

POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR THE
CO-OPTION OF COUNCILLORS TO LAVERSTOCK AND FORD PARISH COUNCIL

Date last amended	9 th August 2021
Date adopted	16 th August 2021
Minute Reference	21.123 16 th August 2021
Date of next review	August 2024

Introduction

The Co-option of a Parish Councillor may occur when a vacancy remains after an election or where the resignation of a councillor causes a 'casual vacancy' to occur. Residents who apply to fill the vacancy may be 'co-opted' by vote of existing councillors, rather than calling an election.

Purpose

The policy identifies the procedures to be undertaken when considering co-option of candidates to become Parish Councillors. The purpose is to ensure that candidates are treated fairly and consistently, and that they fully understand the role of a Parish Councillor and all the implications of accepting the position. The Council must ensure, to the best of its ability, that the candidate is of good character and understands the resolve and commitment required to fulfil the responsibility.

Related Information

<http://www.laverstock-ford.co.uk/policies,-plans,-guides-and-operating-procedures.html>

<https://www.nalc.gov.uk/publications>

<https://www.lfcnp.co.uk/>

Pre Co-option process

This process is intended to ensure that the prospective Councillor is fully aware of the regular activity and workload of the PC, the role of Councillors serving the Parish and the limitations of their authority.

- The candidate who has expressed an interest in becoming a councillor will be sent a letter regarding co-option by the Chair (Appendix 1)
- The candidate will be assigned two Councillors to act as sponsors and oversee the pre co-option process. Normally the Chair plus one other. (Appendix 2)
- The candidate is required to attend a minimum of two Parish Council meetings as an observer, before being considered for co-option.
- At an initial informal meeting with the Chair, after the candidate has attended one PC meeting, guidance will be offered regarding the interview process, and sufficient time given to the candidate for research before attending any further interviews. The Chair should ensure, as a minimum, that the candidate is aware of:-

Council Assets and responsibilities

A map showing the parish boundaries and location of Open Spaces can be found at <https://www.lfcnp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Appendix-10-Designated-Local-Green-Spaces-V6a.pdf>

Structure and workings of the council

Ward Boundaries are shown at <http://www.laverstock-ford.co.uk/files/map-2016.png>

Scheme of Delegation is available at <http://www.laverstock-ford.co.uk/files/Scheme-of-Delegations-Adopted-May-2021.pdf>

Previous Agendas and minutes are available at <http://www.laverstock-ford.co.uk/agendas--minutes.html>

- After the candidate has attended a second PC meeting, the Sponsors will arrange a formal interview (see Appendix 3). The meeting will also cover:
 - Structure of the Parish Council.
 - The Candidate's reasons for wishing to join the Parish Council.
 - Current and future activities of the Parish Council.
 - Minutes of the last meeting observed; to provide an opportunity for a two-way discussion on the events.
 - Roles and responsibilities of Councillors within the parish
 - Subgroups and the candidate choice
 - The Question/Scoring Sheet will be completed by the Sponsors.

- The outcome of the interview and recommendation of the Sponsors will be reported to Councillors who will have the opportunity to vote on the candidate's co-option.

Post Co-option process

A number of actions are essential to assist the integration of new Councillors, post co-option, into the Laverstock and Ford Parish Council. The following process will be adopted:

- A Councillor may be appointed to mentor the new Councillor, with the level and duration of mentoring dependent on their experience and knowledge of parish issues.

Exemption from the Co-option Process

The Parish Council reserves the right to exempt a candidate from having to undertake the Co-option Policy and Procedure.

Appendix 1. Letter to candidate



Laverstock & Ford Parish Council
Incorporating Milford, Bishopdown Farm, Old Sarum & Longhedge

3 Pilgrims Way, Laverstock, Salisbury, SP1 1RZ
Tel: 01722 411847
Email: parish-clerk@laverstock-ford.co.uk

Date xxxxxx

To Candidate
XXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX

Dear

Thank you for your interest in becoming a Councillor for Laverstock and Ford Parish Council. We have a formal co-option process aimed at ensuring you understand and are well prepared for the role. Reading the documentation indicated will give you a clear understanding of what will be expected of you as a councillor and also help you to understand the limitations of the role. I hope you find it helpful.

Process

1. On our website at www.laverstock-ford.co.uk, under the Parish Council tab, you will find a page with all our policies and operating procedures, including our Constitution and Code of Conduct. At this stage, it is important that you read at least these two documents carefully. In addition, on the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) website at www.nalc.gov.uk, under the Publications tab, you will find the Good Councillors Guide. Again, it is important to read this guide carefully. These three documents should help you understand the role you would be taking on.
2. You will be asked to attend two consecutive Parish Council meetings as an observer, to help you understand how council meetings work and the amount of work involved in being a councillor. Before each meeting, the agenda and minutes of the last meeting are available on our website.
3. During this time I will arrange an informal meeting with you, at which I will explain the co-option process. You will have an opportunity to ask me any questions you may have. I will also cover some detail about the structure and operating practice including the roles and responsibilities of Councillors and the work of our committees.
4. You will be assigned two Councillors to act as your Sponsors. They will work with you throughout the co-option process.
5. After attendance at the second meeting your sponsors will arrange a formal meeting with you which will be more interactive, when there will be further discussion on:
 - a) Current and future activities within the Parish Council
 - b) Your reasons for wanting to join the Council and how you think you will fit in.
 - c) You will be asked about your understanding of aspects of the Code of Conduct and the Good Councillors Guide.

6. Following this meeting you will be invited to a full Council Meeting where you will be asked to briefly address all Councillors explaining why you want to become a Councillor. You will then be asked to briefly leave the meeting whilst the sponsors report their recommendation on your co-option and all Councillors will vote. If your co-option is successful, you will then be asked by the Parish Clerk to sign a declaration of acceptance.
7. Following your co-option, a sponsor will remain available to assist you with any follow-up guidance for as long as you need it.

In the event that you are not elected, you are entitled to request the reason for the Councillors decision.

I hope this information is helpful and if you have any questions please contact me or Andrew Prince, our Parish Clerk.

Yours Sincerely

Nick Baker
Chairman Laverstock & Ford Parish Council

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

www.laverstock-ford.co.uk – Laverstock and Ford Parish Council website where you will find all our Policies and Procedures, minutes from past meetings and information about the parish including maps and ward boundaries. In addition to the Code of Conduct, you will find the Scheme of Delegation on our Policies page, giving details of the structure of the council and its committees. The Agendas and Minutes page has details of all recent meetings and the topics and projects that the council is currently working on.

www.lfcnp.co.uk – Laverstock and Ford Parish Councils Neighbourhood Plan website. The Neighbourhood Plan has been a huge project undertaken by the steering group on behalf of the parish council. The plan documents include a map showing the parish boundaries and location of Open Spaces, landscape sensitivity assessments of all corners of the parish, together with extensive information on planning considerations for the parish.

www.nalc.gov.uk – National Association of Local Councils website. NALC is the national body representing the interests of parish councils and hold many national policies and publications.

www.wiltshire-alc.org.uk – Wiltshire Association of Local Councils, our local branch of NALC