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### 1 INTRODUCTION

The co-option of a Parish Councillor occurs when a casual vacancy has arisen on the Council and no poll (by-election) has been called.

### 2 PROCEDURE

To ensure that a fair and transparent process is undertaken, the following procedure will be followed :

1. On receipt of written confirmation from Westmorland and Furness Council that the casual vacancy can be filled by means of co-option, the Clerk will:

- a. advertise the vacancy on the Council notice boards and website;
- b. advertise the vacancy in parish publications and social media;
- c. advise the Council that the co-option procedure has been instigated.

2. Applicants for co-option will be asked to:

- a. submit information about themselves, work history and eligibility.

3. Copies of the applicant's details will be circulated to all Councillors by the Clerk at the earliest opportunity and where possible at least seven days prior to the meeting of the Council at which the co-option will be considered.

All such documents will be treated by the Clerk and all Councillors as strictly private and confidential.

4. Application documents from successful candidates will be retained until they cease to be a co-opted member of the Council.

Application documents from unsuccessful candidates will be destroyed when all successful candidates have signed their Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

5. The application(s) will be considered at the next available Parish Council meeting. Co-option must be done as part of the open meeting and is not subject to exclusion of the press or public.

6. If the number of candidates is less than or equal to the number of vacancies to be filled, the Chair will receive a proposal and seconder for each candidate. The Chair will then confirm that the candidate has been duly elected to office and the candidate will sign a declaration of acceptance of office in the presence of the proper officer of the Council, and will be provided with the declaration of interest forms to be returned to the Monitoring Officer.

If the number of candidates exceeds the number of vacancies, then a vote (or series of votes) must be conducted in accordance with paragraph 7.

7. Voting will be in accordance with the statutory requirements in that a successful candidate must have received an absolute majority vote of those present and voting. If there are more than two candidates for one vacancy and no one of them at the first count receives a majority over the aggregate votes given to the rest, the candidate with the least number of votes is eliminated from the process. The remainder must be put to the vote again and this process must, if necessary, be repeated until an absolute majority is obtained. If two candidates poll the same number of votes, a separate vote to eliminate one of them will be held. Voting will continue with the lowest polling candidate being excluded until the number of candidates matches the number of vacancies. Councillors shall vote by a signed ballot. If any member so requires, the Clerk shall record the names of

members who voted so as to show whether they voted for, against, or abstained. In the case of an equality of votes, the chairman of the meeting has a second or casting vote.

8. For each vacancy, each Councillor has one vote i.e. two vacancies will enable two votes.

9. After the vote has been conducted, this business is concluded when the chairman of the meeting declares that the successful candidate(s) is (are) duly elected. The successful candidate(s) is (are) then declared co-opted to the Council and summoned to attend the next Council meeting.

10. The Clerk will advise the relevant person/s at Westmorland and Furness Council of the names of anyone co-opted to the Council.

11. The Clerk is responsible for providing each new Councillor with induction information where necessary.

12. It is the responsibility of any new member to read and to have understood the Council's Code of Conduct, Standing Orders and Financial Regulations prior to attendance at their first meeting and all policies/ procedures thereafter.

13. Before the successful candidate can participate in Council business they must sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.