

COLLINGHAM *Parish Council*

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Or visit in person in the library on Mondays 2-5 (during Library Opening Hours)

When the Parish Council decided who would write the article this month, it was assumed that the Council would be heading for elections on 2 May and it would therefore fall to me once again to write the article. However as with Brexit, things in local and national government don't always end up as you originally anticipate. As I write this article we know that there have only been 8 nominations received for the 10 Parish Councillors and the Council will therefore be looking to co-opt another 2 members before June. If you might be interested in getting involved with the Parish Council and the work it undertakes on behalf of the whole Parish, please contact me.

I will try and make the remainder of this article as informative as possible as I attempt to address the question of "What are the Roles and Responsibilities of the Parish Clerk", a question that is not as easy as it may sound to explain, but here goes -

The primary role of the Parish Clerk is:

To ensure that the Parish Council operate legally – most of the rules which regulate the operation of the Parish Council are included in the Local Government Act 1972 and the Localism Act 2011 along with other legislation. The legislation is written to cover all levels of local government from Parish Meetings or Councils, through to County Councils or Unitary Authorities, which means that it doesn't specifically say who does what, as for each tier of local government it will differ, depending on the size of the particular organisation.

Collingham Parish Council has a Parish Clerk as its only employee and therefore the Parish Clerk is also the Responsible Financial Officer. This means that the Parish Clerk is also responsible for the day to day management of the Parish Council finances and financial procedures. It should however be noted that all Councillors are jointly and severally liable for the overall control of the finances, to ensure the clear and transparent handling of all income and expenditure, including the annual reporting which is legally required each year.

The Parish Clerk is legally the person to whom all correspondence should be addressed, this is then presented to the Parish Councillors for discussion/decision on any action to be taken – the Parish Clerk will then prepare the vast majority of responses which may be required, although occasionally this may be sent by the Chair of the Council. For all planning applications discussed at the meetings which require comments to the Planning Department, for this Parish the Parish Clerk drafts appropriate responses to ensure they are in line with material planning considerations identified by the Parish Councillors at the meeting and also refer to the relevant planning policy.

The Parish Clerk is not required to act as the Personal Assistant to the Chair (or any other Councillor) but is required to prepare and publish the agenda and minutes of the meetings and issue the summons to attend to all councillors, within a prescribed timetable. The Summons is accompanied by all necessary documents required to provide the Parish Councillors with enough information on which to make a decision and thus ensure the smooth running of Parish Council meetings.

The role of Parish Clerk is pivotal to the operation of a small parish council as the Council now undertakes an enormous a variety of professional functions. There are many management and compliance issues to be dealt with more being added to list each year as technology moves forward so does the legislation. Last year was no exception with the introduction of the new

General Data Protection Regulations and it fell to me to ensure that the Parish Council was compliant with appropriate policies and procedures presented to Councillors for adoption, but then the same day I can be dealing with general maintenance issues at the parks or the cemeteries.

The role is varied and complex, but it is a role which is at the heart of the community, working for the benefit and enjoyment of the community.

If you would like to know anymore about the role of Parish Clerk, please don't hesitate to ask!

Caron Ballantyne.

Collingham Parish Council meets on the fourth Thursday of every month and the second Thursday in December. The meeting in August may be cancelled if there is insufficient business. The meetings are held at the Youth and Community Centre on Low Street and begin at 7:15pm. The general public are welcome at all meetings, though they have no rights to participate except at the beginning of the meeting or at the Chairman's discretion and with prior notice to the clerk. Once the meeting is under way the public are welcome and encouraged to stay and listen to the Council. There may be times because of the sensitive nature of the business being discussed that the public and the press are asked to leave though this happens very rarely.