

Sellack Parish Council

Co-option Policy

Approved: July 2023

Applying to join Sellack Parish Council as a Co-opted member

When a vacancy occurs, the Parish Clerk is responsible for advertising the vacancy for a parish councillor following the procedures and guidance issued by Herefordshire Council. If an election is not triggered by local electors, then the Parish Council is free to co-opt a new councillor and the following procedure will be followed:

The clerk will ensure that the vacancy is advertised via local noticeboards, the council website and through social media channels and will deal with enquiries and questions from interested parties. Potential applicants for the role of Parish Councillor are asked to submit an application/email through the Parish Clerk and to follow the steps outlined below.

1. **Confirm you are eligible to be a member of the council** – you must be a British subject, or a citizen of the commonwealth or European Union and be 18 years of age or over.
You must also be a local government elector for the council area for which you want to stand OR have during the whole of the 12 months preceding that day occupied as owner or tenant any land or other premises in the council area OR have during the same period had your principal or only place of work in the council area OR during that 12 month period resided in the council area.
2. **Confirm that you are not disqualified to be a member of the council** – you cannot stand if you:
 - Are subject of a bankruptcy restriction order or interim order
 - Have, within the previous five years, been convicted in the UK of any offence and have had a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for a period of over three months without the option of a fine.
 - You work for the council you want to become a councillor for (but you can work for other local authorities, including the principal authorities that represent the same area).
3. **Be comfortable that you know what is involved** – you are welcome to observe any council meetings to see how things work and we encourage you to speak with our Chair or Clerk about the role, time commitment and responsibilities.
4. **Send a letter of application/email to the Council** – this needn't be long but should confirm you meet the above criteria and also tell us why you are interested in the role and what you would bring to the role.

Applications will be considered at the next available full Council meeting (these meetings are bi-monthly). To ensure your application is included on the agenda, it should be sent to the Parish Clerk at least one week before the meeting (earlier if there are bank holidays). Meeting dates can be found at <https://sellackparishcouncil.gov.uk/calendar/>

5. **Attend a Parish Council meeting** – you will be invited to attend the next full Council meeting at which your application will be considered. The Parish Clerk will provide you with an agenda for the meeting.
At the meeting you will be given the opportunity to speak for up to 5 minutes to introduce yourself and explain why you want to join the council (this is optional). If there are more candidates than vacancies, the co-option will be decided by a ballot of the councillors. If a candidate is a relative of a councillor, that councillor should declare prejudicial interest and withdraw from the meeting.
Voting will be according to 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 candidates 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 or, if at least two members so request, by signed ballot. In the case of an equality of votes, the Chairman of the meeting has a second or casting vote.
The Council may reject a candidate with good reasons for doing so, but it is under an obligation to fill the vacancy as soon as possible.
After the vote has been concluded, the Chairman will declare the successful candidate duly elected.
6. **Joining the Parish Council** – On successful co-option, you will be invited to sign a declaration of acceptance of office form which completes the process for joining the council. Within 28 days of co-option you are also required to complete a register of disclosable pecuniary interests form which will be provided by the Parish Clerk, along with a copy of the Code of Conduct. As a new councillor you will also have access to training (optional).