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# Policy

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## Co-option of Members Policy

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Adopted: 14-10-2026  
Chairman: Cllr. R. Walker  
Minute Ref.: 261014/9  
Full Council

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*Administered by Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer to Longridge Town Council. To be reviewed every three years or sooner if circumstance's chance.*

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### Mission Statement

Endeavour through foresight and leadership, to enhance quality of life for residents and visitors. Working to enrich and nurture opportunity to protect and improve the built and natural environment and improve community pride.

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## **1. Introduction**

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This policy sets out the procedure to ensure compliance with legislation and continuity of procedures in the co-option of members to the Town Council. The co-option procedure is entirely managed by the Town Council, and this policy ensures a fair and equitable process.

## **2. Co-option**

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Co-option of a Town Councillor occurs when a casual vacancy has arisen and no poll (by-election) has been called. A casual vacancy occurs when: a councillor fails to make their declaration of acceptance of office at the proper time; a councillor resigns; a councillor dies; a councillor becomes disqualified; or a councillor fails for six months to attend meetings of a council committee or subcommittee, or to attend as a Council representative a meeting of an outside body.

Town Councils may exercise the power to co-opt a person to fill a casual vacancy when the requirements to hold an election have not been met — that is, the vacancy has been the subject of a public notice and fewer than ten registered electors have requested an election by the deadline specified by the Borough Returning Officer.

If a by-election is called, a polling station will be set up by the Borough Council and residents will be asked to vote for nominated candidates; the Town Council may have to pay the costs of the election. Residents have fourteen days (excluding weekends and bank holidays) to claim the by-election, and the electoral officer will advise the Clerk of the closing date. If more than one candidate is nominated, a by-election takes place; if only one, they are duly elected without a ballot. If ten residents do not request a ballot within fourteen days of the vacancy notice being posted, the Town Council may co-opt a volunteer.

## **3. Confirmation of Co-option**

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On receipt of written confirmation from the Electoral Services Office that no by-election has been claimed, the Town Clerk will: advertise the vacancy for 21 days on the Council's notice boards and website (excluding the date of the notice, and excluding Saturdays and Sundays); and advise the Council that the Co-option Policy has been instigated.

The Town Council is not obliged to fill any vacancy, nor to select anyone from applicants who apply. However, it is not desirable for electors to be left under-represented for a significant length of time, nor does it support effective and efficient working if there are insufficient councillors to share the workload, provide a broad cross-section of skills, or achieve meeting quorums without difficulty. Councillors elected by co-option are full members of Longridge Town Council.

## **4. Eligibility of Candidates**

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The Town Council may consider any person to fill a vacancy provided they are an elector for the Town; or have resided in the Town for the past twelve months, or rented/tenanted land in the parish; or have had their principal place of work in the parish; or have lived within three miles (direct) of the parish.

Disqualifications for election include (see Section 80 of the Local Government Act 1972): holding a paid office under the local authority; bankruptcy; having been sentenced to a term of imprisonment of not less than three months (whether suspended or not, without the option of a fine) within the preceding five years; and disqualification under any enactment relating to corrupt or illegal practices.

## **5. Applications**

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Members may point out vacancies and the process to qualifying candidates. Although there is no statutory requirement, candidates will be asked to submit an application form and confirm their eligibility.

Following receipt of applications, the next suitable Council meeting will include an agenda item to receive written applications and co-opt a candidate. Copies of applications will be circulated to all Councillors by the Clerk at least three clear days before the meeting; all such documents are treated as strictly private and confidential by the Clerk and all Councillors.

## **6. At the Co-option Meeting**

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Candidates will be given up to five minutes to introduce themselves, give background and experience, and explain why they wish to become a Member. The process is carried out in public session, with no private discussion between Members before the vote — though where the Council is discussing candidates' personal attributes, this may be prejudicial and the Council should resolve to exclude the press and public for that part.

After submissions, the Council will vote on each candidate's acceptability against the person specification, each candidate being proposed and seconded, by a show of hands (LGA 1972 Sch. 12, Para 39); a recorded vote may be requested under Standing Orders. A candidate needs an absolute majority (50% + 1 of votes cast) to be elected. Where there are more than two candidates and no overall majority in the first round, the candidate with the fewest votes drops out and further rounds take place until a majority is reached. In the case of an equality of votes, the Chairman of the meeting has a second or casting vote.

Once elected, the successful candidate signs their declaration of acceptance of office and may take their seat immediately. The Clerk will notify Electoral Services of the appointment. The successful candidate must complete their registration of interests within 28 days, handed to the Clerk for forwarding to the Monitoring Officer. If insufficient candidates come forward, the vacancy will be re-advertised.