**Humber, Ford & Stoke Prior**

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**Group Parish Council**

**Annual Meeting, 15 May 2019**

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**Elections and co-option to resultant vacancy**

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The term of office of all sitting councillors ended on 6 May 2019, and elections for all Council seats were held (with new councillors’ term of office commencing on 7 May 2019 for four years).

The Clerk notified all sitting councillors of the requirements for submitting nominations, and publicised the election/nomination process widely around the parish by means of notices, articles in the Parish Pump, the website and an email to residents.

By the close of nominations on 3 April, there were six nominations to the six Council seats for Ford & Stoke Prior parish, and four nominations to the five Council seats for Humber parish. On 8 April, therefore, these ten nominees were declared elected unopposed, without a poll taking place on 2 May. **These councillors will meet as the new Council for the first time at the Annual Meeting on 15 May 2019. The new councillors are:**

Humber: Cllr Zoe Burge

 Cllr Hugh Fowler-Wright

 Cllr Richard Thomas

 Cllr Stephanie Wilson

Ford & Stoke Prior: Cllr Alan Bathurst

 Cllr Kenneth Bemand

 Cllr Janette Fullwood

 Cllr William Jackson

 Cllr Chris Marston

 Cllr Gill Stovold

**There is therefore one vacancy on the Council for Humber parish.** The procedure laid down in statute for this in an elections year is that the elected Council (if quorate) may co-opt to the vacancy within 35 days of the date of election, after which Herefordshire Council has the *discretion* to order a bye-election (Representation of the People Act 1985 s.21). The Council’s Standing Order 11 does not specifically cover the contingency for co-option to a vacancy arising in this circumstance, but 11(d) provides that a casual vacancy (one arising *during* a term of office) will be advertised for 21 days before the meeting which co-opts. This would appear to be a reasonable and equitable way of approaching this vacancy, with a decision on who to co-opt being made at a subsequent Council meeting.

Following discussions with Herefordshire Council’s electoral services team in 2015 when this situation last arose, it was agreed that if Herefordshire Council are satisfied that the Parish Council is taking reasonable and responsible steps to fill the vacancy, they would not insist on this being done within the 35 days.

**Accordingly, the Clerk proposes to the Council that – the Standing Orders being silent on this specific point – the Council resolves to advertise the vacancy in line with SO11(d), requesting applications in time for the Council to co-opt a member for Humber parish at its next ordinary meeting (31 July 2019) rather than holding an extraordinary meeting for this purpose, and notifies Herefordshire Council of these steps.**

Philip J Brown

Clerk to the Council

7 May 2019