

Provincial Grand Lodge of Somerset



Guide – Recruitment Best Practice for Lodges

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PREFACE

Freemasonry suffers a huge drop out rate among new members, 25% have left within three years of their initiation. The reasons for this drop out are not fully understood and are often dismissed with “it wasn’t for him”, “he didn’t like the ritual” or “he was too busy” etc. There is no doubt however, that part of the problem is that most candidates do not really understand what they are joining or what to expect.

This document has been produced to encourage Lodges to adopt best practice in their selection and interview process so that potential candidates are much better informed and the Lodge members have a much better picture of their potential new member. A new booklet “Steps to becoming a Freemason” is intended to be given to anyone who is seriously considering joining, it should be used by Lodges in conjunction with this document.

The Province is setting up a small Direct Approach Contact Team to ensure that direct approaches from potential candidates, from the web site etc are properly evaluated before and supported during the process of joining a Lodge.

1 INTRODUCTION

It is important to ensure that Freemasonry initiates the right individuals as candidates. The Craft needs Members who will be motivated, active participants. The initial responsibility falls on the Sponsors, the Proposer and the Seconder, but it is not entirely in their hands.

Your Lodge needs candidates but the qualification process should always remain efficient, professional and robust.

Each Candidate must know exactly what the expectations are of him and of the Lodge that he would like to join. Should he decide not to progress his application, or for it to be declined by the Craft, the procedure should leave him with a positive impression of Freemasonry and what it stands for.

Control at the front end of the interview process should mean suitable candidates are screened quickly for membership and reject those who may be considered unsuitable. The aim is to define a standard process whilst not sacrificing the good practices individual Lodges have in place today.

2 INITIAL APPROACH

Provincial initiatives such as Open Days, Provincial Website and Freemasonry in the Community have given the Craft a higher profile in the public domain. This has altered in many respects the way approaches are made by or to someone who is interested in joining Freemasonry. The likely methods fall into three categories:-

1. Individual approach to a mason from a friend.
2. A Freemason making initial approach.
3. An individual approaching Freemasonry direct.

This latter form of approach requires knowledge to be sought of the individual, his family, friends and business. If the approach is direct to the Province the Direct Approach Contact Team will handle the initial interview with a prospective Candidate. If contact is made direct with a suitable Lodge who shows an interest with the potential Candidate, the Lodge must assign suitable members to get to know him and his family over a period of time. All Candidates, not only those who surface through these channels should present a personal CV supported by two references from respected professionals who are not family.

3 INFORMATION FOR THE CANDIDATE

Every Lodge should draw up a short summary of what it is about and reasons why any Candidate should want to be a part of it. Essentially a Lodge "selling tool", it will enable the Interview Committee or Contact Officers to be better informed to make quick decisions concerning the Lodge/s best suited to the Candidate. It will also minimise the needed to continually refer back for clarification. This is particularly relevant to process Candidates quickly who come to us via FITC or Website routes.

He should as a minimum receive the following:-

1. The 'Steps to becoming a Freemason' booklet.
2. Latest version of Compass Magazine.
3. 'What's it all about' booklet or DVD

The Candidate must not be primed to answer questions when he attends the Interview panel. The Proposer and Secunder must ensure that the Candidate knows before the Interview, the total demands likely upon his finances and time. When these points are set out at the Interview, there should be no surprises and the Candidates response unequivocal.

Before candidacy, every potential candidate should be fully assured in his own mind:

1. That he sincerely desires the intellectual and moral improvement of himself and his fellow creatures.
2. That he is willing to devote part of his time, his means and his efforts in the promotion of brotherly love, relief and truth.
3. That he seeks no commercial, social or pecuniary advantages.
4. That he is able to afford the necessary expenditure without injury to himself or his connections.

It is the responsibility of the Proposer and Secunder to ensure that a Candidate is clear about the above points.

4 PROPOSER AND SECONDER

The Proposer and Secunder have considerable responsibilities in the candidacy process. In addition to their own personal reputations, the reputation of the Lodge and Freemasonry generally rests with the Proposer and Secunder. It is therefore important that before agreeing to act as either a Proposer or Secunder, they are sure that the individual is a suitable candidate. To do this they should have a detailed knowledge of the individual, his family, and business activity.

Their responsibility does not end at the Initiation and the acceptance of this continuing commitment from them is necessary at their interview and is irrespective of any arrangements that may exist for formal Mentoring.

