

NETHERHAMPTON PARISH COUNCIL

Information for Prospective Parish Councillors

What is a Parish Council?

A parish council is the local authority that makes decisions on behalf of the people in the parish. It is the level of government closest to the community, with Wiltshire Council above it in the hierarchy. As the authority closest to the people the parish council is often the first place that people go with concerns or ideas. For this reason, it is a vital part of any community.

Why become a Parish Councillor?

By becoming a parish councillor, you become someone your community will look to for help, guidance and support: a community leader with the power to influence decisions for the benefit of the people you serve. Seeing your community change for the better as a result of decisions you have helped make is something that can give you a sense of achievement and pride.

What decisions do Parish Councils make?

Parish councils make decisions on issues that affect the local community. Probably the most common topics that parish councils get involved with are planning matters (they are statutory consultees), crime prevention, managing open spaces and campaigning for and delivering better services and facilities. It's true to say that on their own, parish councils have limited powers to make decisions. But they do have the ability to negotiate with, and the power to influence, those other organisations that do make the final decisions (such as the county council, health authorities, police, etc.). The organisations that make the final decisions know that a parish council gives the best reflection of how a community feels about something, and its views will be taken seriously. The council also has the power to raise money through taxation: the precept. The precept is the parish council's share of the council tax which is paid for by residents as part of council tax.

How much time does it take up?

Netherhampton Parish Council usually meets four times a year. Meetings usually last about an hour and a half, depending on the agenda. In addition to attending meetings parish councillors (plus other co-opted volunteers) share tasks such as:

- Upkeep of the website, notice board, etc.
- Dealing with and responding to parish e-mails
- Responding to queries from parishioners
- Attendance at relevant meetings such as Area Board, CATG, etc
- Overseeing maintenance of village furniture e.g. playground
- Dealing with litter, flyposting, hazardous parking
- Uptake of grants which may be available from various sources
- Co-ordination with the Parish Steward
- Organisation of village events
- Keeping up to date Emergency Plan, Weather Plan, Neighbourhood Plan, etc. as necessary
- Monitoring highway and footpath safety

How long does a parish councillor serve for?

Once elected, parish councillors sit on the council for a maximum of four years. If they then want to stay in the post they can stand for re-election.

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Am I eligible to be a Parish Councillor?

To stand for election on a parish council, you must:

- be a UK or commonwealth citizen, or;
- be a citizen of the Republic of Ireland, or;
- be a citizen of another Member state of the European Union;
- be a least 18 years old.

To be eligible to stand for an election for a particular parish, you must:

- be an elector of the parish, or;
- for the whole of the previous 12 months have occupied (as owner or tenant) land or other premises in the parish, or;
- during the previous 12 months have worked in the parish (as your principal or only place of work), or;
- for the whole of the previous 12 months lived in the parish or within three miles of the parish boundary.

You don't have to be connected to a political party. If you do become a parish councillor you will have to sign up to the Code of Conduct and complete a register of interests.

Don't take our word for it!

The best way to find out what it's like to be a parish councillor is to talk to someone who's doing it now. Come along to the Annual Parish Meeting on 16th March, or speak to one of the current councillors (Sally Armitage, Georgie Lawson, Maggies Scott, Jim Riddell, Paul Cunningham) and find out what they think of the job.

There is further guidance on the **Elections 2017** page of the website www.netherhamptonparishcouncil.com