Sampford Brett Parish Council
Co-option Information Pack



Thank you for your interest in becoming a parish councillor.

This pack provides clear, neutral information to help you understand the role and the co-option process. It is not a recruitment exercise and does not assess or score applicants.

1. About the Parish Council

Sampford Brett Parish Council is the first tier of local government and serves a community of around 290 residents.

The Council:

- represents the interests of residents
- comments on planning applications
- manages local assets and projects
- works with Somerset Council and other bodies
- supports community wellbeing and local initiatives

The Council meets regularly throughout the year and works within the legal framework set out in the Local Government Act 1972.

2. The Role of a Parish Councillor

Parish councillors:

- attend and participate in council meetings
- consider local issues and make decisions collectively
- represent the views of residents
- work within the Council's Code of Conduct
- act lawfully, fairly, and openly
- support community projects where appropriate
- represent the Parish Council at external meetings or liaison groups when required

Councillors do **not** manage staff, run services, or act independently. All decisions are made by the Council as a whole.

3. Time Commitment

The role typically involves:

- attending Parish Council meetings (usually 5 per year) plus any extraordinary meetings if the need arises
- reading agenda papers
- occasional involvement in working groups or community matters
- representing the Parish Council at external meetings or liaison groups when required

Most councillors spend **2–4 hours per month** on council business, though this varies.

4. Speaking with a Councillor

If you would like to understand more about the role, you are welcome to speak with a councillor.

Councillors can explain:

- what the role involves
- how meetings work
- typical time commitments

Councillors **must remain neutral**. They cannot:

- discuss your individual application
- offer advice on what to write
- indicate how they may vote

All formal queries must be directed to the Clerk.

5. Eligibility to Become a Parish Councillor

The Local Government Act 1972 requires that applicants:

- are at least 18 years old
- are a British citizen, qualifying Commonwealth citizen, or citizen of the Republic of Ireland
- meet **one** of the following criteria:

You must either:

- be on the electoral register for the parish, or
- have lived in the parish (or within 3 miles of it) for the past 12 months, or
- have occupied land or premises in the parish for the past 12 months, or
- have worked in the parish (as employee or self-employed) for the past 12 months

If you are unsure whether you meet the eligibility criteria, please contact the Clerk. Councillors do not assess eligibility.

5A. Disqualification Criteria (Local Government Act 1972, Section 80)

In addition to meeting the eligibility criteria, certain circumstances may disqualify a person from being elected or co-opted as a councillor.

A person is disqualified if they:

- hold any paid office or employment with the local council (other than the office of Chairman) or with a joint committee on which the Council is represented; or
- have been adjudged bankrupt or made a composition or arrangement with creditors (subject to the exceptions listed below); or
- have, within five years before the day of election or since election, been convicted in the UK, Channel Islands or Isle of Man of any offence and sentenced to imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for not less than three months without the option of a fine; or
- are disqualified under Part III of the Representation of the People Act 1983 for corrupt or illegal practices.

Bankruptcy disqualification ceases if:

- the bankruptcy is annulled because the person ought not to have been adjudged bankrupt or because debts have been fully discharged; or
- the person is discharged with a certificate stating the bankruptcy was caused by misfortune without misconduct; or
- the person is discharged without such a certificate (in which case disqualification ceases five years after discharge).

In cases (i) and (ii), disqualification ceases on the date of annulment or discharge. In case (iii), disqualification ceases five years after the date of discharge.

If you believe any of these circumstances may apply to you, please contact the Clerk for guidance.

6. The Co-option Process

1. The vacancy is advertised.
2. Interested residents submit a short application form.
3. Applications are considered at a Parish Council meeting.
4. Councillors may ask neutral, fair questions.
5. A vote is taken **in public**.
6. The successful candidate must receive an **absolute majority**.
7. If there is a tie, the Chair may use a **casting vote**.
8. The successful candidate signs the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and becomes a councillor immediately.
9. The Council does **not** provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants.

This process is set out in law and NALC guidance.

7. Confidentiality and Fairness

During the meeting, councillors may hold a short private discussion to protect applicant confidentiality. The vote itself must be taken in public.

Councillors must treat all applicants equally and must not:

- encourage or discourage individuals
- hold private interviews
- compare applicants
- discuss applications outside the meeting
- indicate how they intend to vote

8. What Happens After Appointment

The successful candidate must:

- sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office
- complete the Register of Interests
- follow the Council's Code of Conduct
- receive induction support from the Clerk and councillors

They may take their seat immediately and participate in the remainder of the meeting.

9. Further Information About the Role of a Parish Councillor

If you would like to learn more about the role of a parish councillor, the following sources provide clear, reliable and accessible information:

Sampford Brett Parish Council - Contains agendas, minutes, policies, and local information about how the Council works. Website: https://www.sampfordbrett.org.uk

Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC) - Provides guidance, training and support for parish and town councils across Somerset. Website: https://www.somerset-alc.org.uk

National Association of Local Councils (NALC) - Offers national guidance on councillor roles, responsibilities, and good governance. Website: https://www.nalc.gov.uk

These sources are optional but can help you gain a broader understanding of how parish councils operate and what the role involves.

Privacy Statement: Any personal information you provide during the co-option process will be handled in accordance with the Parish Council's Data Protection Policy and the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018. Information will be used solely for the purpose of administering the co-option process.

10. Clerk Contact Details

For all formal queries, please contact:

Clerk: Mrs Tracey-Ann Biss
Email: *clerk@sampfordbrett-pc.gov.uk*
Postal Address: *c/o Springwood House, 64 Tower Hill, Williton, TAUNTON, Somerset TA4 4JR*