

Ashwell Parish Council Co-options - Qualifications & Appointment Process

(adopted May 2022)

Introduction

Although the process for co-option to vacancies of local councils is not prescribed in law, NALC's Legal Briefing L15-08 (Original date of issue: 23 July 2008 Re- issued: 7 May 2015) provides guidance.

Of paramount importance is that all applicants are treated alike so that arrangements are seen to be open, fair and transparent. This policy sets out the process to be followed by Ashwell Parish Council when co-option is under consideration.

Whenever the need for co-option arises, the Council will seek and encourage applications from anyone who is eligible to stand as a Parish Councillor.

Councillors and parishioners can legally approach individuals to suggest they might wish to consider putting their names forward for co-option and encourage them to register their expression of interest.

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.

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

However, it is not desirable that electors of the Parish be left partially or unrepresented for a significant length of time; neither does it contribute to the effective and efficient working of the Parish Council if there are insufficient Councillors to share the workload equitably, provide a broad cross-section of skills and interests, or to achieve meeting quorums without difficulty, given that some absence is unavoidable at times. However, this must not be used as an excuse to co-opt and the vacancy will remain an agenda item until filled.

Councillors elected by co-option are full members of the Parish Council.

Qualifications

Applicants must meet statutory requirements relating to eligibility for Parish Councillors

The ideal candidate will:

- have been resident in Ashwell for a minimum of 12 months;
- have life experience and interests that will allow them to contribute to the Parish Council's input to the Ashwell community;
- accept that the role of Parish Councillor is to represent the views of the community in an objective and unbiased manner;
- be able to commit the time needed to undertake the role, regularly attending monthly Parish Council evening meetings and having a flexible attitude to participation in other meetings and events.

Steps toward becoming a Parish Councillor

Informal discussion between the candidate and the Chairman or other Parish Councillor about the role and the candidate's reasons for interest in becoming a Parish Councillor.

Candidate submits a brief (Up to 1 page A4) personal statement covering:

- Personal details (including contact details & residency in Ashwell)
- Brief details of skills and experience
- Personal interests
- Reasons for wishing to become a Parish Councillor in Ashwell, and how the candidate could contribute to the Parish Council team.

Candidate attends one or more Parish Council monthly meetings to understand how they operate.

Following all of the above the Parish Council will take a formal vote (requiring a majority in favour) in private session to determine acceptance or rejection of the candidate's application.

The candidate will be notified in writing of the decision by the Parish Council.

Successful candidates will have to provide personal details to the Electoral Officer at North Herts Council including a signed Declaration of Interests (i.e. any financial interests in the community).