



ALSTON MOOR PARISH COUNCIL

Co-option Policy

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 Alston Moor Parish Council (AMPC). The Co-option procedure is entirely managed by the Council and this policy will ensure that a fair and equitable process is carried out.

Scope

The Co-option of a Parish Councillor occurs when a casual vacancy has arisen on the Council and no poll (by-election) has been called. A casual vacancy occurs when:

- A councillor fails to make his declaration of acceptance of office at the proper time.
- A councillor resigns.
- A councillor dies.
- A councillor becomes disqualified; or
- A councillor fails for six (6) months to attend meetings of a council committee or subcommittee or to attend as a representative of the Council a meeting of an outside body.

The Council must notify the Westmorland and Furness Council of a Casual Vacancy and then advertise the vacancy.

If ten residents do not request a ballot within fourteen days of the vacancy notice being posted, as advised by the Westmorland and Furness Council, AMPC is able to co-opt a volunteer.

Confirmation of Co-option

On receipt, of written confirmation, from the Electoral Services Office from Westmorland and Furness Council, the casual vacancy can be filled by means of Co-option, the Parish Clerk will:

- Advertise the vacancy for four weeks on the Council notice boards and website.
- Advise SPC that the Co-option Policy has been instigated.

AMPC is not obliged to fill any vacancy. Even if the Council invites applications for co-option, it is not obliged to select anyone from the candidates who apply.

However, it is not desirable that electors in a particular ward be left partially or fully underrepresented for a significant length of time. Neither does it contribute to effective and efficient working of the Council if there are insufficient councillors to share the workload; equitably; to provide a broad cross-section of skills and interests; or to achieve meeting quorums without difficulty.

Councillors elected by co-option are full members of AMPC.

Eligibility of Candidates

AMPC can consider any person to fill a vacancy provided that:

- They are an elector for the parish; or
- has resided in the parish for the past twelve months or rented/tenanted land or other premises in the parish; or
- had their principal place of work in the parish;
- has lived within three miles (direct) of the parish.

There are certain disqualifications for election, of which the main are (see 5.80 of the Local Government Act 1972):

- 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; and
- Being disqualified under any enactment relating to corrupt or illegal practices. Candidates found to be offering inducements of any kind will be disqualified.

Applications

Members may point out the vacancies and the process to any qualifying candidate(s). Although there is no statutory requirement to do so, candidates will be requested to:

- Submit information about themselves, by way of completing a short application form
- Confirm their eligibility for the position of Councillor within the statutory rules

Following receipt of applications, the next suitable council meeting will have an agenda item 'To receive written applications for the office of Parish councillor and to Co-opt a candidate to fill the existing vacancy'. Copies of the candidate's 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 AMPC. Candidates will also be informed that they will be invited to speak about their application at the meeting.

At the Co-option Meeting

At the co-option meeting, candidates will be given five minutes maximum to introduce themselves to Members, give information on their background and experience and explain why they wish to become a Member of AMPC. The process will be carried out by adjourning the meeting to allow the candidate to speak. Where the Council wishes to discuss the merits of candidates and inevitably their personal attributes, this could be prejudicial, and the Council will resolve to exclude the members of the press and public.

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

For a candidate to be elected to AMPC, 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 or casting vote.

After the votes have been concluded, the Chair will declare the successful candidate duly elected and after signing their declaration of acceptance of office, may take their place 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, the process should continue, whereby the vacancies are again advertised.

Date of policy: September 2025

Date of Council meeting:

Supersedes: Co-Option Policy 2024 - (incorrect information on policy)

Policy effective from: October 2025

Date for next review: October 2027

Appendix A
Application for Co-option

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

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

Please return your completed application to the Clerk to the council. 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 onto Alston Moor Parish Council. General Data Protection Regulations 2018: The information provided on this application will remain private and confidential.

Appendix B

Co-option Eligibility Form

1. In order to be eligible for co-option as an Alston Moor Parish Councillor you must be a British subject, or a citizen of the Commonwealth or the European Union; and on the 'relevant date' (i.e. the day on which you are nominated or if there is a poll the day of the election) 18 years of age or over; and additionally able to meet one of the following qualifications set out below.

a) I am registered as a local elector for the parish: **or**

b) 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**

c) My principle or only place of work during those twelve months has been in the parish: **or**

d) I have during the whole twelve months resided in the parish or within 3 miles of it

2. 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 they:

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 their creditors (but see below): **or**

c) Has within 5 years before the day of election, or since their election, 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

3. 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 their debts have been fully discharged.

ii) If the person is discharged with a certificate that the bankruptcy was caused by misfortune without misconduct on their 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

Ihereby confirm that I am eligible for the vacancy of Alston Moor Parish Councillor, and the information given on this form is true and accurate record.

Signature:_____