BURGHILL PARISH COUNCIL

# CO-OPTION PROCEDURE

**A policy setting out the procedure for co-opting to a casual vacancy following an election process**

**ADOPTED NOVEMBER 2019**

**Amended May 2024**

**Introduction**

If no request for an election is received by Herefordshire Council by the date on the Notice of Vacancy, the Electoral Services Department will advise the Parish Council that it may co-opt to fill the vacancy. The council can then choose a councillor. This person must be:

- Candidates for co-option must have English Local Authority voting rights
- At least 18 years old
- Either on the list of electors for the parish, or during the whole of the previous twelve months has:
    - Occupied land in the parish as an owner or tenant
    - Had a principal place of work in the parish
    - Resided in, or within three miles, of the parish

Co-option is the process by which the Parish Council selects a new Councillor and it is done as an agenda item within a Parish Council meeting.

The Parish Council manages the process of co-option by itself and strives to demonstrate that it is fair and equitable by following the procedure set out below:

**Procedure**

1. The Clerk will advertise the vacancy / vacancies in the Community Magazine and on the Parish Council's website. Candidates are encouraged to observe at least one Parish Council meeting before putting their names forward.

2. Candidates will be asked to apply in writing setting out their relevant experience and reasons for wanting to join the Parish Council.

3. The Parish Council will consider the vacancy/vacancies at the next appropriate meeting.

4. Letters received are circulated to Parish Councillors ahead of the meeting at which co-option is to be considered. These letters form part of the meeting pack which Parish Councillors receive for every Parish Council meeting.

5. If there the number of applicants is equal to the number of vacancies, the applicant or applicants is/are co-opted to the Parish Council. If the number of candidates, exceeds the number of vacancies then a ballot is held as follows:

5.1 At the Parish Council meeting candidates are invited to say something about themselves and Parish Councillors have the opportunity to ask questions of the candidates. Each candidate will be allocated a maximum of three minutes.

5.2 Voting will be by paper ballot. If there is only one vacancy it will continue until one candidate receives an absolute majority of those Parish Councillors present. At this stage, the successful candidate will be declared co-opted.

5.3 Should no single candidate receive a majority on the first vote, the candidate with the lowest number of votes is eliminated. Voting will then take place for the remaining candidates until one person receives an absolute majority.

5.4 If, there is an equality of votes for two candidates there shall be a one further round of voting. If, after this, there is still equality between two candidates the Chair of the meeting shall have the casting vote. The casting vote will be declared to the Clerk. The Chair of the meeting will then confirm the newly co-opted member.

5.5 If there is more than one vacancy, the above principles will apply. The ballot will continue until the number of candidates matches the number of vacancies.

5.6 The successful candidate/s is/are then co-opted to the Parish Council and will be asked to join the meeting.

6. Successful candidates are Parish Councillor in their own right and is no different to any other member.