



GREAT ALNE PARISH COUNCIL

Co-option Policy

Introduction

This policy sets out the procedure to ensure that there is compliance with legislation and continuity of procedures in the co-option of members to Great Alne Parish Council (hereafter the 'Council').

The co-option procedure is entirely managed by the Council, and this policy aims to ensure that a fair and equitable process is carried out.

1. When an Ordinary Vacancy has arisen on a Council after the ordinary elections held every four years, or
2. When a Casual Vacancy has arisen on a 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.

Casual Vacancy

A casual vacancy occurs when:

- A councillor fails to make his declaration of acceptance of office at the proper time,
- A councillor resigns,
- A councillor dies,
- A councillor becomes disqualified,
- A councillor fails for six (6) months to attend meetings of a council committee or sub-committee or to attend as a representative of the council a meeting of an outside body. This requirement is waived, and the time limit extended if any failure to attend was due to a reason/apology approved by the council, in advance of the **six-month** period expiring.

The Council must notify the District Council of a casual vacancy and then advertise the vacancy to give electors of the parish the opportunity to request an election. This occurs when ten (10) electors write to the District Council stating that an election is requested.

The electors of the parish have fourteen days (not including weekends, bank holidays and other notable days), to claim the by- election. If electors do not request a ballot within fourteen days of the vacancy notice being posted, then the Council can co-opt a replacement Councillor to fill the vacancy.

If a by-election is requested, and more than one candidate has come forward, the election will be organized by Stratford on Avon District Council. A polling station will be set up and the electors of the parish will be asked to go to the polls to vote for candidates who will have put themselves forward by way of a nomination paper. Information on the nomination process including which forms are required by the local elections office at Stratford District Council, how and when to submit nomination papers and what happens afterwards, is available on the Electoral Commission website

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/guidance-candidates-parish-council-elections-england/nominations>

The Parish Council will pay the costs of the by-election.

If only one candidate is put forward they are duly elected without a ballot.

Confirmation of Co-Option

On receipt of confirmation from Stratford on Avon District Council that no by-election has been claimed, the casual vacancy can be filled by means of co-option.

Co-option will also apply in the case of an ordinary vacancy where the District Council has confirmed that there were insufficient nominations to fill all the seats but there are sufficient Councillors elected to constitute a quorum.

The Executive Officer will advertise the vacancy in the local press, noticeboards and social media.

The Council is not obliged to fill any vacancy. Even if the Council invites applications for co-option, it is not obliged to select anyone from the candidates who apply.

However, it is not desirable that electors in a parish are under-represented for a significant length of time. Neither does it contribute to the effective and efficient working of the Council if there are insufficient Councillors to share the workload, to provide a broad cross-section of skills and to meet quorum requirements without difficulty.

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, an eligible Commonwealth citizen, a citizen of the Republic of Ireland, a qualifying EU citizen or an EU citizen with retained rights; and at least one of the following apply:
 - They are an elector for the Parish and continue to be an elector,

- Or have resided in the Parish for the past twelve months or rented/tenanted land in the Parish,
- Or have had their principal or only place of work in the Parish for the past twelve months,
- Or has lived within three miles of the Parish for the past twelve months.

There are certain disqualifications for being a Councillor, of which the main are (see s 80 of the Local Government Act 1972):

- Holding a paid office or employment in the Council,
- Bankruptcy,
- Having been sentenced to a term of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) of not less than three months, without the option of a fine during the preceding five years,
- Being disqualified under any enactment relating to corrupt or illegal electoral practices.

Applications

Candidates will be requested to:

- Submit information about themselves, by way of completing a short application form in the form set out in Appendix 1.
- Confirm their eligibility for the position of Councillor within the statutory rules.

Following receipt of applications, the next suitable Full Council meeting will have an agenda item 'Co-option of a Councillor to fill the existing vacancy'.

Eligible candidates will be invited to attend the meeting.

