

Annual Parish Meeting

What is the Annual Parish Meeting?

Strictly this is the Annual Meeting of the Parish. It is also known as the Annual Parish Meeting or the Annual Parish Assembly, they are all the same thing.

The difference between the two meetings: the Annual Parish Meeting is a legacy from the Middle Ages, when Parish Councils did not exist, and all local decision making was carried out by meetings of the whole community. These meetings typically took place in the church vestry.

The Annual Parish Meeting should be a relatively informal event for the community whereas the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council is a formal council meeting.

The Annual Parish Meeting is the meeting where the parish council has an opportunity to report to its electorate on what it has accomplished in the preceding year.

Electors, public and press are invited to hear reports from the Chairman, District & County Councillors, community groups and any organisation that the town or parish council has funded during the year.

The Council may also invite the local community policeman, neighbourhood watch co-ordinator, local headmaster etc. to address and inform the audience on community matters. The Annual Parish Meeting is a SEPARATE meeting from the Parish Council Annual Meeting.

The Annual Meeting of the Parish Council must be held in the month of May and in an election year the meeting must be held between 4 and 14 days after polling day. This is the meeting of the parish council where they elect the chairman, make other annual appointments and review their insurance, risk management policies, etc.

When must the Annual Parish Meeting be held?

The annual parish meeting must be held between 1st March and the 1st June (inclusive) each year on a date decided by the Parish Council or the residents. If there is no Parish Council then on a date decided by the Chairman of the Parish Meeting. LGA 1972 s 14 (1)(2).

The Annual Parish Meeting may not start earlier than 6:00pm (LGA 1972 s 14 (4)).

It is recommended that in an election year the Annual Parish Meeting should be held after the elections to prevent the meeting being used as hustings for potential District and County Councillors.

How should the Annual Parish Meeting be conducted?

There should be an opportunity for the public and press to express their opinions on what the council are doing during the meeting. Many town and parish councils make this meeting a community event by providing refreshments, presentations from community groups and providing an informal atmosphere.

The Annual Parish Meeting is open to all electors of the Parish who have the right to attend and speak on any matter of local interest.

This is in contrast to a Council meeting where electors who are not Councillors have no automatic right to speak although the Parish Council do have a set time before a Council meeting when electors can raise matters of concern to them.

Calling the Annual Parish Meeting

The Annual Parish Meeting is usually called by the Chairman of the Parish Council. However any parish meeting may be called by (LGA 1972 s 15 (1))

- The Chairman of the Parish Council,
- Any 2 Councillors from the parish,
- Any 6 registered electors from the parish

The agenda has to be posted seven clear days before the meeting.

Chairing the Annual Parish Meeting

The meeting should be chaired by the Parish Council Chairman or in their absence the Parish Council Vice Chairman. LGA 1972 ss 17(1)). However, there is no requirement for the Parish Council Chairman to attend a meeting of the parish but they are entitled to attend (LGA 1972 s 16). If neither the parish council chair nor the vice chair are present then those electors present may appoint a chairman for the meeting. (LGA 1972 ss 17(3)).

The role of the Parish Council Clerk

There is no requirement for the parish clerk to attend the Annual Parish Meeting unless it is their contract of employment that they attend.

If required to attend they should attend the Annual Parish Council Meeting as the proper officer of the council unless a leave of absence has been agreed.

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting

The Annual Parish Meeting must not be confused with the Annual Parish Council Meeting. As the parish clerk is not required to attend the Annual Parish Meeting anyone can take the minutes to record the meeting. The minutes of meetings of the parish are kept separately from those of the parish council.

They are to be kept in a book specially provided for the purpose. LGA 1972 ss 19(1).

The minutes of the previous meeting should be signed by the person who chaired the previous Annual Parish Meeting

Voting at the Annual Parish Meeting

Initially voting on a question is done by a majority of those present at the meeting and the decision of the person chairing the meeting as to the decision is final unless a poll is demanded (LGA 1972 ss 18(2)).

No votes taken at this meeting are binding on the parish council although they should consider them at the next meeting of the parish council.

Only members on the electoral roll can vote on an issue.

Other members of the public can attend and express their opinions but not vote.