



YOUR VILLAGE NEEDS YOU!

Parish Councillor Vacancy

Heath and Reach Parish Council currently has a vacancy for members of the public to become a co-opted Parish Councillor.



Introduction

History of Parish Councils

The current system of parish councils was formed back in 1894. There are currently around 10,000 parish and town councils, and in the region of 100,000 Councillors in the country.

Local councils are the first tier of local government, being the closest to individual communities they have the greatest ability to identify, understand and address the needs of the communities they serve.

Heath and Reach Parish Council is apolitical i.e. politically neutral. Councillors are required to represent only the interests of its residents, not a political party.

The Parish Council has two vacant seats. If you would like to contribute to the smooth running of our village and any future plans, please consider volunteering for this worthwhile role.

It is not onerous but is important that the Parish Council can continue so as to allow the village to run its own affairs.

Meetings are at 7pm on the first Monday of every month (except August) and the second Monday when there is a bank holiday. There is a choice of committees responsible for the cemetery, sports facilities, and finance that meet quarterly, at mutually convenient times, and a planning and environment committee that meets when necessary, usually in line with the full Parish Council meetings.

Serving as a councillor on any parish or town council is controlled by the rules and regulations laid out in the Local Government Act 1972 (LGA 1972). Heath and Reach Parish Council has the capacity for 9 serving councillors. In many cases those who put themselves forward for a seat on the parish council are uncontested. This council, generally speaking, has healthy representation at Committee levels and at times there are more nominations than seats. Nonetheless, the election process is adhered to and elections are held every four years.

Between elections further vacancies arising can also be filled by co-option, providing each vacancy is duly notified and nominations invited, and the correct procedures being followed.



Co-optation of Parish Councillors (Casual Vacancy)

Eligibility of candidates

The Parish Council is able to consider any person to fill a vacancy provided that:

A person is qualified to be elected and to be a councillor if they are a British, Commonwealth, Irish or European Union citizen and on the relevant day (that is, the day of nomination or election), they are 18 or over. In addition, the person must meet at least one of the following criteria: -

- (1) On the relevant day and thereafter they continue to be on the electoral register for the Parish, or
- (2) During the whole of the twelve months before that day they have owned or tenanted land or premises in the Parish, or
- (3) During the whole of the twelve months before that day their principal or only place of work has been in the Parish, or
- (4) During the whole of the twelve months before that day they have resided in the Parish or within three miles of it.

Except for qualification (1), these qualifications then continue for the full term of office, until the next ordinary elections.

There are certain disqualifications for being a parish councillor (see s80 of the Local Government Act 1972) of which the main are:

- holding a paid office or employment under the Parish Council;
- holds any employment in a company which, in accordance with Part V of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 other than section 73, is under the control of the local authority
- the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order
- 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 preceding five years; or
- being disqualified under any enactment relating to corrupt or illegal electoral practices.

Applications

Candidates are required to:

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

Following receipt of application form(s) and confirmation(s) of eligibility, the next suitable Parish Council meeting will have an agenda item 'To receive written applications for the office of Parish Councillor and to consider the suitability of the candidate/s to fill the existing vacancy'. Eligible candidates will be invited to attend the meeting.



Copies of the eligible candidates' application form(s) will be circulated to all parish councillors by the Parish Clerk (or Chairman in the absence of the Parish Clerk) at least 3 clear days prior to the meeting of the full Parish Council at which the co-option will be considered.

All such documents will be treated by the Parish Clerk/Chairman and all Parish Councillors as strictly private and confidential. These being: -

- Co-option Application Form
- Co-option Eligibility Form

At the Co-option Meeting

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

The process will be carried out in the public session. A resolution will then be passed to exclude members of the public and press from the meeting to enable the Parish Council to have a private discussion regarding the suitability of the candidate/s for the vacancy. The candidate/s and public will then be invited back to the meeting following which a vote will be taken. The vote will be by recorded voting slip as per the Council's Standing Orders.

In order for a candidate to be co-opted to the 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. An only candidate will normally, but not necessarily, be co-opted. LGA 1972, Sch. 12 s39 states the co-option must be by an absolute majority vote of those present and voting in the meeting.

