

South Petherton Parish Council Co-option Policy

Date Adopted: May 2026

Review Date: May 2027

- 1.1 This policy covers the co-option policy to fill a casual vacancy on South Petherton Parish Council.
- 1.2 A casual vacancy is when a seat on the Parish Council becomes vacant, which may be for a number of reasons including resignation, disqualification or death of a councillor, or when a councillor fails to attend meetings for 6 consecutive months.
- 1.3 Where a casual vacancy arises the Clerk will advertise the vacancy on the Council notice boards and web site along with information about being a Councillor.
- 1.4 If within 14 days at least 10 electors have provided written notice to the Returning Officer at Somerset Council requesting an election to fill the vacancy then a by-election will be held.
- 1.5 If no request by electors is made then no by-election will be held and the Council must fill the vacancy by co-option as soon as practicable, unless the vacancy falls within six months of the next Council election, in which case the vacancy may be held unfilled.

The Co-option process

- 2.1 Candidates must complete and return to the Clerk a co-option application form, which confirms their consent to nomination and includes a declaration that they meet the criteria for eligibility and are not disqualified from standing.
- 2.2 Candidates will be invited to attend the next meeting of the Council and to provide an opportunity for members to ask them any questions.
- 2.3 The decision must be based solely on the candidate's suitability for the appointment. It would be unlawful to come to a conclusion based on anything other than the ability of the candidate to undertake the duties of the position. No question should be asked, or consideration given, to the candidate's: Age, Race, Sex and sexual orientation, Disabilities, Creed, Marital status and family, Political affiliation.

- 2.4 The meeting will be open to the public to attend, to ensure transparency in decision making.
 - 2.5 Where the number of candidates is less than or equal to the number of vacancies, then providing they meet the eligibility criteria and are not disqualified they shall be appointed to the Council following a resolution to appoint them.
 - 2.7 Otherwise, where there are more candidates than vacancies, voting will be by show of hands, in accordance with Standing Orders.
 - 2.8 Where there is a single vacancy, then an absolute majority vote is required from all members present and entitled to vote. The candidate with the least number of votes will be removed and the vote re-taken until a majority is achieved. A tie will be settled by a casting vote by the Chair of the meeting.
 - 2.9 Where there are multiple vacancies then the voting will repeat as described above for each vacancy in turn.
 - 2.10 The successful candidate(s) will then be declared co-opted and will join the meeting of the Council, once they have signed their declaration of acceptance of office. From that point they are a councillor and no different to any other member.
 - 2.11 Within 28 days of becoming a councillor, a person must complete and send their Register of Interest form to the Monitoring Officer at Somerset Council.
-