

A Little About Local Councils

They:

- Were established by legislation in 1894; Oldest type of Local Authority in England and Wales.
- Are the elected representative body of the local community.
- Represent local community.
- Provide services to meet local needs.
- Improve quality of life and well-being in the community.
- Are the first tier of Local Government in England - there are around 9,000 local councils with around 80,000 local councillors.
- Are a statutory body with certain duties and legal powers.
- Are democratically and financially accountable to the local community.
- Have the legal right to be informed about planning applications and other issues.
- Give the local community a more powerful voice in the local area.
- Help support local groups in their area. This may be through funding, provision of meeting places, or through publicity. This could include voluntary groups that help young people or the older generation to name but a few.

Local Council Services

Local Councils have a range of powers and can provide, maintain and or contribute to services in their community.

Here are a few examples:

- Village Halls, Community Centres and leisure facilities
- Local Youth projects
- Bus shelters, car parks and community transport schemes

- Crime reduction measures –CCTV and Anti-Social Behaviour
- Cycle Paths and traffic calming measures
- Festivals, celebrations, illuminations and tourism activities
- Allotments, parks and open spaces
- Community Safety Schemes
- Litter bins, Street lighting and Street cleaning

And What else?

- Local Councils can raise money to spend on public purposes through their precept (a tax levied within the parish) which is collected through the local Council Tax.
- Most of that money is invested back into the local community to improve facilities and services.
- Many Local Councils also supplement the precept with grants from other bodies, including the Big Lottery.
- Sometimes they own property, and can use the money from rents or leases. They can also generate income through running their community facilities.
- The Localism Act 2011 gave more authority and power to the tiers of Local Government including Local Councils. For instance, the General Power of Competence will provide eligible Local Councils with the power to do anything an individual could do unless it is specifically prohibited by law. Other measures contained in the Localism Act include Community Right to Bid, Community Right to Build, Community Right to Challenge, Neighbourhood Planning and the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Your local Council does not have statutory responsibility for the following services:

- Waste Collection and Environmental Health.
- Highways issues and street parking or traffic regulation
- Street trading or licensing
- Housing, planning or building control
- Education or social care functions
- Development control and approving/refusing Planning Applications

Who is eligible?

The law specifies that any person over the age of 18 who is a citizen of the United Kingdom, The European Community, or the Commonwealth can be a Councillor if they are an elector in, work in, live in or live within three miles of the area of the local Council is eligible. Certain circumstances will mean that an individual may be “disqualified” from standing; check with your council if unsure.

What will I do if elected?

- Attend Council meetings
- Raise matters that the Council can consider and formally decide to take action about at meetings.
- Make informed contributions which influence the debate on the business that needs to be decided at those meetings
- Participate in the Council’s decision-making process, which in itself is subject to strict rules and guidelines.
- To take part/help in Parish Council community events.

Key Points

- A Councillor’s normal term of office is 4 years
- He/She is the holder of a Public Office and not a volunteer
- The main job of a councillor is to participate in the collective decision-making processes of the Council
- He/She has no authority to make decisions about Council business on their own.
- A councillor’s financial and certain other interests in Council business must be transparent
- He/she is subject to obligations set out in the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council
Information about councillors is available in the Council’s publication scheme
- The first business of the Council’s annual meeting is the election of its Chairman and Vice Chair.
- Most Councils appoint a Vice Chairman, but this is optional
- The normal term of office for the Chairman and Vice Chair is one year.

And above all else...

- ***To be a positive and active member of your community.***

Become a
Councillor