If present, a candidate who is co-opted will sign at the co-option meeting a Declaration of Acceptance of Office, including an undertaking to abide by the Parish Council's Code of Conduct, a copy of which is available on the Parish Council Website at: heathandreach.org.uk/code-of-conduct, and may take office immediately thereafter. If not present, a co-opted candidate will sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and undertaking to abide by the Parish Council's Code of Conduct, and, upon signing, will take office either before or at the next meeting of the Parish Council. A failure to sign the Declaration of Acceptance of office will result in automatic disqualification from office.

Holding a Position of Public Office

Councillors hold a position of public office with which comes responsibilities to attend all the meetings of the council and to abide by the seven principles (or Nolan principles) of public life being:

1. Selflessness
2. Integrity
3. Objectivity
4. Accountability
5. Openness
6. Honesty
7. Leadership



HEATH & REACH PARISH COUNCIL



Councillors are required to promote and maintain high standards of conduct when they are representing the council and are required to:

- Treat others with respect
- Not to bully or behave in an intimidatory manner
- Not seek to improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on others
- To use the resources of the Council in accordance with its requirement; and
- Not to disclose confidential information

The Parish Clerk will notify Central Bedfordshire Council Electoral Services Office of the co-option of the new parish councillor. A co-opted parish councillor will also complete a Notification of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests form which the Parish Clerk/Chairman will lodge with the Monitoring Officer at Central Bedfordshire Council within 28 days of the co-option. Failure to comply, without reasonable excuse, with the arrangements for the registration and disclosure of disclosable pecuniary interests is a criminal offence, with a penalty on conviction of a fine of up to £5,000 and disqualification from office for up to five years.

It is also a criminal offence to knowingly provide false or misleading information when making the notification or to be reckless as to whether the information is true and not misleading.



Role Description

Role:	Parish Councillor
Responsible to:	The 'Corporate Body' (i.e. the Parish Council) and all residents within the parish
Responsible for:	Effective leadership, governance, liaison and budget setting
Purpose:	Representing the views of residents
Regular liaison with	Other councillors, staff, local authorities, residents' associations, community groups, charitable groups and residents
Period of service	Elections are held every four years – next elections due May 2023 Councillors co-opted between elections serve to the end of the current four-year term of office
Salary	This is an unpaid voluntary position – no expenses are paid other than legitimate expenses incurred on official duties or attending training courses.

Support and training

New councillor induction training is aimed at taking newly elected councillors through the basics of being a parish councillor which comprises a tour of the Parish and a 'walk through' of the Members' Handbook. Ongoing training is provided via the Bedfordshire Association of Town and Parish Councils (BATPC) and other bespoke training sessions. These vary between daytime and evenings and each session last for about 2 hours. Our Parish Clerk can also provide advice as and when required.

How to find out more

You could attend a meeting of the Parish Council, talk to existing councillors or to the Parish Clerk.



Main Duties and Responsibilities

1. To attend Parish Council meetings.
2. To prepare for meetings and being properly informed about the issues to be discussed.
3. To participate constructively in the governance of Heath and Reach Parish Council.
4. To participate fully in the formation and scrutiny of the Parish Council's policies, budgets, strategies and service delivery including the 'Strategic Plan'.
5. To ensure, with other councillors, that the Parish Council is properly managed.
6. To keep up to date with significant developments affecting the Parish Council at local, regional and national levels.
7. To promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of the Parish taking account of the strategic effects on other communities and the Parish Council as a whole.
8. To represent effectively the interests of, not only the ward for which the councillor is elected, but the Parish as a whole and to raise at Council meetings residents' enquiries, representations and complaints.
9. To represent the whole electorate; listen, and then represent the views of the whole community when discussing Council business and working with outside bodies.
10. To take an active part in the Parish Council's arrangements to build community capacity and promote measures that contribute to the Parish Strategic Plan.
11. To comment on planning applications and other planning matters such as the Local Plan.
12. To take part in meetings and form sound judgements based on what is best for the community and then abide by majority decisions.
13. To represent the Parish Council on outside bodies to which the councillor is appointed.
14. To maintain proper standards of behaviour when representing the Parish Council.
15. To fulfil the statutory and locally determined requirements of an elected member of a local authority and the Parish Council, including compliance with all relevant codes of conduct and maintaining high ethical standards, (including not disclosing confidential information and not using Council resources for political purposes or for any other reason).
16. To participate effectively as a member of any committee or working party to which the councillor is appointed.
17. To act as an Ambassador for the Parish Council and to promote the work the Council undertakes, on behalf of the community.
18. To uphold the Parish Council's Standing Orders, Code of Conduct and the Nolan principles of Public Life (ensuring that the impartiality of Council staff is not compromised).
19. To contribute to the Parish news section on the Website to enhance members' accountability to the public by providing details of official activities and the contribution made to the effective operation of the Parish Council, as and when appropriate.
20. To undertake appropriate training courses and as when possible.
21. The Parish Council operates its own email server – new members will be provided with a unique councillor email address which must be used for all communications.



