



## **Rockbourne Parish Council Co-option Policy**

### **Introduction**

If no request for an election is received by New Forest District Council, the Democratic Services Department will advise the Parish Council to co-opt a person to fill the vacancy, as soon as is practicable. (*See RPC Policy: Casual Vacancies in the Office of Councillor.*)

Co-option is the process by which the Parish Council selects a new Councillor, and it is done as an agenda item within a monthly Parish Council meeting.

The Parish Council manages the process of co-option by itself and strives to demonstrate that it is fair and equitable by following the procedure set out below:

1. Rockbourne Parish Council invites interested candidates to write to the Clerk by a specified date. If there is only one applicant for one vacancy, the applicant is automatically co-opted to the Parish Council. If there is more than one candidate, the letters received are circulated to Councillors ahead of the meeting at which a Parish Councillor is to be co-opted. These letters form part of the documentation pack, which Councillors receive for every Parish Council meeting.
2. At the Parish Council meeting candidates are invited to say something about themselves and Councillors can ask questions of the candidates. Each candidate will be allocated a maximum of three minutes.
3. The council's debate and vote on the co-option must be conducted in the public section of its meeting. It follows that the candidates, as members of the public, will be entitled to be present during the proceedings.
4. The Chairman will request the Councillors present to nominate any of the candidates. Candidates will require a proposer and seconder to progress to the voting stage. If there is only one vacancy, a Councillor may only nominate or second one candidate. One candidate needs to receive an absolute majority of votes.
5. The Chairman will then place the names of those nominated into alphabetical order and proceed to vote. Councillors will have one vote per vacancy to be filled.

6. Voting will be in accordance with Standing Orders by a show of hands and will continue until one candidate has received an absolute majority of those Councillors present. At this stage, the successful candidate will be declared co-opted.

7. Should no single candidate receive a majority on the first vote, the candidate with the lowest number of votes is eliminated. Voting will then take place for the remaining candidates until one person receives an absolute majority.

8. The successful candidate is then declared co-opted to the Parish Council and will be asked to join the meeting.

9. The successful candidate is a councillor and is no different to any other member as co-option is a legitimate form of election as part of the election process.

10. The person elected must make a declaration of acceptance of office before, or at, the first meeting of the Parish Council following his/her election in the presence of a member of the Parish Council or the Proper Officer of the Parish Council. The declaration is thereafter retained in the parish records.