**STILLINGFLEET PARISH COUNCIL CO-OPTION PROCEDURE**

Although the process for co-option is not prescribed in law Stillingfleet Parish Council feels it appropriate to document its procedures, which conform to best practice guidelines, so that all applicants are treated alike and arrangements are seen as open and fair.

The co-option process to be adopted by Stillingfleet Parish Council is as follows:

1. The Parish Council will advertise the vacancy (vacancies) on the Parish Council notice board and on the website. The notice will include:

* A contact point so that people considering putting their names forward for co-option can obtain more information on the role of a parish councillor;
* The closing date for all expressions of interest;
* The date on which the Parish Council intends to make a decision. It is quite in order for Parish Councillors (or indeed any parishioner) to approach individuals to suggest that they might wish to consider putting their names forward for co-option.

1. When the applications have been received, the Parish Clerk will consider the application letters/emails, check that the individuals meet the qualification requirements, and confirm that, if successful, they would be willing to accept the Code of Conduct and other obligations of a Parish Councillor.
2. All candidates may be asked to submit a short letter with a brief CV giving reasons why they should be considered for the vacancy. These letters will be circulated to Parish Councillors at least seven days prior to the meeting of the full council where the co-option will be considered. All such documents will be treated by the Clerk and councillors as strictly private and confidential.
3. Candidates will be informed of the date of the meeting at which the Parish Council will make its decision on the co-option. Notice of intention to co-opt should be given in the agenda for the meeting of the Parish Council. Candidates may be invited to the meeting to introduce themselves and to provide councillors the opportunity to ask questions of them, or the council can decide to rely on written submissons alone. If candidates are not invited to speak at the co-option meeting they are welcome to, but not required to, attend as members of the public. The Council may only discuss each candidate’s suitability for the role, when he/she and members of the public are not present.
4. If there are exactly as many as, or fewer candidates than vacancies, the Parish Council may vote on a composite motion, duly proposed and seconded, that all candidates be co-opted. If there are more duly proposed and seconded candidates than seats, it will be necessary for existing Councillors present at the meeting to vote.
5. Councillors shall vote by secret ballot. In the case of an equality of votes, the Chairman of the meeting has a second or casting vote.
6. A successful candidate should have received an absolute majority vote of those present and voting. So if there are more than two candidates for one vacancy and none of them at the first count has an overall majority, the candidate with the fewest votes should be eliminated and the remainder put to the vote again. The process should be repeated as necessary until one candidate has an overall majority.
7. Each vacancy should be filled by a separate vote or series of votes. Ibn a small council there is a distinct possibility that there could be a tie for last place in the first round of voting, leaving the candidate for elimination to be decided by lots.
8. After the vote the clerk will notify the candidates of the results by email, as soon as is reasonably possible (usually within 24 Hours). Successfully co-opted candidates become councillors in their own right, with immediate effect, and are no different to any other member. As such, they must sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and Registration of Interests form at their first meeting, or within 28 calendar days of the election, whichever is the sooner. Their term of office runs until the next quadrennial elections for the Parish Council.
9. A copy of this policy statement will be posted on the Council’s website. Employees and members have a responsibility to ensure that the Parish Council complies; not only with the legal requirements, but with the achievement of the policy, and their active involvement is encouraged.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Signed on behalf of Stillingfleet Parish Council | Name | Date of Parish Council meeting at which this procedure was adopted |
|  | PAUL ELMHIRST  CHAIRMAN |  |