



Procedure for Co-Option and Application Form

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1. Introduction

There are two circumstances under which the Electoral Officer of Central Bedfordshire Council will notify Fairfield Parish Council that it may proceed to fill a casual vacancy by co-option: -

- a) when a seat has been left vacant because no eligible candidate stood for election for a new election.
- b) during the life of a Council when a seat has fallen vacant (because of a resignation, death or ineligibility). The Parish Clerk will immediately notify the Electoral Officer and the vacancy will be advertised. If the required TEN electors of the parish have not called for a poll within the legally specified time period following publication of the Notice of Vacancy, the Parish Clerk will be notified by CBC and the vacancy can be filled by co-option.

The Parish Council is not obliged to co-opt to fill any vacancy. Even if the Council invites applications for co-option, it is not obliged to select anyone from the candidates who apply. However, it is not desirable that electors in the parish be left partially or fully unrepresented for a significant length of time.

Although the process for co-option is not prescribed in Law, County & District Councils and Local Council Associations provide best practice advice and guidelines. It is especially important that all applicants be treated alike so that the arrangements are seen as open, fair and transparent.

Whenever the need for co-option arises, Fairfield Parish Council will seek and encourage applications from anyone in the Parish who is eligible to stand as a Parish Councillor. Councillors or parishioners can legally approach individuals to suggest that they might wish to consider putting their names forward for co-option.

The Parish Council will advertise the vacancies in the local area via the Parish Council noticeboards, the Parish Council website and email newsletter.

The co-option procedure will be reviewed regularly.

2. Co-Option Procedure

2.1. The advertisement to co-opt will include:

- a) the method by which applications can be made
- b) the closing date for all applications
- c) a contact point to obtain more information
- d) details of further information that is available electronically via the website, to include application forms, nomination forms and information about the roles and responsibilities of the Council.
- e) Encouragement to attend a parish council meeting before applying for the position.

2.2. Existing Members may point out the vacancies and the process to any qualifying candidate(s).

2.3. Any candidate(s) found to be offering inducements of any kind will be disqualified.

2.4. Eligibility of the candidate(s) will be confirmed by the Clerk.

2.5. All eligible candidates will be invited, by email or letter, to attend the next full Parish Council meeting following the application deadline. If candidates are unable to attend, this meeting will not be rearranged. The co-option will still take place and voting on this vacancy will be subsequently based on this meeting and the candidate application form.

2.6. All members will receive copies of candidate applications, along with the summons to attend the next full Parish Council meeting following the application deadline. Candidate names will be displayed on the agenda of the meeting at which the co-option voting will occur. No other details apart from the candidates' names will be displayed. Candidate applications are strictly confidential.

2.7. An agenda item will be set aside for candidates to make a brief verbal presentation to members, outlining their relevant skills and experience. Each candidate in turn

(alphabetically, by surname) to speak for a maximum of three minutes. During each presentation the other candidates will be asked to leave the meeting.

After presentations, members may ask candidates questions if considered necessary. During questioning, the other candidates will be asked to leave the meeting.

The Public are welcome to listen to these presentations and questions.

- 2.8. If one or more candidates is unable, for bona fide reasons, to attend the meeting, Members will proceed straight to the vote without any candidate being allowed to address the Members. The decision as to whether to accept the candidate's reasons for not attending the meeting shall be made by the Clerk and that decision is final.
- 2.9. The Chairman will then request those Councillors present to nominate any or all of the candidates for co-option. As co-opting any person to the Parish Council has to occur by resolution, candidates will require a proposer and seconder to progress to the voting stage. Voting will be by a show of hands.
- 2.10. A successful candidate must have received an absolute majority vote by those Councillors present. If there are more than two candidates for one vacancy and not one of them at the first count receives a majority over the aggregate votes given to the rest, steps must be taken to strike off the candidate with the least number of votes and the remainder must then be put to the vote again. This process must, if necessary, be repeated until an absolute majority is obtained. In the case of an equality of votes in the final round of voting, the Chairman has the casting vote.
- 2.11. If there is more than one vacancy and the number of candidates equals the number of vacancies, all the vacancies may be filled by a single composite resolution, but if the number of candidates exceeds the number of vacancies each vacancy must be filled by a separate vote or series of votes.
- 2.12. The Council is not obliged to fill all vacancies but must take steps to advertise for further co-options or hold an election to fill vacancies.

- 2.13. Successfully co-opted candidates become Councillors in their own right, with immediate effect, and are no different to any other member.
- 2.14. The co-opted members will be asked to sign a Declaration of Acceptance of Office to agree to be bound by the Local Government Code of Conduct. They may then take their seat at Council.
- 2.15. Any application can be considered in the candidate(s) absence, but if successful, members would need to agree for him/her to sign the Declaration of Office either before or at the next meeting.
- 2.16. The clerk will notify Electoral Services of the new Councillor appointment and advise the new Councillor that he/she should complete their Register of Interests within twenty-eight days of being appointed.
- 2.17. As soon as practicable following their co-option, members will be invited to attend an Induction and Training session with the Parish Clerk.

3. Qualifications for being a local Councillor

To become a Parish Councillor, Section 79(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 requires you to be:

- A qualifying citizen of the Commonwealth or European Union citizen; **and**
- 18 years of age or over on the day on which you are nominated (and if there is a poll, on the day of the election), or on the day on which you are co-opted.

and, additionally:

- On the day of your election or co-option, and thereafter, you continue to be a local government elector for the area of the Council; **or**
- You have, during the whole of the twelve months preceding that day occupied, as owner or tenant, any land or other premises in that area, **or**
- Your principal or only place of work during that twelve months has been in that area, **or**
- You have, during the whole twelve months, resided in that area or within 3 miles of it.

You are disqualified from being a local Councillor if:

1. you hold any paid office, employment or other place of profit in the gift or disposal of Fairfield Parish Council, or any committee or sub-committee thereof **OR**
2. you are subject to a bankruptcy restrictions order or an interim order **OR**
3. you have within five years before the co-option or since been convicted in the UK, Channel Islands or Isle of Man of any offence and been sentenced to imprisonment (suspended or not) for not less than three months without the option of a fine **OR**
4. you are convicted of offences involving corrupt or illegal practices under Part III of the Representation of the People Act 1983 **OR**
5. you have been convicted for the failure to register or declare disclosable interests under the Localism Act 2011 (England)

4. Co-option Application Form

All applicants must complete this form and return it to the Parish Clerk at the address below with the requested supporting letter and signed declaration. It is advised that all applicants read Fairfield Parish Council's Co-option Procedure

Contact Details (Block capitals please)

Name _____

Address _____

_____ Postcode _____

Email address _____

Home Telephone number _____

Mobile Telephone number _____

Please attach a supporting letter giving details on your background (including any previous voluntary, community or Council work), why you wish to become a member of this Council and what skills you can bring to the Council and residents of Fairfield.

Please detail any other information you would like to disclose regarding your application.

Please complete the following: -

Declaration:

I have read the conditions for becoming a Parish Councillor and confirm that I am qualified to be considered for co-option.

Print Name _____

Signed _____ Date _____

Please return this completed form, together with your supporting letter and signed Declaration to the Parish Clerk by the advertised deadline.

Email: enquiries@fairfieldparishcouncil.gov.uk

Address:

Fairfield Parish Council
Fairfield Community Hall
Kipling Crescent
Fairfield
Hitchin
SG5 4GY