Proposer and Secunder must be satisfied that the Candidate:-

1. Holds a belief in a Supreme Being and that he does not have religious beliefs incompatible with freemasonry.
2. He has a reasonable financial standing and that he is not entering Freemasonry for pecuniary gain.
3. He does not have a criminal record. (NB Consideration must be given to Grand Lodge policy and the Law itself e.g. Rehabilitation of Offender Act. If he does have a criminal record then always refer back to the Provincial Grand Secretary who can give advice based upon the latest ruling of Grand Lodge.

The Proposer and Secunder should understand the contents of Rule 157 to 166 B of C and also the duties contained in Rule 179, paragraph 14 of the summary of the Ancient Charges).

On Initiation, the Proposer has a duty of care to coach the candidate through the various degrees and assist in mentoring him to be a responsible member.

5 THE DUTIES OF THE SECRETARY ARE:

1. Obtain information on prospective candidate as early as possible.
2. Circulate to all members.
3. Observe rule 158 B of C if required.
4. Issue Blue form and have it completed.
5. Provide completed form to GP/Interview Committee
6. Arrange interview for Proposer/Secunder.
7. Arrange interview for Candidate.
8. Issue P form.
9. Include required information on Summons for the ballot.

6 INFORMAL CONTACT

It is recommended that two of the interviewing committee meet and talk with the potential candidate informally prior to the formal interview. This is considered essential if the individual has approached Freemasonry by a direct approach.

No matter how the candidate has made his initial approach it is strongly recommended that an informal interview/meeting is held at the prospective candidates home between the candidate and his wife or partner and two members of the interviewing committee. There are at least three objectives to this exercise:

- a) to ensure that the candidate and his wife or partner are fully aware of the commitment being made by the candidate, it therefore necessary to answer fully and frankly any questions put to the two committee members by either party.
- b) to establish that the candidates wife or partner does not object to his proposed membership.
- c) it will provide more background information to the interviewing committee to help them reach the correct decision on whether the person is a suitable candidate for Freemasonry.

Before a candidate for admission is presented to a Lodge Interview Panel the following activities should have taken place:

Subject to a general verbal agreement with the Lodge members who have met the candidate, the candidate answering the screening questions correctly and with a willingness by the candidate to progress to the next stage, the following will need to be completed:

1. UGLE Registration Form P – Completed by the candidate and handed to his Proposer

2. On the basis of the above being completed to the satisfaction of the Worshipful Master and Secretary, a formal interview is arranged and the candidate is invited to meet the Worshipful Master, Secretary, Proposer, Seconder and other selected brethren.

7 THE CANDIDATE INTERVIEW – OVERALL PROCESS

Overview:

1. Proposer and Seconder to meet the candidate on his arrival.
2. On entering the Interview room he should be introduced to all present by name
3. WM, when seated should expand on the introductions giving a little background on each of the members present and covering in a little more detail his position as WM.
4. Acknowledge to the Prospective Candidate that his Proposer and Seconder have already been interviewed discussed his candidacy and that this is the next stage in the process.
5. Having confirmed that the committee is charged with the process on behalf of the Lodge, outline to the candidate why the interview takes place;-
 - a. Ensure that Freemasonry accepts the right people into the craft and that we ensure the Craft is right for him.
 - b. To enable the Committee to report to the lodge as to the applicants suitability for membership.
 - c. Ensure that candidate wants to join Freemasonry for the right reasons.
 - d. Ensure that the candidate is under no misapprehensions about the craft.
 - e. Expand on information already provided by the Candidate.
6. The WM should ensure that the prospective candidate has a good idea of the commitment he is making. This can be done by giving a brief explanation of what it means to be a Freemason:-
 - a. The commitment to a way of life
 - b. High standards of Conduct
 - c. Leading a sound moral life by treating others as you would wish to be treated yourself
 - d. The support of others by way of charitable giving.
7. Encourage the candidate to start talking by use of open questions – starting with perhaps “tell us about yourself” is a good start.
8. The members of the committee then put their designated questions, probing further when necessary and allowing the prospective candidate plenty of opportunity to respond. The Interview committee should comprise:
 - e. Worshipful Master
 - f. Wardens - one or both to allow them to build experience and confidence.
 - g. Secretary
 - h. Two Past Masters acceptable to the lodge for this purpose.

8 PRE-MEETING

The members of the interview committee should meet prior to the time set for the meeting with the Prospective Candidate to allow discussion on the information provided during the interview of the Proposer and Secunder, and to ensure that they are aware of their role in the interview.

