Greetham Parish Council
CO-OPTION POLICY

Adopted by Council: 09.09.2026
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Review Date: 2028

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

Casual Vacancy
A casual vacancy occurs following the resignation, disqualification or death of a serving member. Rutland County Council is notified of the vacancy and the Elections Department post a formal Notice of Vacancy. The notice will be displayed for fourteen days during which time, ten members of the parish can request an election takes place. If called, the by-election is then organised by Rutland County Council. If an election is not called then GPC will be notified to fill the seat by co-option.

Vacancies after an ordinary election
a. If there are not enough candidates to fill the remaining vacancies the Representation of the People Act 1985, section 21 allows the elected members, provided there is a quorum (i.e. one third of the whole numbers of members with a minimum of three) to co-opt members to fill the remaining vacancies.

b. If, following an ordinary election there are insufficient persons nominated to fill all the available seats, the parish has 35 days from the date of the election to co-opt persons to fill those vacancies without the necessity of advertising for a potential by-election. If, following the election, there are insufficient councillors elected to form a quorum, the parish must advise Rutland County Council who can either appoint persons to be parish councillors or order another election. (See section 39(4) Representation of the People Act 1983 and section 21(2) RPA 1985).

Vacancies without an election
If an election is not requested the parish clerk will be notified that the parish council must co-opt a member to fill the vacancy as soon as practicable. If the number of casual vacancies leaves the parish council without a quorum, Rutland County Council will order an election to be held and, in the meantime, may by order appoint people to fill all or any of the vacancies until other Councillors are elected and take up office.

Co-option Process
The vacancy for co-option will be advertised on notice boards within the parish and via the Parish Council website for a minimum of four weeks. This will include a deadline for receipt of applications. See Annex A.

Any questions about the procedure for co-option, eligibility to serve or the roles and responsibilities of a Parish Councillor should be directed to the Clerk to the Council.

Eligibility
To be able to stand as a candidate at a parish council election you must:
- be at least 18 years old
- be a British citizen, an eligible Commonwealth citizen, a citizen of the Republic of Ireland, a qualifying EU citizen or an EU citizen with retained rights
- meet at least one of the following four qualifications:
    - You are, and will continue to be, registered as a local government elector for the parish in which you wish to stand from the day of your nomination onwards.

- You have occupied as owner or tenant any land or other premises in the parish area during the whole of the 12 months before the day of your nomination and the day of election.
- Your main or only place of work during the 12 months prior to the day of your nomination and the day of election has been in the parish area.
- You have lived in the parish area or within three miles of it during the whole of the 12 months before the day of your nomination and the day of election.

When completing your home address form and consent to nomination form you will be asked to indicate which qualifications you meet. You should indicate on the forms ALL those qualifications that apply to you.

The person should also not be disqualified for election under Section 80 of the Local Government Act 1972. Broadly, this relates to holding a paid office under the Town Council, bankruptcy, having been sentenced to a term of imprisonment of not less than 3 months without the option of a fine during the 5 years preceding the co-option, or being disqualified under any enactment relating to corrupt or illegal practices. They should also not be subject to the notification requirement of or under Part 2 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 or have been convicted of an intimidatory criminal offence motivated by hostility towards a candidate, future candidate or holder of a relevant elective office. Full details of qualifications and disqualifications can be found at https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/guidance-candidates-parish-council-elections-england/what-you-need-know-you-stand-a-candidate

Applications
Candidates will be requested to:

- Submit information about themselves, by completion of Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 explaining why they are interested in joining the Parish Council and what skills and experience they would bring. Applicants will also be asked to confirm their eligibility to serve, based on the above criteria.

Parish Council Meeting

- The Parish Council will consider the candidates for co-option to fill any vacancy at a Parish Council meeting.
- Shortly before the start of this meeting the Parish Clerk will report the names of the candidates to the Council at the meeting and distribute copies of any applications made by the candidates.
- Each candidate may make a short statement to the Council. The process will be carried out in the public session and there will be no private discussions between members prior to a vote being taken. However, where the Council is discussing the merits of candidates and inevitably their personal attributes, this could be prejudicial and the Council should resolve to exclude the members of the press and public.
- As soon as all candidates have finalised their submissions, the council will proceed to vote on the acceptability of each candidate utilising the ‘person specification’ criteria set out in Appendix 3 and any personal statements provided by candidates, with each candidate being proposed and seconded by the councillors in attendance and a vote by a show of hands. The vote will be recorded to show whether each Councillor present and voting have his/her vote for or against that question.
- Declarations of interest must be made by Parish Councillors as each candidate is considered, (eg: family ties, friendships, business relationships etc). This does not prevent Councillors from voting.

