# Hinton St George Parish Council

# Co-Option Policy
# October 2026

1. **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 Hinton St George Parish Council. The co-option procedure is entirely managed by the Council and this policy will ensure that a fair and equitable process is carried out.

2. **Confirmation of Co-option**
   The co-option of a Parish Councillor occurs when a casual vacancy has arisen on the Council and an election has not been called for by parishioners.

   The Parish Council is required to notify Somerset Council of the casual vacancy and then advertise the vacancy to give electors the opportunity to request an election. If ten electors write to Somerset Council within fourteen working days requesting an election, then one is called. A polling station will be set up by Somerset Council and parishioners will be asked to vote for candidates who will have put themselves forward by way of a nomination paper. The Parish Clerk will advertise the process on the website, noticeboards and any other means in use by the council at the time. The Parish Council will be required to pay the costs of the election. If only one candidate applies, they are elected without a ballot.

   If residents do not request a ballot within fourteen days of the vacancy notice being posted, the Parish Council is able to co-opt. On receipt of written confirmation from Somerset Council that the casual vacancy can be filled by means of co-option, the Parish Clerk will advertise the vacancy on the website, noticeboards and any other means in use by the council at the time. Councillors are also encouraged to approach anyone who meets the criteria below**.**

3. **Eligibility of Candidates**
   The Parish Council is able to consider any person to fill a vacancy provided that:

   a. They are at least 18 years old;
   b. They are a British citizen, an eligible Commonwealth citizen, or an EU citizen;
   c. They are a registered elector or have lived, worked, or owned property in the parish (or within 3 miles of it) for the past 12 months.

   Candidates are not required to have any special experience, but should have an interest in Hinton St George and be willing to get involved in helping to shape local policies and services, and in representing the views of neighbours in council decisions. Candidates should be willing to regularly attend council meetings, which are usually held on the third Monday of the month (excluding August and December).

   There are certain disqualifications for election, including:

- holding a paid office under the local authority;
- bankruptcy;
- having been sentenced to a term of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) of not less than three months, without the option of a fine during the five years preceding the election;
- being disqualified under any enactment relating to corrupt or illegal practices.
- being convicted at any time of failure to register or declare disclosable interests under the Localism Act 2011 or for breach of the Code of Conduct.

**4. Co-Option Process**

**a.** A Co-Option advert will be posted on the council noticeboard and website for a period of at least 2 weeks, with the deadline clearly noted. Candidates will be requested to submit information about why they are interested in the role and the skills and experience that they will bring to the Parish Council.

**b.** An item to co-opt a councillor will be placed on the agenda of the meeting. Applications will be collated by the Clerk, and once the application deadline has passed, the information for all eligible candidates will be shared with the Councillors. All such documents will be treated by the Clerk and Councillors as strictly private and confidential.

**c.** Candidates will be invited to attend the meeting. The Chair will ask each candidate (in alphabetical order, by surname) to give a short statement, and at the end of each statement, Councillors will have the opportunity to ask clarifying questions.

**d.** If there is more than one candidate, the Councillors will vote on who to co-opt, as per the Standing Orders. An existing Councillor will need to propose the election of a candidate and this proposal will need to be seconded by another Councillor prior to the vote taking place. A tie in votes may be settled by the casting vote exercisable by the chairman of the meeting.

e. The Council's decision is final and the Council will be under no obligation to engage in further discussion or correspondence on the matter.

f. No co-option may take place outside of a Full Council meeting.

g. Councillors elected by co-option become full members of Council.

**5. After Co-option**

The co-opted member will be asked to sign an acceptance of office form. They can then take their place and join the meeting. A register of interests form will also be given to the co-opted member, which must be returned to the Parish Clerk, within four weeks. This document will be published on the Council's website, together with the new Councillor's contact details.

The Parish Clerk will send the new Councillor by email a copy of the Code of Conduct, Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, as well as a link to the website which contains additional policies. The dates of future meetings and available training will also be given. Any new Councillor must ensure they have registered for Councillor Training within 6 months of joining the Parish Council.

For further information contact the Clerk to Hinton St George Parish Council:

Clerk: Helen Graham
Contact: clerk@hintonstgeorgeparishcouncil.gov.uk / 07824 333493
Website: https://hintonstgeorgeparishcouncil.gov.uk

Approved: 19 October 2026 (Parish Council Meeting)