



Becoming a Parish Councillor

Background to parish councils

Parish councils have their origins in medieval times, in an era when money was rarely used and when few people lived in the countryside. Communities came together in order to organise land management, agriculture and settle disputes.

The current system of parish councils was formed in 1896 and now there are approximately 10,000 parish councils.

Any community can ask to have a parish council and, in fact, many new parishes have been formed in recent years, particularly in urban areas.

Local parish councils are the tier of local government which is closest to individual communities and therefore have the greatest potential for identifying, understanding and addressing the needs of the communities they serve.

While some larger councils are run along party political lines, there is no expectation that you have to join a political party. The vast majority of parish councils are not split by party politics.

Description of the role

Role	Parish Councillor
Responsible to	All people resident within the Parish
Regular liaison with	Other councillors, local authorities, residents
Period of service	Four years with possible extension.
Salary	This is a voluntary position with some expenses able to be paid in certain cases.

Please note: - A Parish Councillor is not an employee or a volunteer; they have put their name forward for public office, been elected as a representative volunteering their time for free to work on behalf of their community.

Main duties and responsibilities

The following main duties and responsibilities are indicative, apart from 1 and 2, which are mandatory:-

1. To attend parish council meetings
2. To conform to the code of conduct
3. To prepare for parish council meeting and familiarise/prepare for matters being discussed
4. To participate constructively in the governance of the parish
5. To ensure, with other councillors, that the parish council is properly managed
6. To be accessible and represent the interests of the parish that the councillor is elected to; and deal with parishioners enquiries, representations and complaints
7. To represent the whole electorate; listen and then represent the views of the whole community when discussing council business and working with outside bodies
8. To take part in meetings and form sound judgements based on what is best for the community, and then abide by majority decisions
9. To participate fully in the formation of the councils budget, deciding how much to raise through the council tax in order to deliver your council's services
10. To oversee the running of local services which may include: open spaces, play areas, village halls, community car schemes etc
11. To influence and shape the long-term development policy, strategy and service delivery for the parish
12. As part of the planning process, comment on planning applications in the parish
13. To take an active part in the parish council's arrangements to build community capacity and promote measures that contribute to the parish council's vision
14. To represent the parish council on outside bodies to which the councillor is appointed
15. Working to bring about improvements through local projects, lobbying other service providers and working in partnership with other parishes and agencies
16. To keep up to date with issues affecting the parish at a national, regional and local level

Person specification

Criteria	Essential	Desirable
Over 18 and on the electoral register	Y	
A resident of the parish for which you are standing during the whole of the last 12 months (although there are certain exceptions)	Y	
Able to attend regular evening meetings	Y	
Interest in local issues and things which affect people	Y	
Keen to improve the local environment and quality of life		Y
An understanding and willingness to represent the views of the whole community.	Y	
An interest in learning and developing your role in the community		Y
Is a British, EU or Commonwealth passport holder	Y	

Support and training

Each parish is supported by a Clerk and their role is to ensure that the council as a whole conducts its business properly and to provide independent, objective and professional advice and support.

Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Council (GAPTC) can provide training, advice and support on the following:-

- Acting lawfully as a council
- Code of Conduct issues
- Employment advice
- Localism

Regular training offered by GAPTC includes:

- Being a Better councillor
- Chairpersonship
- Budget setting
- Preparing for audit
- Common land and village greens
- Planning explored

Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC) provide support on Localism and Community Rights including Neighbourhood Planning; and on Parish, town and community-led plans.

How to find out more

Contact the parish clerk to find out more.

Contact an existing parish councillor to discuss the role.

Contact GAPTC advice@gaptc.org.uk to identify the range of support that can be obtained. Visit the website on www.gaptc.org.uk.