

WANT TO MAKE A CHANGE? BECOME A PARISH COUNCILLOR

"...Everyone who's part of a community benefits from the input of other people to that community. It makes sense for everyone therefore to do their bit and contribute; if everyone sat back and let 'other people' do it, we'd soon have no community organisations of any kind - voluntary, cultural, sporting, youth, or local government."

Are you passionate about this community?

Do you want to use your knowledge and skills to make a long-lasting change?

Do you have innovative ideas?

**Do you want to do something about a specific issue that affects
Kenardington?**

Read the following pages to understand the role of a Parish Council and its Councillors.

Why become a Parish Councillor

If you've never attended a PC meeting you probably believe they are a group of (probably) older people who meet now and then in a draughty village hall drinking cups of tea!

That's not the case and an ideal PC will have Councillors who vary widely in age, and ideals, this ensures all age groups and thoughts of the community are represented, there's no time for cups of tea although the draughty village hall is probably correct!

By becoming a Parish Councillor you'll become; with the help of your fellow councillors; somebody the community will ask for help, guidance and support with the power to influence decisions to benefit the community.

The decisions you help to make can see community improve and give you a sense of achievement and pride, whilst still enjoying and protecting the village where you live or work in.

How much time does it take up

PC's usually meet once a month for a council meeting lasting a maximum of two hours, which the public are also invited. In addition to this if an emergency arises a short extraordinary meeting may be called.

If major projects are occurring in the village groups may be set-up and one of the councillors asked to represent the PC and update the remaining councillors at the normal council meeting.

The Parish Clerk will keep councillors updated of correspondence received via email or telephone as it is received and ask councillors for their comments, therefore councillors will normally dedicate a few minutes a day to reply as required so it definitely doesn't take over your life.

Councillors have three main areas of work:

- **Decision making** by attending meetings and committees with other elected members, you decide which activities to support, where money should be spent, what services should be delivered and what policies should be implemented.
- **Monitoring** you make sure that that any decisions made lead to efficient and effective services by keeping an eye on how things are working

- **Getting involved locally** as local representatives you have responsibilities towards the community and local organisations. This often depends on what time you have available

How often do elections take place

PC elections take place every 4 years and if a Councillor has to resign for any reason during that time they are required to give their resignation in writing to the Clerk, this allows the Electoral Officer at the Borough Council to issue a Vacancy Notice, which is displayed for 14 working days, if they do not receive any applicants the PC is able to co-opt a replacement, this should be done as soon as possible to ensure the maximum number of Councillors are acting on behalf of the Community.

Am I eligible to be a Parish Councillor

Are you a:

- A British subject, or citizen of the Commonwealth or the European Union
- Over 18 years of age

And additionally, you have to be one of following:

- A local government elector for the council area for which you want to stand
- Have during the whole of the 12 months occupied as an owner or tenant of any land or other premises in the council area or within 3 miles of it for the whole period
- Have during that same period had your principal or only place of work in the council area or within 3 miles of it for the whole period

You **cannot** stand for election if you:

- Are subject of a bankruptcy restriction order or interim order
- Have within five years before the day of the election, been convicted in the UK of any offence and have had a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for a period of over three months without the option of a fine.

- You work for the council you want to become a councillor for (but you can work for other local authorities, including the principal authority (KCC) that represent the same area_

What is a Parish Council

A Parish Council is the level of government closest to the community, with the Borough and County councils above it.

As the authority is closest to the people its normally the first place the community go to with concerns or ideas, for this reason they are a vital part of the community.

Its work falls into three main categories:

- Representing the local community
- Delivering services to meet local needs
- Striving to improve quality of life in the Parish

It's important to remember, Parish Councils are non-political

Decisions Parish Councils make

These vary considerably, probably the most common are planning applications, crime prevention and deciding on the budget for each year. They also liaise with local groups, police, Borough and County Councils and how to improve the area we live in.

PC's have limited powers to make decisions but they can negotiate and influence those who make the final decisions.

Therefore, in this respect PC's are extremely powerful, those that make the final decisions know a PC gives the best reflection of how a community feel and take its views seriously.

These can't happen without Parish Councillors.

