



Co-option Policy

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of the Parish Council's Co-option Policy is to define the process to be followed when recruiting new parish councillors by co-option, when an election has not been called to fill a vacancy.

In the event of there being one or more vacancies to serve as a councillor that is to be filled by co-option and there are more applicants than places, the Council shall adopt the following procedure.

In the event that there are less candidates for co-option than vacancies, Council will seek to co-opt without undue delay, unless there is a lawful reason for not co-opting.

Lawful reasons to refuse co-option are:

- holding a paid office under the local authority;
- 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 five years preceding the election; and
- being disqualified under any enactment relating to corrupt or illegal practices.

Candidates found to be offering inducements of any kind will be disqualified.

Source: Local Government Act (1972) 5.(80)

Councillors may also choose not to co-opt persons where there is, in their opinion, reasonable evidence that the persons are likely to breach the code of conduct and bring the Council into disrepute.

If there are allegations that the recruitment procedure outlined below has not been followed fairly and correctly, then Councillors can choose to delay co-option while the issues are rectified. This may result in further candidates coming forward.

2 The Procedure

- 2.1 The co-option shall be advertised on the public noticeboards and parish website, with an appropriate deadline, advising that an application form can be obtained from the parish Clerk or website.
- 2.2 The Clerk will advise each applicant if he/she is legally qualified to serve as a councillor (Requirements as for elections run by Milton Keynes Council).
- 2.3 Applicants will ideally demonstrate an interest in a fairly broad range of the issues that come before the Parish Council.

- 2.4 Applicants should apply via writing or email to the clerk who will forward applications to members for consideration.
- 2.5 The names of eligible applicant(s) will be included on the agenda for the meeting at which the co-option will take place.
- 2.6 The applicant shall be asked to submit information about themselves in writing on the application form, limited to 300 words. Applicants' written statements will be included in the papers for the relevant meeting
- 2.7 Councillors will then be given the opportunity to ask questions of the applicant(s). The total question and answer time will be limited to a maximum of ten minutes. Any councillor arriving after the question & answer session has begun will be excluded from voting.
- 2.8 If there are more vacancies than applicants, providing there is no lawful reason to refuse (see 1), the Council shall co-opt the candidate(s) automatically. If there are less vacancies than applicants, Council will hold a secret ballot to determine who shall be co-opted.
- 2.9 Councillors should write the name of their preferred applicant or write the word "abstain" on the ballot paper and hand it back to the Clerk.

If an applicant has received more than 50% of the vote, he/she is duly co-opted. In the event of a tie between only 2 applicants, extra consideration will be given to the candidate from a demographic underrepresented or not represented on the council. If there is equal representation on the Council already, a coin will be tossed for the deciding vote.

- 2.10 If vacancies still exist, Council shall continue advertising and will seek to fill vacancies as soon as is reasonably practicable. Candidates who are not co-opted shall be entitled to reapply.

3. Parish Council Responsibilities

The Council must, as set out in law:

1. Comply with its obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018 the GDPR and the Equality Act 2010;
2. Comply with employment law;
3. Consider the impact of their decisions on reducing crime and disorder in their area;
4. Have regard to the protection of biodiversity in carrying out their functions;
5. Consider the provision of allotments if there is demand for them from local residents and it is reasonable to do so;
6. Appoint a chairman of the council;
7. Appoint officers as appropriate for carrying out its functions;
8. Appoint a responsible financial officer (RFO) to manage the council's financial affairs; the RFO is often the clerk, especially in smaller councils;
9. Appoint an independent and competent internal auditor;
10. Adopt a Code of Conduct (listed under policies);
11. Hold a minimum number of four meetings per year, one of which must be the Annual Meeting of the Council.

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Councillors must:

1. Attend meetings when summoned to do so; notice to attend a council meeting is, in law, a summons, because you have a duty to attend;
2. Consider, in advance of the meeting, the agenda and any related documents which were sent to you with the summons or prior to the summons;
3. Take part in meetings and consider all the relevant facts and issues on matters which require a decision including the views of others expressed at the meeting;
4. Take part in voting and respect decisions made by the majority of those present and voting;
5. Ensure, with other councillors, that the Council is properly managed;
6. Represent the whole electorate, and not just those who voted for you;
7. Abide by rules that apply to the disclosure of some business or financial matters (disclosable pecuniary interests);
8. Adopt the seven Nolan Principles, which apply to the conduct of people in public life:
 - a. **Selflessness:** you should act in the public interest.
 - b. **Integrity:** you should not put yourself under any obligations to others, allow them improperly to influence you or seek benefit for yourself, family, friends or close associates.
 - c. **Objectivity:** you should act impartially, fairly and on merit.
 - d. **Accountability:** you should be prepared to submit to public scrutiny necessary to ensure accountability.
 - e. **Openness:** you should be open and transparent in your actions and decisions unless there are clear and lawful reasons for non-disclosure.
 - f. **Honesty:** you should always be truthful.
 - g. **Leadership:** as a councillor, you should promote, support and exhibit high standards of conduct and be willing to challenge poor behaviour.

Councillor Co-option Application Form

If, after a vacancy has been advertised, the main authority (Milton Keynes Council) advises that a by-election has not been requested, the Parish Council chooses someone to fill a vacancy through the co-option process. The appointment lasts until the next time the Council has elections.

Parish councillors are not employees, they are elected/co-opted representatives who volunteer their time for free to work on behalf of their communities. You do not have to be a member of any political party. Good parish councillors are concerned with local community matters (refer to our website for main duties and responsibilities of a parish councillor).

Please indicate which part of Kents Hill & Monkston Parish Council you are prepared to represent? Monkston Kents Hill Monkston Park

Please give your personal details. This information is held under the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 and will not be shared outside the Parish Council without your permission.

Your full legal name	
Your "common name" if different	
Address	
Phone no.	
Email address:	

Qualifications – please indicate yes or no to each

1. Are you a British subject, or a citizen of the Commonwealth or the European Union?
2. On the "relevant date" (i.e. the day on which you propose yourself for co-option) were you 18 years of age or over?
3. On the "relevant day", were you a local government elector for the council area for which you want to stand; **or**
Have you during the whole of the 12 months preceding that day, occupied as owner or tenant any land or other premises in the council area; **or**
Have you, during that same period, had your principal or only place of work in the council; **or**
During that 12 month period, have you resided in the council area?
4. Are you subject of a bankruptcy restriction order or interim order?
5. Have you lived in the council area or within three miles of it for the whole of the 12 months preceding the "relevant day"?
6. Have you, within five years before the day of the co-option, been convicted in the United Kingdom of any offences and have had a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for a period of over three months without the option of a fine?
7. Do you work for the council you want to become a councillor for?

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Please write a short paragraph about yourself and why you want to become a Parish Councillor. Please give details of your area(s) of interest and/or expertise (no more than 300 words)

I confirm that the information listed above, to the best of my knowledge, is true and correct.

Name:

Date:

Signed:

Change Control

Version	Nature of Update or Approval	Approved
1	First approved circa 2016	2016
2	Confirmed in 2017	May 2017
3	Confirmed in 2019	May 2019
4	Reinstated in 2023 with updated references to legislation	15-5-2023

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