



EAST HANNINGFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer: Miss Lucy White, CiLCA, BA(Hons)

☎ 07703170512. clerk@easthanningfield-pc.gov.uk

🌐 www.easthanningfield-pc.gov.



CO-OPTION POLICY

Adopted November 2025

1. Introduction

Co-option is used to fill a casual vacancy on the Parish Council when the Electoral Services Department has confirmed that a by-election has not been requested.

This policy ensures that the process is fair, open, transparent and compliant with legislation, enabling the Parish Council to appoint the most suitable person to represent the community.

2. Notification of Vacancy

Once written confirmation is received from Chelmsford City Council that the vacancy may be filled by co-option, the Clerk will:

- a) Advertise the vacancy for a minimum of 14 days on the Council's noticeboards, website and—where feasible—the Parish Council newsletter.
- b) Notify councillors that the co-option process has commenced.
- c) Provide guidance to prospective applicants on the role, responsibilities and expectations of a parish councillor.

3. Applying for Co-option

Applicants will be asked to:

- a) Complete a short Co-option Application Form.
- b) Complete and sign a Co-option Eligibility Declaration confirming they meet the legal requirements to serve.
- c) Indicate areas of interest or experience which may support the work of the Council (optional).
- d) Attend a Council meeting if they wish, to gain an understanding of council business (recommended but not mandatory).

Note:

The Council does **not** require ID documents such as passports or driving licences. Eligibility is confirmed by signed declaration only, in line with GDPR best practice.

4. Consideration of Applications

- a) Applications will be circulated to councillors before the co-option meeting and will be treated as strictly confidential.
 - b) A short, dedicated Co-option Meeting will take place immediately before a Full Council meeting wherever possible.
 - c) Candidates may be invited to speak briefly about their interest in the role and ask any questions.
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5. Voting Procedure

- a) Voting will follow statutory requirements: a candidate must receive an absolute majority of those present and voting.
- b) For this agenda item only, Standing Orders will be suspended to permit a secret ballot.
- c) Where there are multiple candidates for one seat:
 - If no candidate receives a majority on the first vote, the candidate with the lowest number of votes is removed and voting continues until one candidate achieves a majority.
- d) Where there are multiple vacancies:
 - Each candidate must still gain an absolute majority.
 - Councillors may cast as many votes as there are vacancies but are not required to use all votes.
 - If more candidates than positions, lowest-scoring candidates will be withdrawn until numbers match vacancies, then a final vote is taken.
- e) If no candidate receives a majority, the Council is not obliged to fill the vacancy.
- f) The Chair has a casting vote in the event of a tie.

After voting, the Chair will formally declare the successful candidate(s) elected.

6. After Appointment

- a) The successful candidate signs a Declaration of Acceptance of Office before participating in Council business.
 - b) The Clerk will ensure completion of a register of interests
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7. Data Protection (GDPR)

- a) Personal data submitted during the co-option process will be used solely for the purpose of assessing eligibility and suitability.
 - b) Unsuccessful applicants' data will be securely deleted within **28 days** of the decision unless explicit consent is given for it to be retained for future vacancies.
 - c) Successful applicants' data will be managed in accordance with the Council's GDPR policies.
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8. Equal Opportunities

East Hanningfield Parish Council welcomes applications from all sections of the community and does not discriminate on the basis of age, disability, gender, marital status, pregnancy, race, religion, sexual orientation, or any protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.

9. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if legislation or best practice guidance changes.

APPENDIX A: Co-option Application Form

EAST HANNINGFIELD PARISH COUNCIL CO-OPTION APPLICATION FORM

Full Name:

Address:

Telephone:

Email:

(Please note that councillors are expected to receive information electronically.)

1. Eligibility

I confirm I meet the qualification(s) for serving as a Parish Councillor as set out in the attached Eligibility Declaration Form.
(You will be asked to sign the eligibility form separately.)

2. About You

Please tell us briefly why you would like to become a parish councillor and what qualities, skills, or experience you can bring to the Council.
(You may continue on a separate sheet if needed.)

3. Areas of Interest

Please indicate any areas of council work you are particularly interested in (optional):

- ☐ Planning
 - ☐ Environment / Green Spaces
 - ☐ Highways / Transport
 - ☐ Village Amenities
 - ☐ Community Engagement
 - ☐ Events
 - ☐ Finance
 - ☐ Other (please specify): _____
-

4. Projects

Are there any current or upcoming parish projects you would especially like to be involved in?

5. Additional Information

Is there anything else you would like the Council to consider as part of your application?

Declaration:

I confirm that the information provided is true to the best of my knowledge.

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

APPENDIX B: Co-option Eligibility Declaration Form

EAST HANNINGFIELD PARISH COUNCIL CO-OPTION ELIGIBILITY DECLARATION

Local Government Act 1972 – s.79 & s.80

To be eligible for co-option as a parish councillor, you must meet **one** of the following criteria and must **not** be disqualified.

1. Qualifications (please tick all that apply):

- ☐ I am a British citizen, qualifying Commonwealth citizen, or citizen of the Republic of Ireland / EU, and
 - ☐ I am aged 18 or over, and
 - ☐ I meet at least *one* of the following:
 - ☐ I am registered as a local government elector for East Hanningfield;
OR
 - ☐ I have occupied as owner or tenant land or premises in the parish for the past 12 months;
OR
 - ☐ My principal or only place of work has been in the parish for the past 12 months;
OR
 - ☐ I have resided in the parish, or within 3 miles of its boundary, for the past 12 months.
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2. Disqualifications

I confirm that **none** of the following apply to me:

- ☐ I am not employed by East Hanningfield Parish Council.
 - ☐ I have not been declared bankrupt (unless legally discharged or annulled as defined in the Act).
 - ☐ I have not been convicted of an offence resulting in imprisonment of three months or more (including suspended sentence) within the last five years.
 - ☐ I am not disqualified under the Representation of the People Act 1983 for corrupt or illegal practices.
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Declaration

I declare that I meet the legal qualifications for co-option and that I am not disqualified from serving as a parish councillor.

Name: _____
Signature: _____
Date: _____

APPENDIX C: Data Protection Statement (GDPR)

Your personal data will be used solely for the purpose of assessing your eligibility and suitability for co-option.

Unsuccessful applicants' personal data will be securely deleted within **28 days**, unless explicit consent is given to retain the information for future vacancies.

Successful applicants' data will be retained and managed in accordance with the Council's GDPR policies.