9 THE CANDIDATE INTERVIEW

In addition to the information provided in Section 7, the interview process should be considered in some detail in each Lodge and the process agreed by each Worshipful Master at the beginning of his year of office. For example agreeing that:-

1. The Secretary should send a letter to the candidate detailing date, time and venue for the interview and dress code should be indicated to all attending.
2. Outlining who will sit on the panel. It is recommended that this should not be the whole Lodge committee, a potential candidate will find it intimidating to be faced by a large group and the effect may be counter productive. A smaller group or sub committee consisting of no more than six members would be more effective and encourage the potential candidate into discussion.
3. When the interview concludes, the candidate will be asked to leave for a short while in order for his application to be considered. He should be accompanied by a Lodge member (not the Proposer or Secunder, ideally the Lodge Mentor).

CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

The following questions should be asked. The candidate ought to give spontaneous answers and he should not be primed on the replies that are expected of him.

1. A basic condition of admission and membership into Freemasonry is a belief in a Supreme Being? Do you subscribe to such a belief? If the answer is "NO", then it should be explained that such a belief is mandatory. The applicant should be politely thanked for coming and the interview terminated.
2. Tell us about yourself, e.g. Family, Work, Sport, Hobbies, Education, etc.
3. What attracted you to Freemasonry and to this Lodge in particular?
4. Are you comfortable with the cost of being a member and has it been fully explained to you? Just to recap: The Initiation Fee is £..... The Annual Subscription is £..... The Dining Fees are £.....
5. Are you aware of the time commitment for membership? Note: Lodge Interview Panel decision on asking "Can you spare the time for "XX" evenings per year (regular Lodge meetings, Lol, etc.)?"

6. Is your wife/partner aware of your wish to join Freemasonry, do they approve and will they support you if you become a member?

7. What do you feel you can offer Freemasonry? What qualities do you bring?

8. What expectations do you have of Freemasonry?

9. Are you prepared to support the charitable aims of the Fraternity – providing it is without detriment to yourself, your family and connections?

10. What questions do you have for us and please raise anything you feel relevant or not clear as we are here to help and give you all the information we can?

11. Does he understand the demands that will be made on him

Towards the end of the interview it is necessary to ensure that the candidate understands a number of important areas:-

a. Explain the pattern of meetings associated with the Lodge both in a Masonic sense and also a social sense. The element of his time commitment and his ability to attend are very important.

b. Explain the dress code required of members.

c. Explain the regular costs involved in joining and remaining a member:-

- I. Joining Fees
- II. Dues/subscriptions
- III. Regalia
- IV. Meals
- V. Explain the Masonic Charity system in general terms and how we also contribute to non- Masonic Charity activity both nationally and locally.

In closing the interview the WM should ascertain that the prospective candidate wishes to continue with his application to join. Lodge Mentor (or WM) to escort the potential candidate back to his Proposer and Secunder. Immediately after the interview the review should take place immediately afterwards.

If the vote has been successful he will be advised by letter attached regarding the next steps and that his details will be read out in open Lodge at a forthcoming meeting when a ballot will be taken.

If the vote has not been successful, he will be thanked for attending, and should it be necessary, it will be left to the Proposer to provide any additional feedback to the candidate.

Acknowledgement:

We would like to thank the Provincial Grand Lodge of Hampshire and Isle of Wight for allowing us to use their original documentation.

APPENDIX 1 EXAMPLE LETTER TO INITIATE ON LODGE LETTERHEAD

Dear Mr.....

Following your interview with the committee of the Lodge, I can confirm that you were formally proposed for membership at our meeting on

It is now proposed that you be Initiated into Lodge on We meet atpm but it would be most helpful if you were present bypm. (You will be balloted for at the beginning of that meeting, although this should be a formality and your Initiation will then commence).

Prior to the Initiation you will be required to pay your fees for your initiation and annual subscription. The initiation fee is a one-off fee of £..... and the annual subscription contribution for the year beginning 1st is £..... The total due will therefore be £..... A cheque payable to '..... Lodge No' would be welcome on the night.

The dress required is a dark suit (black, grey or blue), white shirt, black tie, black shoes and plain dark socks are usual. You will also require a pair of white gloves, which one of our members can obtain for you if you wish.

There is a meal after each meeting. Ordinarily the cost is £....., however yours is free on this occasion. You will be expected to say a few brief words at the table after a toast is made to you. I will chat to you on the night about this, but it will literally be along the lines of 'I've had a great evening and thank your sponsors'. You will find that brevity is often welcome on these occasions!

You are very welcome to invite fellow masons from your family/work to attend on the evening. If you have guests, please ask them to contact our dining steward,,, on or by email on by, so he can book them in for dinner.

If you should have any queries at all then please don't hesitate to contact me. We very much look forward to you joining with us and spending many happy meetings with the Lodge.

Yours sincerely

Secretary