



Kingsnorth Parish Council

CO-OPTION POLICY

1. This policy sets out the procedure to ensure there is compliance with legislation and continuity of procedures in the co-option of Parish Council members to Kingsnorth Parish Council (KPC).
2. The Co-option process is entirely managed by KPC.
3. The *Principal Authority* for Kingsnorth Parish Council is Ashford Borough Council.
4. The Co-option of a Parish Councillor occurs when a casual vacancy has arisen on the Council or in an election year a Parish ward vacancy has not been filled via the election process.
5. A casual vacancy occurs when:
 - a. A Councillor fails to make their declaration of acceptance of office at the proper time.
 - b. A Councillor resigns.
 - c. A Councillor dies.
 - d. A Councillor becomes disqualified; or
 - e. A Councillor fails to attend a Parish Council meeting or committee meeting for six (6) months.
6. KPC must notify the *Principal Authority* of a Casual Vacancy and then advertise the vacancy and give the electors the opportunity to request an election. This occurs when ten electors write to the *Principal Authority* stating that an election is requested. If an election is called, this will be organised by the *Principal Authority*. The cost of the election will be paid by KPC.
7. If an election is not called this will be confirmed in writing by the Principal Authority to the Parish Council Manager and the casual vacancy can then be filled by means of co-option.
8. The Parish Council Manager shall advertise the vacancy on Parish Council noticeboards, website and social media pages and a deadline will be set to allow time for applications and co-option to take place within two months.
9. Any candidate who wishes to apply for co-option to the Parish Council will be asked to confirm that they are qualified to be a Councillor as set out below:

Qualifications to be a Councillor

A person is qualified to be elected and to be a Councillor if they are a British, Commonwealth, Irish or European Union citizen and on the relevant day (that is, the day of nomination or election) they are 18 or over.

In addition, the person must meet at least one of the following criteria.

- a. On the relevant day and thereafter they continue to be on the electoral register for the Parish.
- b. During the whole of the twelve months before that day they have owned or tenanted land or premises in the Parish.
- c. During the whole of the twelve months before that day their principal or only place of work has been in the Parish.
- d. During the whole of the twelve months before that day they have resided in the parish or within three miles of it.
- e. Except for qualification (a), these qualifications then continue for the full term of office, until the next ordinary elections.

Co-Option Process

10. Any candidate who wishes to apply for co-option to the Parish Council shall be asked to provide a brief explanation of why they would like to be a Parish Councillor and a CV of experience.
11. All candidates applying for co-option to the Parish Council shall be invited to a meeting of the Parish Council during which their co-option will be considered.
12. Prior to the Parish Council all members of the Parish Council will receive the information provided by the candidates.
13. At the Parish Council Meeting candidates will be invited to say something about themselves and what they would like to achieve as a Kingsnorth Parish Councillor. Each candidate will be allocated a maximum of six (6) minutes. Candidates should be physically present at the meeting and not virtually unless required to do so by law.
14. Once all candidates have presented and answered any questions, they will be asked to withdraw from the Parish Council meeting until the discussions and voting has been completed.
15. In the Parish Council meeting, with the public present, Councillors will discuss and consider the candidates.
16. Voting will then take place. Councillors will have one vote per vacancy. In the event of a tie between candidates for one vacancy the Chairman will exercise their casting vote.
17. If there are multiple candidates for co-option, then voting will take place in rounds. An example would be if four candidates were up for co-option voting would take place as follows; Round 1 - Votes take place and candidate with the least votes is eliminated. Round 2 - Voting takes place and candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated. Round 3 - voting takes place and the candidate with the most votes is co-opted if Parish Councillors are happy to co-opt at this point
18. If there is only one candidate for one vacancy, they are not automatically co-opted – a yes/no vote will take place. Should no candidate be deemed suitable then the Parish Council can declare a no contest and arrange for the process to be rerun in the future.
19. The successful candidate/s will be declared co-opted to the Parish Council and after signing the declaration of acceptance of office paperwork, will be invited to join the meeting.
20. A co-opted member of the Council is no different to any other elected representative (member).