

BECOME A PARISH COUNCILLOR

With local elections planned for May this year, here is a taster of what parish council's can do and what you can do as a parish councillor to help improve your local community.

What is a Parish Council?

A local council is a universal term for community, neighbourhood, parish and town councils. They are the first tier of local government and are statutory bodies. They serve electorates and are independently elected and raise their own precept (a form of council tax). There are 10,000 local councils in England with over 30% of the country parished and 100,000 councillors who serve in these local councils, with over £1b being invested into these communities every year. Local councils work towards improving community well-being and providing better services.

Their activities fall into three main categories:

- ◆ representing the local community;
- ◆ delivering services to meet local needs;
- ◆ striving to improve quality of life and community well-being.

Through an extensive range of discretionary powers local councils provide and maintain a variety of important and visible local services including allotments, bridleways, burial grounds, bus shelters, car parks, commons and open spaces, community transport schemes, community safety and crime reduction measures, events and festivals, footpaths, leisure and sports facilities, litter bins, public toilets, planning, street cleaning and lighting, tourism activities, traffic calming measures, village greens and youth projects.

What do local councils and Parish Councillors do?

Local (parish and town) councils and councillors make a massive difference to the quality of life of local people. They are passionate about their communities and seek to make a change to help improve the lives of their residents.

Parish councillors are elected to represent the local community, so you must either live or work within 3 miles of the parish boundary. Becoming a councillor is a rewarding experience as you will be in a position to make a change in your community to help improve the lives of residents, the role is unpaid and there is an expectation that you attend all parish council meetings (normally one per month). The term of service is 4 years.

A councillor's role can include responsibilities such as developing strategies and plans for the area, helping with problems and ideas, representing the community, working with other local community groups, decision making and reviewing decisions and talking to the community about their needs and about what the council is doing.

Councillors comment on proposals to ensure the best outcome and vote to enable the Council to make decisions.

Individual Parish Councillors cannot make decisions on behalf of the Council, but they can actively lead and engage with local projects. Parish Councillors have no powers outside of the Council meeting.

How to find out more about becoming a parish councillor?

Checkout your parish council website for details on how to apply to become a parish councillor. DMBC will also provide details. You can find more information on being a parish councillor on the website below.

www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a-candidate-or-agent/parish-council-elections-england

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