CENTRAL SWINDON NORTH PARISH COUNCIL

Councillor Co-Option Policy & Procedure

Change Log		
Review Date	**Action**	**By Whom**
July 2026	FGP to Staffing Panel	AR

1. INTRODUCTION

The process for co-option is laid out in the Local Elections (Parishes and Communities Rules 2006) and the Local Government Act 1972.

This policy sets out in detail the circumstances which permit and legislation relating to the co-option of persons to fill the vacancies within the parish council and is based on NALC Legal Briefing L15-08 which recommends good practice to be taken in respect of a co-option process.

2. NOTIFICATION

2.1 There are two circumstances under which the SBC Monitoring Officer will notify CSNPC that it may proceed to fill a casual vacancy by co-option:

a) When a seat has been left vacant because no eligible candidate stood for election at the full elections for a new council. In this instance the Parish Clerk would be notified of vacancies by SBC and that efforts must be made to fill the vacancies by co-option. The Council will be notified, and they will decide if they wish to fill the vacancy by giving public notice of such vacancy.

b) during the life of a council when a seat has fallen vacant (because of a resignation, death or a person ceases to qualify to be a councillor). The Parish Clerk will immediately notify the Monitoring Officer, and the vacancy will be advertised.

If the required 10 electors of the Parish have not called for a poll (by-election) within the legally specified time period (currently 14 working days) following publication of the Notice of Vacancy, the Parish Clerk would be notified by SBC and that the vacancies can be filled by co-option. The Council will be notified and they must give public notice of the vacancy and intention to co-opt.

2.2 The Parish Council is not legally obliged to co-opt 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.

2.3 However, it is considered poor that electors be left partially or fully unrepresented for a significant length of time. Neither does it contribute to effective and efficient working of the Council if there are insufficient councillors to share the workload equitably; to provide a broad cross-section of skills and interests; or to achieve meeting quorums without difficulty, given that some absence is unavoidable at times.

2.4 Councillors elected by co-option are full members of the Council. CSNPC Councillors are volunteers who receive a small annual allowance toward expenses such as petrol and telephone use.

2.5 To ensure that a fair and transparent process is undertaken this policy sets out the process to be followed by CSNPC.

3. APPLICATION PROCESS

3.1 On receipt, of written notification, from the Monitoring Officer at SBC a casual vacancy may be filled by means of co- option and on instruction from the Council:

a) The Parish Clerk will announce the vacancy or vacancies to be filled by co-option within 21 days of receipt of the written notification by means of displaying a Notice on the Pinetrees Notice board and CSNPC website. A copy of the Notice will also be sent to the local press.

b) The Co-option Notice will include the closing date of requests for consideration (between 14 and 30 days after the date of the display) and the number of vacancies.

c) The Co-option Notice may also be displayed in other locations if instructed by Full Council.

d) The Parish Clerk will advise the council when the Co-option process has been instigated by notifying all councillors.

3.2 Councillors and Officers are at liberty to point out the vacancies and the process to any qualifying applicant(s) without prejudice.

3.3 Applicants are recommended to read the publication, “The Good Councillor Guide” which explains more about the role and the responsibilities of councillors – copies are available on request. If you have any questions you are welcome to raise them with the Parish Clerk.

3.4 Applications will be considered at the next available Staffing Panel meeting. To ensure that applications are included on the agenda they should be sent to the Parish Manager before the advertised deadline. **Late applications will not be accepted.**

4. PERSON SPECIFICATION

NALC legal briefing suggests a personal specification that identifies attributes that a Parish Council should be looking for when co-opting a councillor.

CSNPC welcome people with a wide range of life skills and experience that reflects the local community. CSNPC are looking for councillors who can bring enthusiasm and commitment as well as some of the following:

COMPETENCY DEMONSTRATED BY:

Experience, Skills, Knowledge and Ability:

- Interest in local matters. Knowledge and understanding of local affairs and the local community. Living within the Parish would be advantageous.
- Ability and willingness to represent the Council and their community.
- Good interpersonal skills.
- 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 relevant training.

Circumstances

- Ability and willingness to attend meetings of the council (or the meetings of other local authorities and local bodies) in the evening and events in the evening and at weekends.
- Flexible and committed to the Council
- Enthusiastic.

4.1 Applicants will be invited to attend an interview with the Staffing Panel at which point their application will be considered. The Parish Clerk will provide applicants with the interview details, which will be held at the Parish Chambers at the Princess Elizabeth Pavilion, Moredon Sporting Hub, Cheney Manor, SWINDON SN2 2QJ.

