

PRESTON BROOK PARISH COUNCIL

Co-option Policy

Date of Adoption: 25 January 2022
To be Reviewed by 31 January 2023

1. INTRODUCTION

There are two circumstances under which the Electoral Officer of Halton Borough Council will notify Preston Brook Parish Council that it may proceed to fill a casual vacancy by cooption:

- a) when a seat has been left vacant because no eligible candidate stood for election at the full elections for a new council. In this instance the Proper Officer would be notified of vacancies by Halton Borough Council and that efforts must be made to fill the vacancies by cooption.
- b) during the life of a council when a seat has fallen vacant (because of a resignation, death or ineligibility). The Proper Officer will immediately notify the Electoral Officer and the vacancy will be advertised. If the required 10 electors of the have not called for a poll (by-election) within the legally specified time period (currently 14 days) following publication of the Notice of Vacancy, the Proper Officer would be notified by Halton Borough Council and that the vacancies can be filled by co-option. The Council will be notified and they must give public notice of the vacancy if their intention is to co-opt.

Councillors elected by co-option are full members of the Council.

Preston Brook Parish Councillors are volunteers who receive no remuneration or allowances.

To ensure that a fair and transparent process is undertaken, this policy sets out the process to be followed by Preston Brook Parish Council when co-option is under consideration.

2. APPLICATION PROCESS

On receipt, of written notification, from the Electoral Officer at Halton Borough Council that a casual vacancy may be filled by means of co-option and on instruction from the Council:

- a) The Proper Officer will announce the vacancy or vacancies to be filled by co-option within 21 days of receipt of the written notification by means of a notice on the Council Notice board and/or website.
- b) The co-option notice will include the number of vacancies and detail how applicants can submit an expression of interest.
- c) The co-option notice will also be displayed in other locations if instructed by the Council.
- d) The Proper Officer will circulate all applications to the council that adhere to the Co-option Policy.

Members may point out the vacancies and the process to any qualifying applicant(s).

Applicants are recommended to read NALCs publication "The Good Councillor Guide", which explains more about the role and the responsibilities of councillors – electronic copies are available on request.

If applicants have any questions they are welcome to raise them with the Proper Officer.

Applications will be considered at the next available full Council meeting. To ensure that applications are included on the agenda they should be sent to the Proper Officer at least ten working days before the meeting.

Application letters should explain how you are eligible and confirm that you are not disqualified (by completing the co-option application form (appendix 1). Application letters should also explain why applicants are interested in applying and what they think they can bring to the role of a Preston Brook Parish Councillor. Some topics that applicants might like to consider are shown in the table below, but please note that applicants are not expected to be able to demonstrate all of these competencies.

COMPETENCY	EVIDENCE
Experience, Skills, Knowledge and Ability	<p>Preston Brook Parish Council welcome people with a wide range of life skills and experience that reflects the local community. We are looking for councillors who can bring enthusiasm and commitment as well as some of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interest in local matters. • Knowledge and understanding of local affairs and the local community. • Ability and willingness to represent the Council and their community. • Good interpersonal skills. • Ability to communicate succinctly and clearly. • Ability and willingness to work closely with other members and to maintain good working relationships with all members and staff. • Ability and willingness to work with the council's partners (e.g. voluntary groups, other Parish councils, principal authority, charities). • Ability and willingness to undertake relevant training.
Circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability and willingness to attend meetings of the council (or the meetings of other local authorities and local bodies) in the evening and events in the evening and at weekends. • Flexible and committed to the Council. • Enthusiastic.

Applicants will be invited to attend the next full Parish Council meeting at which their application will be considered. The Proper Officer will provide applicants with an agenda for the meeting. Details of Parish Council meeting dates are available on the website.

At the meeting, applicants will be given the opportunity to speak for a maximum of five minutes to introduce themselves and explain why they want to join the council. If there are more candidates than vacancies the co-option will be decided by a ballot of the members. Voting will be according to the statutory requirements, in that, a successful candidate must have received an absolute majority vote of those present and voting. If there are more than two candidates for one vacancy and no one of them at the first count receives a majority over the aggregate votes given to the rest, steps must be taken to strike off the candidate with the least number of votes and the remainder must then be put to the vote again; this process must, if necessary, be repeated until an absolute majority is obtained.

Councillors shall vote by show of hands. In the case of an equality of votes, the Chairman of the meeting has a second or casting vote.

On successful co-option applicants will be invited to sign a Declaration of Acceptance of Office which completes the process for joining the council.

Within 28 days of co-option, applicants are also required to complete a Register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests which will be provided by the Proper Officer.

Unsuccessful applicants can request their details be kept on file for up to six months should any new vacancies arise.

Applicants found to be offering inducements of any kind, at any stage in the co-option process, will be disqualified.

APPENDIX 1

**Preston Brook Parish Council
Co-option & Eligibility Application Form**

Contact Details (Block Capitals please)

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Email address:

Home Tel. No:

Mobile Tel. No:

Please attach a letter of application to this form which should explain why applicants are interested in applying and any relevant experience they think they can bring to the role of a Parish Councillor.

Please inform the Proper Officer of any other information you would like to disclose regarding your application (e.g. if you are related to an employee of the Council or would require assistance during Council meetings with a disability).

Councillor Eligibility

Please tick which of the following applies to your application.

In order to be eligible for co-option as a Preston Brook Parish Councillor you must be:

- a British subject, or a citizen of the Commonwealth or the European Union
- 18 years of age or over on the 'relevant date' (i.e. the day on which you are co-opted).

You must additionally be able to meet one of the following qualifications, please tick all that apply:

- I am registered as a local government elector for the Parish of Preston Brook; 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 of Preston Brook; or
- My principal or only place of work during those twelve months has been in the Parish of Preston Brook; or
- I have during the whole of the twelve months preceding the date of my co-option resided in the Parish of Preston Brook or within three miles of it.

Please note that under Section 80 of the Local Government Act 1972 a person is disqualified from being elected as a Local Councillor or being a member of a Local Council if he/she:

- a) holds any paid office or employment of the local council (other than the office of Chairman) or of a joint committee on which the Council is represented; or
- b) is a person who has been adjudged bankrupt or has made a composition or arrangement with his/her creditors* (but see below); or
- c) has within five years before the day of co-option, or since his/her co-option, been convicted in the UK, Channel Islands or Isle of Man of any offence and has been sentenced to imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for not less than three months without the option of a fine; or
- d) is otherwise disqualified under Part III of the Representation of the People Act 1983 for corrupt or illegal practices.

*This disqualification for bankruptcy ceases in the following circumstances:-

- I. if the bankruptcy is annulled on the grounds that either the person ought not to have been adjudged bankrupt or that his/her debts have been fully discharged;
- II. if the person is discharged with a certificate that the bankruptcy was caused by misfortune without misconduct on his/her part;
- III. if the person is discharged without such a certificate.

In (i) and (ii) above, the disqualification ceases on the date of the annulment and discharge respectively. In (iii), it ceases on the expiry of five years from the date of discharge.

Declaration

I (insert name).....hereby confirm, that I am eligible to apply for the vacancy of Preston Brook Parish Councillor, and the information given on this form is a true and accurate record.

Signed Dated

Please return your completed application form, together with your application letter to
clerk@prestonbrookparishcouncil.gov.uk