Voting

- This must take place in a public meeting.
- Only Councillors present at the meeting may vote. Each councillor must vote. No councillor may abstain.
- If a member is not at the meeting the legislation does not provide for a proxy or postal vote.

- Even if there are fewer candidates than vacancies, each candidate must receive an absolute majority vote of those members present at the meeting; no majority, no co-option. There is no “co-opted uncontested” provision within the law.
- If there are more candidates than vacancies, the candidate with the least number of votes should be taken off the list of candidates, and if there are still more candidates than vacancies, the vote is taken again. This procedure should be repeated until the number of candidates equals the number of vacancies and each candidate has a majority vote.
- The Chair may only use their casting vote if two successive voting rounds are stalemated.

Declaration of Acceptance of Office
Those co-opted must sign a Declaration of Acceptance of Office before they join any meeting of the council as a member. If the successful candidate is present at the meeting where the co-option is agreed they will sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and be able to participate in the meeting.

Notification to Rutland County Council
The Clerk will notify Corporate Services at Rutland County District Council of the new member appointment and request the new member completes a Registration of Interests form within 28 days of being co-opted.

Term of Office
A person elected or co-opted to fill a casual vacancy holds office until the person in whose place they are elected or appointed would regularly have retired.

Annex A: Example Public Notice of Co-option

GREETHAM PARISH COUNCIL WILL BE CO-OPTING FOR A CASUAL VACANCY AT THE NEXT MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL ON (DATE)

A person co-opted to fill a casual vacancy on the Parish Council must fulfil the same criteria as a person being formally nominated for a candidate at an election. The person must either be on the current Register of Electors for Greetham and/or during the previous 12 months prior to appointment by co-option, either have occupied as owner or tenant any land or premises in the parish, or had their principal or only place of work in the parish, or have resided either in the parish or within 3 miles of the parish boundary.

The person should also not be disqualified for election under Section 80 of the Local Government Act 1972. Broadly, this relates to holding a paid office under the Town Council, bankruptcy, having been sentenced to a term of imprisonment of not less than 3 months without the option of a fine during the 5 years preceding the co-option, or being disqualified under any enactment relating to corrupt or illegal practices.

Any interested persons are asked to contact the Clerk to Greetham Parish Council in the first instance: clerk@greethamparishcouncil.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Application for Co-option to Greetham Parish Council

Thank you for your interest in becoming a Parish Councillor. Please provide the below information to assist the Council with this decision.

Full Name / Title	
Home Address	
Home Telephone	
Mobile Telephone	
Email Address	
About You Please provide the council with some background information about yourself	
Signature	
Reasons for Applying. Please provide the council with your reasons for wanting to become a Parish Councillor .	
Signature	

Please return your completed application to the Parish Clerk. Your application will be considered at the next available Parish Council meeting, where a vote will be held to decide whether the Council agrees to co-opt you onto Greetham Parish Council.

General Data Protection Regulations 2018: The information provided on this application will remain private and confidential.

Appendix 2: Co-option Eligibility Form

1**. In order to be eligible for co-option as a Greetham Parish Councillor you must be a British subject, or a citizen of the Commonwealth or the European Union; and on the 'relevant date' (i.e. the day on which you are nominated or if there is a poll the day of the election) 18 years of age or over; and additionally able to meet one of the following qualifications set out below.**

Please tick all which apply to you:

a) I am registered as a local government elector for the parish; or	
b) 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	
c) My principal or only place of work during those twelve months has been in the parish; or	
d) I have during the whole of 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 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 election, or since his/her election, 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.

DECLARATION

I……. hereby confirm that I am eligible for the vacancy of Greetham Parish Councillor, and the information given on this form is true and accurate record.

Signature: ……

Date: ……

Contact: email: …….. Phone: ……..

Greetham Parish Council is duty bound to treat this information as strictly confidential.

Appendix 3: CO-OPTED PERSON SPECIFICATION

COMPETENCY	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE
Personal Attributes	• Sound knowledge and understanding of local affairs and the local community. • Forward Thinking	• Can bring a new skill, expertise, or key local knowledge to the Council.
Experience, Skills, Knowledge and Ability	• Ability to listen constructively • A good team player • Ability to pick up and run with a variety of projects Solid Interest in local matters. • Ability and willingness to represent the Council and their community. • Good interpersonal skills and able to contribute opinions at meetings whilst willing to see others' views and accept majority decisions. • 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).	• Experience of working or being a member in a local authority or other public body. • Experience of working with voluntary and/or local community / interest groups. • Basic knowledge of legal issues relating to town and parish Councils or local authorities. • Experience of delivering presentations
Circumstances	• Ability and willingness to undertake induction training and other relevant training.	