

## **REPORT TO PICKMERE PARISH COUNCIL**

**1<sup>st</sup> February 2022**

### **AGENDA ITEM 9.1 POTENTIAL CO-OPTION OF 8<sup>th</sup> COUNCILLOR**

#### **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 At the last full election of parish councillors in 2019, insufficient candidates put themselves forward to fill the 8 councillor places on the Parish Council. In fact only 5 candidates put themselves forward and were duly elected unopposed. The newly formed Council subsequently decided, in accordance with the relevant rules, to co-opt further members to fill the three vacant posts. However only two councillors were co-opted through that process. Accordingly since that time the Council has operated with 7 rather than its full complement of 8 councillors.
- 1.2 It is pointed out for information that the term remaining for the current Council expires in May 2023, and at that time full elections will again be required for all seats.

#### **2. REPORT**

- 2.1 It has become increasingly apparent that the demands being placed on members have increased significantly in recent months, as a result of the current projects being undertaken by the Council – in particular the commencement of the Neighbourhood Plan and the refurbishment of the play area – together with increasing time and resources being spent on asset maintenance matters, and also the likelihood that further time will be required to work on the HS2 proposals. It is therefore suggested that Council may wish again to seek to co-opt an eighth member who will be able to help share this burden.
- 2.2 Cheshire East Council, the Parish Council's principal authority, together with CHALC have been consulted on this matter and agree that this process would be appropriate in the circumstances.
- 2.3 Council has previously approved a process for such a co-option, although it is suggested that it commences with an appropriate advertisement being placed on the Council's noticeboards and website. The question of whether the Council proceeds to appoint a further councillor (or not) remains within the control of the Council no matter how many candidates express an interest in being considered.
- 2.4 A copy of the principles previously approved for the selection of a co-option candidate are appended.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 That Council considers whether or not to seek to co-opt an eighth member.

- 2.2 Should Council decide to proceed with a co-option process, that the principles for the co-option process be approved, commencing with the posting of appropriate notices on the Council's noticeboards and website.

**Jack Steel**

**Clerk to the Parish Council**

**Appendix - Summary of Co-option process previously approved.**

Applications should be invited by means of the Council's minutes. There is nothing to prevent the Council from inviting particular parish residents who comply with the statutory requirements for a Parish Councillor to submit an application for co-option. Such invitations should be based on the apparent skills, experience or ability of the person(s) involved to make a positive contribution to the work of the Council and the wellbeing of the Parish as a whole.

Applications should be in the form of a brief CV, with some reasoning as to the contribution the applicant can make to the operation of the Council and the enhancement of the Parish.

The Council will appoint a Committee of the Council (the Co-option Committee) and delegate to it the power to assess applications for co-option, interview applicants and make decisions on who should or should not be co-opted. The reasons for such decisions do not require to be explained or reported in public.

Membership of the Committee should be at least 3 councillors and the quorum should be 3.

The Co-option Committee should meet and make its decisions in private.

Voting in Committee shall be by show of hands, in the normal way with the Chairperson having a casting vote if required.

The decisions of the Committee should be reported to the Council as soon as practicable after the decisions have been made.

The applicants should then be informed of the decisions of the Council as to their individual applications, though not about the decisions as to other applicants.