

Tatham Parish Council

Councillor Co-option Policy July 2025

Introduction

This policy sets out the process the Parish Council will follow to ensure there is compliance with legislation and continuity of procedures in relation to filling a casual vacancy on the Parish Council. A casual vacancy occurs when:

- A councillor resigns;
- A councillor dies; or
- A councillor is disqualified.

A casual vacancy will be filled either by an election or by co-option.

By-Election

Before the Parish Council can proceed to co-option it must provide the electorate with an opportunity to call an election. This process starts when Tatham Parish Council notifies the Principle Authority (i.e. Lancaster City Council) of the Casual Vacancy and submits a notice advertising the vacancy and provides the Tatham electorate 14 working days to request an election.

The precise details relating to elections are set out in the document [Guide to Election Procedures \(2023\)](#)

If Lancaster City Council receives a request for an election within the period it will then issue notices to the Clerk for display advertising for candidates for a bye-election. The whole election process is administered by Lancaster City Council whether a poll occurs or not, and the costs of such are charged to the parish council.

If the advertisement does not initiate the 10 signatures of electors in the period of time required by legislation (14 working days) the Clerk will receive a notice from Lancaster City Council to say it can co-opt to the casual vacancy.

Notice of Co-option

On receipt of written confirmation from the Elections Team, Lancaster City Council, the casual vacancy will be advertised by a co-option notice placed on noticeboards, on the website and newsletter. The co-option notice will include a closing date for acceptance of requests for consideration.

All candidates will be expected to put their request for consideration in writing by completing the application form in Appendix A with the following information; reason for wishing to be a Councillor, previous community/council work and any other skills they can bring to the council.

In addition to advertising the casual vacancy, Councillors may point out the vacancy, and the election process, to a qualifying candidate(s).

Co-option

The process of co-option is the responsibility of, and entirely managed by, the Parish Council and this policy will ensure that a fair and equitable process is followed.

Once elected, co-opted councillors then become full members of the Parish Council.

Eligibility of Candidates

Tatham Parish Council will consider any person to fill a casual vacancy provided they are:

- a British, Commonwealth or Irish Citizen or a citizen of another European Union Member State;
- 18 years of age (or older) on the day he/she is nominated;
- not disqualified; **and**
 - be a local government elector for the parish on the day he/she is nominated and thereafter; **OR**
 - have occupied land or premises in the parish as owner or tenant for 12 months preceding both the day of nomination and the day of the poll; **OR**
 - have had his/her principal or only place of work in the parish during the 12 months preceding both the day of nomination and the day of the poll; **OR**
 - have resided in the parish or within 4.8 kilometres of it for 12 months preceding both the day of nomination and the day of the poll. (4.8 kilometres is the equivalent of 3 miles.)

There are a number of disqualifications for being a Councillor. These include:

- being employed by the parish council;
- being subject to a bankruptcy restriction order or interim order;
- in the previous five years, conviction for any offence carrying a sentence of not less than three months without the option of a fine;
- disqualification for corrupt or illegal election practices;
- offering inducements, of any kind, to support their election.

Applications

Following receipt of all applications, the next available full council meeting will include the agenda item; 'To receive written applications for the office of Parish councillor and to Co-opt a candidate to fill the existing vacancy or vacancies

Copies of the candidate applications will be circulated to all Councillors, by the Clerk, at least 3 clear days prior to the meeting of the full Council, when the Co-option will be considered. All such documents will be treated by the Clerk and all Councillors as Strictly Private and Confidential.

Candidates will be sent a full agenda of the meeting at which they are to be considered for appointment, together with a copy of the Code of Conduct, Standing Orders and Financial Regulations of the Parish Council. Candidates will also be informed that they will be invited to speak about their application at the meeting.

The Co-option Meeting

At the co-option meeting, candidates will be given a maximum of five minutes to introduce themselves to councillors, give information on their background and experience and explain why they wish to become a Tatham Parish Councillor.

As soon as all candidates have finished their submissions, the council will proceed to a vote on the acceptability of each candidate utilising the 'person specification' criteria set out in Appendix B and any personal statements provided by candidates, with each candidate being proposed and seconded by the councillors in attendance and a vote by a show of hands. The vote will be recorded so as to show whether each Councillor present and voting gave his/her vote for or against that question.

