



Chideock Parish Council

CHIDEOCK PARISH COUNCIL

CO-OPTION OF A NEW COUNCILLOR (PROCEDURE GUIDE)

This procedure is based on NALC Legal Briefing L1508

Good practice for selection of candidates for co-option to local Councils.

Parish Councils are permitted to exercise the power to co-opt a person on to the Council to fill a casual vacancy when the requirements to hold an election have not been met (i.e. The vacancy has been the subject of a public notice and less than 10 registered electors have requested an election by a deadline date specified by the District Returning Officer).

Although seeking 'expressions of interest' is not a legal requirement, the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) recommends that Councils always give public notice of vacancies because this makes the process of co-option open and transparent and should attract more potential candidates.

Whenever the need for co-option arises, Chideock Parish Council will:

Consider advertising the vacancy to seek and encourage 'expressions of interest' by a specified date from anyone in the Parish who is eligible to stand as a Parish Councillor. All potential candidates will be requested to put their request for consideration in writing with the following additional information:

- I. Reason for wishing to be Councillor;
- II. Previous Community/Council work; and
- III. Other skills they can bring to the Council

Please note:

Councillors are required to have an email address that is checked frequently as the Council operates electronically wherever possible and, it is a condition of a Councillor that a means of contact by telephone and/or e-mail will be public information.

The Person Specification for the role of Councillor appears at Appendix 1.

At the next Full Council meeting:

- I. Clerk to confirm that each candidate is qualified to become a Councillor and is not disqualified from being a Councillor as set out in the Local Government Act 1972 s79 and s80;
- II. Chair to offer opportunity for debate on the order of priority to offer co-option.
- III. Vote on the acceptability of each candidate for co-option, utilising the 'person specification' criteria set out below and any personal statements requested from and provided by candidates. An absolute majority vote is required for each candidate from all members present and entitled to vote (LGA 1972 Sch. 12. Para 39) (The applicant with the least number of votes cast will be deleted and the vote taken again and again etc. until the number of candidates equals the number of vacancies);
- IV. Vote to select the order in which acceptable candidates (decided by the vote at iii above) should be approached to offer co-option on this occasion.
- V. The Clerk to approach and offer co-option to candidate(s) after the meeting in the order of priority determined by the vote at iii above, if the first choice does not accept the post then the second is to be approached and so on until the ranking list is exhausted.
- VI. Assuming that the co-option position is filled, formally ratify the appointment at the next Full Council meeting.

- VII. The Clerk to notify Dorset Council Electoral Services of the new Councillor appointment, initiate 'acceptance of office' paperwork and 'registration of interests' on the Parish Council and Dorset Council websites.
- VIII. If no one accepts the vacant post(s), the whole process is to be repeated when new individuals expressing interest are identified or until the next election.



REPRESENTING YOUR LOCAL AREA

A councillor's primary role is to represent their ward or division and the people who live in it. Councillors provide a bridge between the community and the council. As well as being an advocate for local residents and signposting them to the right people at the council, you will need to keep them informed about the issues that affect them.

In order to understand and represent local views and priorities, you need to build strong relationships and encourage local people to make their views known and engage with you and the council. Good communication and engagement are central to being an effective councillor.

As a local councillor, your residents will expect you to:

- Respond to their queries and investigate their concerns (casework)
- Communicate council decisions that affect them
- Know your patch and be aware of any problems
- Know and work with representatives of local organisations, interest groups and businesses.
- Represent their views at council meetings
- Lead local campaigns on their behalf
- Act and conduct yourself in a manner that is appropriate for your role.

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Community leadership is at the heart of modern local government. Councils work in partnership with local communities and organisations – including the public, voluntary, community and private sectors – to develop a vision for their local area, working collaboratively to improve services and quality of life for citizens. Councillors have a lead role in this process.

DEVELOPING COUNCIL POLICY

Councils need clear strategies and policies to enable them to achieve their vision for the area, make the best use of resources and deliver services that meet the needs of local communities. As a councillor you will contribute to the development of these policies and strategies, bringing the views and priorities of your local area to the debate. How you do this will depend on the committees and forums you are appointed to. However, the council's policy framework must be signed off by full council, on which every councillor sits.

PLANNING AND REGULATION

Councils are not just service providers; they also act as regulators. As a councillor you may be appointed to sit on the planning and regulatory committee – considering issues such as planning applications, licences for pubs and restaurants and ensuring that businesses comply with the law. In these roles, councillors are required to act independently and are not subject to the group or party whip. Most councils arrange special training for this.