Copies of the eligible candidates' applications will be circulated to all Councillors by the Executive Officer at least 3 clear days prior to the meeting of the Full Council, when the co-option will be considered.

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

Co-Option of a Councillor

At the Full Council meeting, candidates will be allowed a maximum of five minutes to introduce themselves to the Councillors, give information on their background and experience and explain why they wish to become a member of the Council.

The process will be carried out by adjourning the meeting to allow the candidates to speak. Where the Council wishes to discuss the merits of candidates and inevitably their personal attributes, the Council may resolve to exclude members of the press and public.

Candidates will be called to speak by alphabetical order of surname. For this part of the proceedings, other candidates will be asked to leave the room.

Councillors may ask candidates for clarifications regarding aspects of the application form or the statement they have delivered. Questions should relate to aspects of the Person Specification or areas of the candidate's experience and expertise which might be directly pertinent to the candidate's ability to perform the role.

Councillors are reminded of their obligations under the Council's Code of Conduct.

When asking questions, Councillors will be mindful of the needs of the candidates. They may be unused to speaking at a public meeting and may need positive reinforcement whilst responding. The Chair will be mindful to ensure that questioning is conducted so as to give candidates a good opportunity to articulate their experience and expertise in a supportive atmosphere and in compliance with the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy.

There will be no private discussions outside the meeting between members prior to a vote being taken.

For a candidate to be co-opted to the Council, it will be necessary for them to obtain an absolute majority of votes cast (50% + 1 of the votes available at the meeting, abstentions cannot be accepted) If there are more than two candidates and there is no candidate with an overall majority in the first round of voting the candidate with the least number of votes will drop out of the process.

Further rounds of voting will take place with the process repeated until a candidate has an absolute majority. In the event of a tied ballot, the Chair has the casting vote.

After the voting has been concluded, the Chair will declare the successful candidate duly elected and after signing their declaration of acceptance of office, they may take their seat immediately.

The Executive Officer will notify Stratford on Avon District Council of the co-option of the new Councillor.

Approved by full council on 16 September 2025.

Reviewed by Councilor's at Parish Council meeting 13 May 2026

Appendix 1

GREAT ALNE PARISH COUNCIL

Application for Co-option

Thank you for your interest in becoming a Councillor. Please provide the information requested below to assist the council in making their decision.

Full Name

Home address

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Phone (home)

Phone (mobile)

Email address

I confirm that I am:

- Over 18 years of age
- A British citizen, an eligible Commonwealth citizen, a citizen of the Republic of Ireland, a qualifying EU citizen or an EU citizen with retained rights

And one of the following applies:

- I am an elector for the Parish and continue to be an elector, or
- I have resided in the Parish for the past twelve months or rented/tenanted land in the Parish, or
- I have had my principal or only place of work in the Parish for the past twelve months, or
- I have lived within three miles of the Parish for the past twelve months.

(Please indicate which category applies to you)

About You

Please provide the Council with some background information about yourself and explain why you would like to be a Councillor. (*Continue overleaf if required.*)

Signed.....Dated.....

Appendix 2

Co-opted Councillor Person Specification

Competency	Essential
<p>Personal Attributes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sound knowledge and understanding of local affairs and the local community. • Forward thinking.
<p>Experience, Skills, Knowledge and Ability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to listen constructively. • A good team player. • Ability and willingness to become a Lead Councillor. • Solid interest in local matters. • Ability and willingness to represent the Council and their community. • Good interpersonal skills and able to contribute opinions at meetings whilst willing to see others views and accept majority decisions. • Ability to communicate succinctly and clearly. • Ability and willingness to work closely with other members and to maintain good working relationships with all members and staff. • Ability and willingness to work with the Council's partners (e.g. voluntary groups, other parish Councils, principal authority, charities) • Ability and willingness to undertake induction training and other relevant training. • Appropriate competency in using email/IT
<p>Circumstances</p>	<p>Ability and willingness to attend meetings of the Council (or meetings of other local authorities and local bodies) at any time and events in the evening and at weekends.</p>