Co-option of Parish Councillors (Casual Vacancy)

Person Specification:

COMPETENCY	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE
Relevant knowledge, Education, Professional Qualifications and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sound knowledge and understanding of local affairs and the local community • Good knowledge of the Parish boundaries and Parish Council property 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific work experience /voluntary work experience /undertaken vocational or academic training /professional qualifications
Experience, Skills and Ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solid interest in local matters • Ability and willingness to represent the Parish Council and its community • Ability to communicate clearly both verbally and in writing • Ability and willingness to work closely with other members and to maintain good working relationships with all members and staff • Good reading, analytic and problem-solving skills • Ability and willingness to work with the Parish Council's partners (e.g. Parish Council committees and working party groups, voluntary groups, other parish councils, principal authority, charities) • Ability and willingness to undertake relevant training as and when required • Ability to work under pressure and make sound judgement • Ability to research and report back on issues faced by the Parish Council • Good standard of computer literacy with access to an email account 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous Council /Parish Council experience • Basic knowledge of legal issues relating to town and parish councils or local authorities • Experience of financial control/budgeting
Other requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability and willingness to attend all meetings of the Parish Council (including committee meetings or the meetings of other local authorities and local bodies) in the evening and at weekends • Flexible working approach • Enthusiastic • Ability and willingness to carry out physical tasks across the Parish 	



What to do next?

If you would like to proceed with your application, please arrange for the completion of the forms that follow on the next pages.

If, in the meantime, you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Parish Clerk who would be more than happy to answer any concerns you may have.



CO-OPTION ELIGIBILITY FORM

1. In order to be eligible for co-option as a Heath and Reach Parish Councillor you must satisfy certain criteria.

You must satisfy a. and b. below and at least one of the options c. to f.

Please tick which apply to you:

- a. I am 18 years of age or over; and
- b. I am a British citizen or a citizen of the Commonwealth or a citizen of any other member state of the European Union; and
- c. I am registered as a local government elector for the Parish; or
- d. 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
- e. My principal or only place of work during those twelve months has been in the Parish; or
- f. I have during the whole of those 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 a parish councillor if he/she:

- a. Is employed by the Parish Council or holds paid office (other than Chairman, Vice-Chairman) under the Parish Council (including joint boards or committees);
- b. Is employed by an entity controlled by the Parish Council;
- c. Is the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or an interim bankruptcy restrictions order or a debt relief restrictions order or an interim debt relief restrictions order; or
- d. 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 e. Is otherwise disqualified under Part III of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (relating to corrupt or illegal electoral practices and offences relating to donations) or the Audit Commission Act 1998.



HEATH & REACH PARISH COUNCIL



Is there any other information you would like to disclose regarding your application? (If necessary, please continue on a separate sheet).

Use of Personal Information

The Parish Council will use your information, including that which you provide on these application forms, to assess your suitability to be a parish councillor.

Declaration & Consent

I hereby confirm that I am eligible for the vacancy of Heath and Reach Parish Councillor and I am not disqualified under s80 of the Local Government Act 1972 from being a parish councillor and that the information given on this form is true and correct.

I have read the section entitled '*Use of Personal Information*' and by signing this form I consent to the use and disclosure of my information included in this application in accordance with GDPR and the Heath and Reach privacy policy located at heathandreach.org.uk/heath-and-reach-privacy-policy/

I declare the information given on these forms to be true and correct.

Signature:

Full name:

Date:

Please print out and return this completed form, together with the completed Co-option Eligibility form to:

Sue Grierson-Hill
Clerk to the Council
Heath and Reach Parish Council
25 Woburn Road, Heath and Reach, Bedfordshire, LU7 0AP

Or email all to parish-clerk@heathandreach.org.uk