In order for a candidate to be elected to Tatham Parish Council, it will be necessary for them to obtain an absolute majority of votes cast (50% + 1 of the votes available at the meeting). If there are more than two candidates and there is no candidate with an overall majority in the first round of voting the candidate with the least number of votes will drop out of the process. Further rounds of voting will then take place with the process repeated until a candidate has an absolute majority. In the case of an equality of votes, the Chairman of the meeting has a second, casting, vote.

After the votes have been concluded, the Chairman will declare the successful candidate duly elected and after signing their declaration of acceptance of office, the newly co-opted councillor may take their seat immediately.

The Clerk will notify Electoral Services of the new Councillor appointment. The successful candidate(s) must complete the 'registration of interests' within 28 days of being elected. The form should be handed to the Clerk for forwarding to the Monitoring Officer.

If insufficient candidates come forward for co-option or the Parish Council fail to co-opt a councillor from the available candidates, the vacancy will be re-advertised and the process will repeat itself.

Tatham Parish Council**Application for Co-option**

Thank you for your interest in becoming a Tatham Parish Councillor. Please provide the following information to assist the Parish Council in making their decision.

Full Name	
Address	
Home Telephone number	
Mobile Telephone number	
Email Address	
About You Please provide the council with some background information about yourself:	
Reasons for applying Please provide the council with your reasons for wanting to become a Parish Councillor:	
Signature:	

Eligibility

In order to be eligible for co-option as a Parish Councillor you must be a British subject, or a citizen of the Commonwealth or the European Union; and be 18 years of age or over; and additionally, be able to meet at least one of the following qualifications set out below. Please tick those which apply to you:

I am registered as a local government elector for the parish; or	
I have, during the whole of the twelve months preceding the date of my co-option, occupied as owner or tenant, land or other premises in the parish; or	
My principal or only place of work during those twelve months has been in the parish; or	
I have during the whole of twelve months resided in the parish or within 3 miles of it.	

There are a number of disqualifications for being a Councillor. You cannot apply to become a Parish Councillor if meet any one of the criteria set out below:

- being employed by the parish council;
- being subject to a bankruptcy restriction order or interim order;
- in the previous five years, conviction for any offence carrying a prison sentence of not less than three months without the option of a fine;
- disqualification for corrupt or illegal election practices;
- offering inducement, of any kind, to support your election.

Declaration

I hereby confirm that I am eligible for the vacancy of Tatham Parish Councillor, and the information given on this form is a true and accurate record.

Signature:	Date:
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Your application also requires signatures of 2 registered electors (known as a proposer and seconder) from within the Tatham parish area:

	Proposer	Secunder
Name		
Address		
Signature:		

Please return your completed application to:

The Clerk, Tatham Parish Council

Email: clerk@tathamparishcouncil.org.uk

Your application will be considered at the next available Parish Council meeting, where a vote will be held to decide whether the council agrees to co-opt you on to Tatham Parish Council.

General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

The information provided by you in this application form will only be seen by members of the Parish Council (i.e. the Councillors and the Clerk). It will not be shared with anyone else.

**Tatham Parish Council
Parish Councillor – Person Specification**

Competency	Essential	Desirable
Personal Attributes	• Sound knowledge and understanding of local affairs and the local community. • Open minded and forward thinking.	• Can bring a new skill, expertise or key local knowledge to the Council.
Experience, Knowledge and Skills	• Ability to listen attentively • A good team player • Ability to pick up and run with a variety of projects • A genuine interest in local matters • Ability and willingness to represent the Council and their community • Good interpersonal skills and able to contribute opinions at meetings whilst willing to acknowledge the views of others and accept majority decisions. • Ability to communicate succinctly and clearly. • Ability and willingness to work closely with other councillors and to maintain good working relationships with councillors and the Clerk. • Ability and willingness to work with the Council's partners (e.g. voluntary groups, other parish councils, principal authority, charities, etc.). • Ability and willingness to undertake induction training and other relevant councillor training.	• Experience of working or being a member in a local authority or other public body • Experience of working with voluntary and or local community/interest groups • Basic knowledge of legal issues relating to parish councils and/or local authorities • Experience of delivering presentations
Personal Circumstances	• Ability and willingness to attend meetings of the Council (or meetings of other local authorities and local bodies) at any time and events in the evening and/or at weekends.	