

Membership Policy

We are very excited to welcome new members to the coop. We want the process of applying to join Furze to be fair, transparent and a good experience for people. The process will be in line with our [purpose and values](#) which is about creating a nice community which we suggest you read (here) first.

Allocation

We are aiming to have up to 10-15 members during the pre-build phase of the project, and around 20-25 members during the 'live in' phase.

Everyone who gains membership and contributes in the development and build will be offered housing in Furze Coop. All members and provisional members are subject to the conflict resolution process and dismissal procedures before and after the build.

Membership criteria

At this stage (2021 - 2023) Furze wants adults with the time and skills (or willingness and ability to learn) to contribute to the development of the properties and build. Furze will prioritise people who have lived in Bristol for at least one year, who want to live and work cooperatively and have a housing need.

Membership Expectations

- Regularly take on meeting roles (Cook dinner. Facilitate. Make the agenda. Take minutes)
- Attend a minimum of two Furze social events per year, out of a total of 4 per year that we intend to organise.
- Commit to the [purpose and values](#) of the coop. We welcome feedback on this document from all applicants, provisional members and members. We expect the document to adapt and evolve over time.
- Attend meetings consistently – these are currently on fortnightly Monday evenings. It is possible to zoom in to the meetings.
- Join a working group and contribute to the work of the coop in between meetings.
- Practise the conflict and communications culture and systems we are trying to develop.

Publicising membership spaces

Furze aims to advertise locally within the Lockleaze community and within the social networks of existing Furze members. We explain in our application process how to apply, the application process and the deadline if there is one.

Managing the process

A full member takes on the job of overseeing the membership process which includes corresponding with applicants, circulating applications to members, pairing provisional members with a buddy.

Application process

To apply you must answer the application form questions. You can apply using other media (voice/video etc) if written forms are not your thing. We will acknowledge applications and at each stage we tell applicants how soon we expect to make a decision.

We welcome group applications of friends or families.

We may phone or email applicants for more information. Applicants may also call or email the membership secretary for more information.

The membership process is:

- Send in applications
- Short listing
- A friendly initial interview.
- Invitation to provisional membership or application rejection.
- Provisional member participates in the meetings and working groups of the coop.
- 3 month review and invitation to continue the process or not.
- 6 month review and invitation to join the coop or not.

After each review, we decide at a coop meeting whether to continue or end the application process. All members must fully agree by consensus to continue the process.

Shortlisting

Current members must read the applications in advance of meetings. Existing members discuss the needs of the coop and the applicants based on these membership criteria:

- The applicant's housing need.
- People wanting to live cooperatively.
- Who we think we might want to live with.
- Who has the skills and time to contribute to the project.
- The gaps in diversity and skills in the mix of the existing group.

Provisional Membership

The number of provisional members at any time will be limited by our capacity to induct new members. This will be discussed in member meetings before making a call out for applicants.

Provisional members will be assigned a buddy who is not their close friend or connection to the group. The buddy will make themselves available to answer questions about policy and support them through the process.

If there is feedback or issues between members and provisional members in either direction this will be facilitated through the buddy. The provisional member can request to switch to a different buddy if they feel they would be better supported by someone else. See the communication and conflict policy for more on Furze's approach to navigating disagreements and conflict.

Legally, children cannot be members of a housing coop. If your family size changes between becoming a pre-build member and moving into the coop housing, there would need to be a new discussion about the capacity of the coop to house your additional family members. If you already have plans to expand the size of your family at the time of applying for membership, you are welcome to apply directly for your intended future family size.

Expectations of Provisional Members

By the 6 month review provisional members, with the support of their buddy, are expected to:

- Have chaired (or minuted) a meeting and have led on some coop work - in collaboration with a buddy if need be.
- Attended 2 social events with the existing coop members.
- Demonstrate that you share the [purpose and values](#) of Furze.

If you have not met every member in person within 6 months due to covid we will extend the provisional membership period.

3 month and 6 months reviews

At the 3 month review, full members will either reach consensus to continue the membership process for a provisional member or call an end to the process. At the 6 month review, full members will either agree the provisional member becomes a full member, extend the provisional membership or refuse their application for full membership.

On rare occasions, there might be a need for a more closed process to block an application. A closed process is called when the person blocking the applicant reaches out to the membership secretary and one other member to discuss and reach consensus on a confidential block.

Rejecting applications

This is done by phone or email (they can choose which on the application form). Individual feedback isn't given unless they ask for it – in this case we send an explanation that's been agreed by all members, focussing on shared reasons rather than individual feelings.

As unquantifiable as they will always be, the chemistry of friendship and collaboration will influence whether a probationary member becomes a full member or not.

Feeding back on the process

If feedback about the process or coop is received, the membership secretary forwards it to all members. We then read it in advance and discuss in a meeting, with a view to learning from it and improving our process. Feedback, and the notes from our discussion, are filed with the membership policy info.

Leaving the coop

Prebuild, members and provisional members are welcome to leave the process at any time. They should communicate this with as much notice as possible. If someone is unresponsive for more than 2 months we will assume they have chosen to leave.

Dismissal from the cooperative

People can be asked to leave the membership due to:

- Not participating in the life of the community (meetings, working groups, social events)
- Not contributing to work,
- Bullying, harassment or discrimination.
- After we move in - not paying rent. (Rent levels depend on each members' circumstances and the co-op can agree to alter them when those circumstances change.)

Dismissal procedure: see conflict policy.