



ROTTINGDEAN PARISH COUNCIL

CO-OPTION POLICY

INTRODUCTION

1. This policy sets out the procedure to ensure there is compliance with legislation and continuity of procedures in the co-option of members to Rottingdean Parish Council. The co-option procedure is entirely managed by the Parish Council, and this policy will ensure that a fair and equitable process is carried out.

CO-OPTION

2. The co-option of a parish councillor occurs when:
 - a. An ordinary vacancy has arisen on the Parish Council after the ordinary elections held every four years;
 - b. A casual vacancy has arisen on the Parish Council and no poll (by-election) has been called.

Ordinary vacancy

3. An ordinary vacancy occurs when there are insufficient candidates to fill all the seats on the Parish Council at the ordinary elections held every four years. Any candidates who were nominated are automatically elected to the Parish Council and any remaining vacancies are known as "ordinary vacancies". Provided there are enough parish councillors to constitute a quorum (see [Standing Orders](#)) the Parish Council is usually able to co-opt a volunteer to fill the vacancies.

Casual Vacancy

4. A casual vacancy occurs when:

- A councillor fails to make their declaration of acceptance of office at the proper time;
 - A councillor resigns;
 - A councillor dies;
 - A councillor becomes disqualified; or
 - A councillor fails for six (6) months to attend monthly meetings of the council.
 - An election is declared void
5. The Parish Council has to notify Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC) of a casual vacancy and then advertise the vacancy to give electors for the ward the opportunity to request an election. This occurs when ten (10) electors write to the BHCC stating that an election is requested.
 6. If more than one (1) candidate is then nominated a by-election takes place but if only one (1) candidate is put forward they are duly elected without a ballot.
 7. If ten (10) residents do not request a ballot within fourteen (14) days of the vacancy notice being posted, as advised by the Electoral Services Office, the Parish Council is able to co-opt a volunteer.
 8. On receipt of written confirmation from the Electoral Services Office that no by-election has been claimed, the casual vacancy can be filled by means of co-option.

CO-OPTION POLICY

Discrimination

9. Rottingdean Parish Council (RPC) will co-opt members to the Council on the basis of merit. Merit will be assessed against a pre-determined Statement of Skills and Attributes that RPC wishes to foster in the Council, and in compliance with the Equality Act 2010.

Positive Action

10. It is RPC policy to achieve, as far as is practical, a Council that is representative of the mix of parish residents. RPC will therefore identify where there is underrepresentation and encourage potential candidates from significantly underrepresented groups to apply for co-option.

CO-OPTION PROCESS

11. At the next meeting of the full Council following the notification from the Returning Officer that an election has not been called the Council will agree:
 - The key skills and attributes that will be used as a basis for the selection process

- The membership of the Panel to review applications, conduct interviews and recommend appointment(s). This will normally be the Chair and Vice Chair and one other Council member.
- The skills and attributes and role description, and, if the timing allows, inviting potential applicants to attend the next full Council meeting
- The interview process and key questions
- The Clerk will then advertise the vacancies in the terms agreed and amend the application form and selection scoring material accordingly.

12. Candidates will be requested to:

- Submit information about themselves, by way of completing a short application form and provide a copy of their CV (a copy of the application form is attached as Appendix A);
- Confirm their eligibility for the position of Parish Councillor within the statutory rules, (a copy of the eligibility form is attached as Appendix B).

13. Following receipt of applications, the interview panel will meet to interview the applicants. The panel will draft a record of the interviews, and its recommendation for appointment(s) to the full parish council. The next suitable Parish Council meeting will have an agenda item 'To receive written applications for the office of Parish Councillor and to co-opt a candidate to fill the existing vacancy'. Eligible candidates will be invited to attend the meeting.

14. Copies of the eligible candidates' applications and CVs, and the interview panel's recommendations for appointment will be circulated to all parish councillors by the Clerk at least 3 clear days prior to the meeting of the full Parish Council, when the co-option will be considered.

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

CO-OPTION MEETING

16. During the co-option meeting, the Council will vote, by a show of hands, on the interview panel's recommendations for appointment to the Parish Council. In order for a candidate to be co-opted to the Parish Council, it will be necessary for them to obtain an absolute majority of votes cast. (LGA 1972 Sch. 12. Para 13).

17. The Clerk will notify Brighton and Hove City Council Electoral Services Office of the co-option of the new parish councillor(s).

18. The co-opted Parish Councillor(s) will complete a Declaration of Acceptance of Office and Notification of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests forms which the Clerk will retain and post on the RPC website within 28 days of the co-option.

19. In the event of there being only one eligible candidate that candidate will be appointed.

20. If an insufficient number candidates are co-opted, the process should continue, whereby the vacancies are again advertised.

21. The Clerk will inform all candidates of the results of the co-option process.

Parish Clerk

February 2021

APPENDIX A

**Is there any other information you would like to disclose regarding your application?
(If necessary, please continue on a separate sheet).**

Use of Personal Information

The Parish Council will use your information, including that which you provide on this application form, to assess your suitability to be a parish councillor.

Declaration & Consent

I have read the section entitled "Use of Personal Information" and by signing this form I consent to the use and disclosure of my information included in this application form.

I declare the information given on this form to be true and correct.

SIGNED

NAME

DATE

Please complete and return this form, together with the completed Co-option Eligibility Form to:

The Clerk, Rottingdean Parish Council, The Gables 6 Dean Court Road,
Rottingdean BN7 7DH or email to chris.hayes@rottingdean-pc.gov.uk

ROTTINGDEAN PARISH COUNCIL CO-OPTION ELIGIBILITY FORM

1. In order to be eligible for co-option as a Rottingdean Parish Councillor you must satisfy certain criteria. You must satisfy (a) and (b) below and at least one of the options (c) – (f). Please tick which apply to you:

- a. I am 18 years of age or over; and
- b. I am a British citizen or a citizen of the Commonwealth or a citizen of any other member state of the European Union; and
- c. I am registered as a local government elector for the parish; or
- d. I have, during the whole of the twelve months preceding the date of my co-option occupied, as owner or tenant, land or other premises in the parish; or
- e. My principal or only place of work during those twelve months has been in the parish; or
- f. I have during the whole of those twelve months resided in the parish or within 3 miles of it.

2. Please note that under Section 80 of the Local Government Act 1972 a person is disqualified from being a parish councillor if he/she:

- a) Is employed by the parish council or holds paid office (other than chairman, vice- chairman or deputy chairman) under the parish council (including joint boards or committees);
- b) Is employed by an entity controlled by the parish council;
- c) Is the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or an interim bankruptcy restrictions order or a debt relief restrictions order or an interim debt relief restrictions order; or
- d) Has within five years before the day of co-option, or since his/her co-option, been convicted in the UK, Channel Islands or Isle of Man of any offence and has been sentenced to imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for not less than three months without the option of a fine; or
- e) Is otherwise disqualified under Part III of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (relating to corrupt or illegal electoral practices and offences relating to donations) or the Audit Commission Act 1998.

Use of Personal Information

The Parish Council will use the information provided on this form to assess your eligibility to be a parish councillor.

Declaration & Consent

I..... hereby confirm that I am eligible for the vacancy of Rottingdean Parish Councillor and I am not disqualified

under s80 of the Local Government Act 1972 from being a parish councillor and that the information given on this form is true and correct.

I have read the section entitled "Use of Personal Information" and by signing this form I consent to the use and disclosure of my information included in this form.

Signature

Name

Date