

Weedon Parish Council

Co-option Policy

Adopted: 15 September 2026

Weedon Parish Council

Co-option Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

This policy sets out the process to ensure there is compliance with legislation and continuity of procedures in the co-option of members to Weedon Parish Council ("**the Council**"). The co-option procedure is entirely managed by the Council, and this policy ensures a fair open and transparent process.

2. CO-OPTION

The co-option of the parish councillor ("**councillor**") occurs in two instances:

- When an ordinary vacancy has arisen on the Council after the ordinary elections held every four years;
- When a casual vacancy has arisen on the Council and no poll (by-election) has been called.

Ordinary vacancy

An ordinary vacancy occurs when there are insufficient candidates to fill all the seats on the Council at the ordinary elections held every four years. Any candidates who were nominated are automatically elected to the Council and any remaining vacancies are known as "ordinary vacancies". Provided there are enough councillors to constitute a quorum, the Council is usually able to co-opt a volunteer to fill the vacancies. In some cases, Buckinghamshire Council may intervene and make an appointment or order an election to fill the vacancies.

Casual vacancy

A casual vacancy occurs when a councillor:

- fails to make their declaration of acceptance of office at the proper time;
- resigns;
- dies;
- becomes disqualified; or
- fails for six (6) months to attend meetings of the Council, committee or sub-committee or as a representative of the Council at a meeting of an outside body.

The Council has to notify Buckinghamshire Council of a casual vacancy and then advertise the vacancy and give electors the opportunity to request an election. This happens when ten (10) electors write to Buckinghamshire Council within fourteen (14) days of the vacancy notice being posted, stating that an election is requested. If this does not occur, the Council is able to co-opt a member.

3. CONFIRMATION OF CO-OPTION

On receipt of written confirmation from the Electoral Services Office that no by-election has been called or, in the case of an ordinary vacancy, where there are insufficient councillors to fill the seats, but sufficient to form a quorum, the vacancy can be filled by means of co-option.

Weedon Parish Clerk ("**the Clerk**") will:

- advertise the vacancy for four (4) weeks, or such other period as the Council may agree, on the Council's website and noticeboard; and
- advise Buckinghamshire Council that the co-option policy has been instigated.

The Council encourages applications from anyone in the parish who is eligible to stand. Councillors or parishioners can approach individuals to suggest they might wish to consider putting their names forward for co-option. The Clerk acts as a contact point for potential candidates to obtain more information.

4. ELIGIBILITY OF CANDIDATES

The Council is able to consider any person to fill a vacancy provided that:

- they are 18 or over;
- they are a British citizen, a qualifying Commonwealth citizen, or a qualifying citizen of an EU member state.

and at least one of the following apply:

- they are an elector for the parish and continue to be so;
- they have resided in the parish for the previous 12 months or rented/tenanted land in the parish;
- they have had their principal or only place of work in the parish for the previous 12 months; or
- they have lived within 3 miles of the parish for the previous 12 months.

A person can be disqualified from applying under s80 Local Government Act 1972 if they:

- hold a paid office or employment with the Council;
- are bankrupt;
- have been sentenced to a term of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) of not less than 3 months, without the option of a fine, within the preceding five years; or
- have been disqualified under any enactment relating to corrupt or illegal electoral practices.

5. APPLICATIONS

Candidates will be requested to:

- attend at least one Council meeting as an observer unless previous council experience renders this requirement unnecessary;
- submit information about themselves as a short application form; and
- confirm their eligibility for the position of a councillor within the statutory rules.

A template application form is included as the Appendix to this policy.

Following receipt of applications, the next suitable full Council meeting will have the agenda item *“To receive written applications for the office of councillor and to co-opt a candidate to fill the existing vacancy/vacancies”*. The Clerk will circulate copies of any applications to the councillors at least 3 days before the meeting and eligible candidates will be invited to attend. All such documents will be treated as strictly confidential. The meeting will not be rearranged in the event of candidates not being available to attend.