At the interview, applicants will be given the opportunity to present to the Staffing Panel for a maximum of 10 minutes to introduce themselves and explain why they want to join the Parish Council. There will be set questions set out which each candidate will be asked. There may also be probing questions on the content on the presentation.

If there are more candidates than vacancies the co-option will be decided by a ballot of the Staffing Panel members. Voting will be according to 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, steps must be taken to strike off the candidate with the least number of votes and the remainder must then be put to the vote again; this process must, if necessary, be repeated until an absolute majority is obtained.

Councillors shall vote by signed ballot. In the case of an equality of votes, the Chairman of the meeting has a second or casting vote.

4.2 The Staffing Panel will then submit their recommendation to the next Full Council. **Only if Full Council accepts the recommendation of the Staffing Panel by majority vote will the appointment be confirmed.**

Full Council is **not** required to accept the recommendation and may at its discretion request further information or to re-run the process if there is no overall majority

On successful co-option and ratification from Full Council, applicants will be invited to sign a Declaration of Acceptance of Office which will be kept in the Parish Office safe.

This completes the process for joining the council. Within 28 days of co-option, applicants are also required to complete a Register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests which will be provided by the Parish Manager and sent to SBC.

Unsuccessful applicants will have their details, application form and any written materials forwarded to the Parish Council deleted.

4.3 Applicants found to be offering gratuities of any kind, at any stage in the co-option process, will be disqualified and reported to the Monitoring Officer and may be reported to the Police.

Central Swindon North Parish Council
Councillor Co-Option APPLICATION FORM

BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE:
Contact Details

Name:
Address:
Postcode:
Email:
Home Tel:
Mobile Tel.

Please briefly outline why you are interested in becoming a Parish Councillor

Please tell us something about the life experience you will bring to the Council, for example, previous local government experience, work in the voluntary sector or business experience.

Please tell us something about the skills you feel you will bring to the Council, for example professional qualifications, financial management expertise, listening and organisational skills.

Please tell us your availability to serve as a Parish Councillor.

Please add any further information would like to include to support your application.

Please inform us of any other information you would like to disclose regarding your application? (E.g. if you are related to an employee of the Council / would require assistance during Council meetings with a disability)

Councillor Eligibility

In order to be eligible for co-option as a CSNPC Parish Councillor you must be:

A British subject, or a citizen of the Commonwealth or the EU.

- 18 years of age or over on the 'relevant date' (i.e. the day on which you are co-opted).

You must additionally be able to meet one of the following qualifications, please tick all that apply:

☐ I am registered as a local government elector for CSNPC area; or

☐ 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 CSNPC area.

☐ My principal or only place of work during those twelve months has been in the CSNPC area.

☐ I have during the whole of the twelve months preceding the date of my co-option resided in the CSNPC area or within 3 miles of it.

Please note that under Section 80 of the Local Government Act 1972 a person is disqualified from being elected as a Local Councillor or being a member of a Local Council if he/she:

a) Holds any paid office or employment of the local council (other than the office of Chairman) or of a joint committee on which the Council is represented; or b) is a person who has been adjudged bankrupt or has made a composition or arrangement with his/her creditors* (but see below); or c) 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 d) is otherwise disqualified under Part III of the representation of the People Act 1983 for corrupt or illegal practices.

*This disqualification for bankruptcy ceases in the following circumstances:- I. if the bankruptcy is annulled on the grounds that either the person ought not to have been adjudged bankrupt or that his/her debts have been fully discharged; II. if the person is discharged with a certificate that the bankruptcy was caused by misfortune without misconduct on his/her part; III. if the person is discharged without such a certificate.

In (i) and (ii) above, the disqualification ceases on the date of the annulment and discharge respectively. In (iii), it ceases on the expiry of five years from the date of discharge.

I (insert name).....hereby confirm, that I am eligible to apply for the vacancy of CSNPC, and the information given on this form is a true and accurate record.

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

Please return your completed application form to Andy Reeves, Parish Clerk.

Post to: (Allow 2-3 Days for Postage)
Moredon Sporting Hub
Cheney Manor Industrial Estate
SWINDON
SN2 2QJ

In Person:
The office is open Mon-Fri 9.30am-4.00pm and can be handed to the Parish Clerk.

By Email:
admin@centralswindonnorth-pc.gov.uk