

ROLE OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

The role of the Parish Council is to represent the interests of the whole community. It is a part of local government supporting the democratic process. Local Councils provide a focus for the community to identify concerns and projects, and endeavour to solve them locally themselves.

The Parish Council is a corporate body, and a legal entity, separate from that of its Members, and is accountable to the local community. Its decisions are the responsibility of the whole body and are made collectively and by majority.

The Parish Council has been granted powers by Parliament including the authority to raise money through taxation - the precept, and a range of powers to spend public money.

A Parish Council is an elected body in the first tier of local government. Elections take place every 4 years. Other tiers, known as principal councils or authorities, have many legal duties to deliver services such as education, housing, town and country planning, transport, environmental health and social services.

The Parish Council is an employer. The Parish Clerk works for and with the Council to action its decisions.

ROLE OF PARISH COUNCILLORS

The main role of a Parish Councillor is to represent the views of all residents within the Parish and to listen to, and understand, the views and needs of different groups in the community (such as young and older people).

Parish Councillors are elected representatives, not volunteers or employees, and serve for a 4-year term, unless co-opted or elected in a bye-election when they serve until the next election.

They must apply the law and comply with the Code of Member Conduct. Councillors contribute to the work of the Council by suggesting ideas, influencing policy, engaging in constructive debate and by responding to the needs and views of the community.

Councillors comment on proposals to ensure the best outcome and vote to enable the Council to make decisions.

Individual Parish Councillors cannot make decisions on behalf of the Council, but they can actively lead and engage with local projects.

Parish Councillors have no powers outside of the Council meeting.

The Parish Council needs a wide range of skills to work as a team. Occasionally there will be a conflict of interest requiring sensitive judgement, and the need to take difficult decisions in an open, honest and reasoned way.

Councillors are also required to act in an ethical way and to declare an interest when necessary.

Key Responsibilities:

- As part of the Parish Council, Councillors may have responsibility for managing and maintaining public open spaces, play areas, Neighbourhood Development Plans.
- Deciding how much to raise through the precept in order to deliver the Council's services.
- Influencing and shaping the long-term development policy for the Parish, and as part of the planning process, commenting on planning applications in the Parish.
- Improving the quality of life and the environment in the local area.
- Working to identify issues which are important to the lives of the residents you represent.
- Working to bring about improvements through local projects, lobbying other service providers and working in partnership with other Parishes, local authorities and agencies.
- A Councillor agrees to attend all meetings (reasonably possible) that he or she is summoned to.
- Councillors together as a team are responsible for the financial decisions made and implemented.

A Councillors main task is to bring local issues to the attention of the Council, participate in debate and help the Council to make decisions on behalf of the local community.

To be eligible:

- Must be over 18
- Be an elector in the parish, or lived in parish for 12 months or have worked in parish for 12 months

Individuals are disqualified if:

- They are subject to a bankruptcy order
- Convicted of a criminal offence and sentenced to not less than 3 months imprisonment

If elected or co-opted you must abide by the rules that apply to disclosure of interest. Failure to do so can result in a number of criminal offences.

Meetings:

Every first Tuesday of the month (except usually January and August)

Sub committees as required

Working groups as required

Rules for meetings are set out under Standing Orders

You have a duty to attend meetings and apologies must be made to the clerk if you are unable to attend. Absence to be approved by whole council.

Failure to attend any meetings for 6 months without acceptable reasons results in disqualification

Training is available through Northumberland Association of Local Councils