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CPALC EDITORIALS

The cosy clique of co-option

DETAILS CATEGORY: CPALC
EDITORIAL CREATED ON 20 MARCH
 2013 WRITTEN BY HERBERT SMITH

I've been following the forum thread on the fairness or otherwise of the co-option process. Co-option is a fundamentally flawed process as it deprives the electors of their right to choose.

The right to choose is usurped by a few who quite naturally select those with an outlook and views that are the same as their own. The deeper question is why is a council co-opting? The common response is that no one stood for election.

This is to be honest a fatuous answer. Hiding the notice of the vacancy on an out of the way notice board is these days not advertising the vacancy. In an age of digital communication the failure to promote the vacancy as widely as possible is inexcusable. Hiding behind the excuse that the letter of the law was followed is just sad.

How can you choose when you're not aware of the

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choices?

Another possibility is that the community is of course so perfect physically and socially that there is just nothing left to do or improve to make it a better place for everyone to live. This is of course just plain ridiculous. Ask 10 people what needs doing in your community and you'll get 10 different answers.

The commonest excuse by far is that the council cannot afford the cost of an election as opposed to the cheap and cosy co-option process. This is an ill thought through answer as many principal authorities only charge for contested elections.

This also evades the question, the council and councillors have a duty to provide for reasonable and foreseeable financial situations in managing the councils affairs. If an election is not both reasonable and foreseeable what is? Councils have often had many years to ensure that they have made adequate financial provision for elections.

When was the last contested election in your community. The key point is that with an election everyone who meets the criteria CAN stand for election. If they don't stand against a single candidate at least they have had the opportunity.

So next time there is a casual vacancy in your community get 10 friends to sign the necessary forms to call for an election and stand. You'll almost certainly get elected. If the council complains about the cost, reply...

“what you've failed in your duty to provide for the cost over all these years”

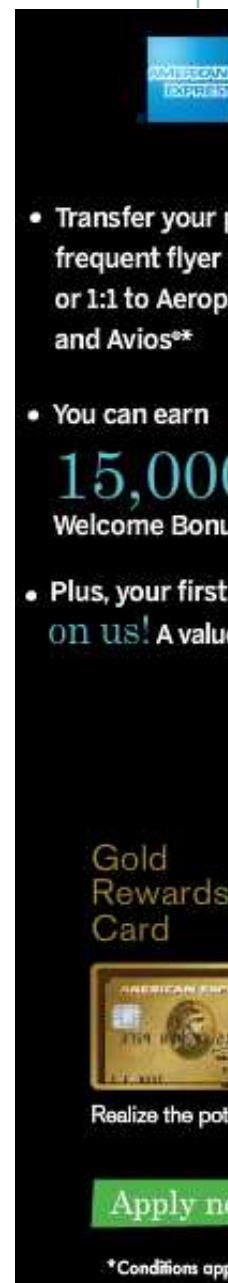
Elections are a right, co-option removes that right. It only takes 10 good men...

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Posted: 1 day 8 hours ago by **MiaCa**

#1743



We forced an election last December in our village, 3 people stood for election. I have started a facebook page for the villagers which is independent to the Parish Council and through that page encouraged each candidate to produce a flyer which they did and we got a 26% turnout which apparently is good for such an election. The cost of the election was bemoaned in the village newsletter but we will do it again next time there is a vacancy.

Posted: 1 day 10 hours ago by **colinosborn**

#1742



Whenever we have a vacancy notice is put in our Parish Magazine, which is delivered to every house in the Parish, every month. No-one comes forward when they might have to stand for election, but people do come forward when they have the option of being co-opted.

Posted: 2 days 16 hours ago by **bindib**

#1731



I am currently having a discussion with my District Council about why my Parish has not advertised vacancies. They have "found" one person to be co-opted and now two of us have to compete for the remaining vacancy. Maybe they have run out of friends?! The two Councillors resigned at the same meeting, so how come two vacancies were not advertised? They are an all male council and they clearly want people the same as them. This is NOT local democracy. It is appalling.

Posted: 2 days 18 hours ago by **MapleB**

#1729



How very true. In our case the co-optee has become the power-behind-the-throne, and guides the weak and faltering chairman in every step. Recently he went on holiday so the chairman contrived to make the council meeting inquorate. We believe he was the originator of the Chatham House Rule concept that we have discussed recently. A thoroughly malign influence.

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