

A Simple Guide to Parish Meetings

Parish Meetings are quite distinct from meetings of the Parish Council, although the two are often confused.

The confusion arises for several reasons:

- ❖ if present, the Chairman of the Parish Council must chair the Parish Meeting;
- ❖ the Clerk to the Parish Council organises and takes the minutes of the Parish Meeting;
- ❖ the Annual Parish Meeting often takes place on the same evening as the AGM of the Parish Council.

Some of the differences are as follows.

- ❖ Any person on the Electoral Register of the Parish is entitled to speak at a Parish Meeting, at a meeting of the Parish Council members of the Public may speak only at the Chairman's discretion.
- ❖ With the exception of the Chairman, councillors rank the same as other members of the Electorate at Parish Meetings.
- ❖ Agendas for Parish Council meetings must be published three days ahead of the meeting, for Parish Meetings a skeleton Agenda is usually published ahead of the meeting, but often items are added up to and even during the meeting.
- ❖ Only Councillors may request items to be placed on the Agenda of a Parish Council Meeting whereas any member of the Electorate may do so at a Parish Meeting.
- ❖ Any matter pertinent to the parish may be discussed at a Parish Meeting, whereas at a Parish Council meeting subjects for discussion should be limited to those matters on which the Council has the power to act (conferred by various Acts of Parliament).
- ❖ The press and general public have a right to attend Parish Meetings, but anyone not on the Electoral Register of the Parish is "stranger" and does not have the right to vote.

In a summary:

A Parish Meeting is a meeting of the people of the parish.

A Parish Council Meeting is a meeting of the Parish Councillors.