6. PROCESS OF CO-OPTION AT THE COUNCIL MEETING

There is an early agenda item at which each candidate will be asked to make a brief verbal presentation on why they would like to be a councillor and the skills they can offer the Council (5 minutes maximum each). All of this, including the voting for the candidate will be in public. Candidates may be asked questions by members and an application will still be considered if a candidate cannot attend in person. Councillors may take into account the application form of each candidate. Where the Council is discussing the merits of candidates and inevitably their personal attributes, this could be prejudicial, and the Council should resolve to exclude members of the public. In the event of a candidate being related to a councillor, that councillor would be expected to declare an interest and request a dispensation to speak and vote.

7. VOTING

Only councillors present at the meeting may vote with one vote per vacancy to be filled (the Chair may have a casting vote). The successful candidate must receive an absolute majority of those present and voting. If there are more than two candidates and no one of them receives an absolute majority, the candidate with the least votes is struck off and the process is repeated.

8. MORE THAN ONE VACANCY

If there is more than one vacancy and the number of candidates equal the number of vacancies, all the vacancies may be filled by a single composite resolution. If the number of candidates exceeds the number of vacancies, each vacancy must be filled by a separate vote or series of votes.

9. STARTING AS A COUNCILLOR

The successful candidate(s) are asked to start as a councillor immediately after completing the declarations of acceptance of office. The fact that a new member has not received a summons does not

make their attendance as a councillor illegal. If an absent candidate is successful, members must agree to them signing the declaration of acceptance of office before or at the very start of the next meeting. New councillors will also be made aware that Interests Forms will need to be completed within 28 days of co-option.

10. FILLING A CO-OPTION VACANCY

The Council must fill co-option vacancies within 60 days of the notice of vacancy. There is no obligation to do this if the Council only has 6 months left of its four year term.

Weedon Parish Council

Parish Clerk: Mrs Ruth Millard, 32 Campbell Close, Linden Village, Buckingham, MK18 7HP

Tel 01280 814739 email parishclerk@weedonbucks.org.uk

APPENDIX

Councillor Application and Eligibility Form

APPLICATION FOR THE ROLE OF COUNCILLOR ON WEEDON PARISH COUNCIL

Full name	
Home address inc. postcode	
Telephone number	
Mobile number	
Email	

Eligibility to become a parish councillor.

(To qualify you must be able to answer 'Yes' to both questions below)

Are you a British citizen, a Commonwealth citizen or a citizen of a European Union country?	Yes/No
Are you 18-year-old or over?	Yes/No

(To qualify you must be able to answer 'Yes' to at least one of the questions below)

Are you on the electoral register for the parish of WEEDON?	Yes/No
Have you lived either in WEEDON or within three miles of its boundary, for at least a year?	Yes/No
Have you been the owner or tenant of land in WEEDON for at least a year?	Yes/No
Have you had your only or main place of work in WEEDON for at least a year?	Yes/No

DISQUALIFICATIONS

(You must be able to answer No to all the questions below to be eligible to serve as a councillor)

Are you the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order?	Yes/No
Have you within the last five years been convicted of an offence in the UK, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man which resulted in a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for a period of three months or more without the option of a fine?	Yes/No
Are you disqualified by order of a court from being a member of a local authority?	Yes/No

Please briefly outline why you are interested in being a parish councillor.

Please tell us something about the life experience you will bring to the Council, for example, previous local government experience, work in the voluntary or charitable sector, business or trade union experience.

Please tell us something about the skills you feel you will bring to the Council, for example, professional qualifications, financial or project management expertise.

Are there any questions you would like to ask the Council?

Please note that most Council meetings are held in an evening and, unfortunately, under present legislation the Council is not permitted to contribute to the cost of councillors' childcare or care of dependents.

Please type your name below or sign if you are submitting a hard copy and return to:

Weedon Parish Council

Parish Clerk: Mrs Ruth Millard, 32 Campbell Close, Linden Village, Buckingham, MK18 7HP

Tel 01280 814739 email parishclerk@weedonbucks.org.uk.

Your application will be considered at the next appropriate Council meeting, where a vote will be held to decide your co-option to Weedon Parish Council.

Signed:

Date:

The information provided on the application form will remain private & confidential to the Council