

**WILLINGHAM
PARISH COUNCIL**

**All you need to know about being a parish
councillor!**

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Parish Clerk**

February 2018

www.willinghamparishcouncil.gov.uk

What is a Parish Council and what can they do?

Parish and Town Councils are the level of local government closest to the needs of local people. Parish and Town councils are created in law and are required to act within the laws by exercising their powers and functions which have been conferred on them by Acts of Parliament. However, these laws give the Parish and Town council a wide remit within which to improve the lives of their local community. They collect a precept each year (a sum collected with the council tax each year from the householders in the parish specifically intended to maintain and improve facilities and services for local people).

Parish and Town Councils are the least bureaucratic and the cheapest form of local government in existence and all sums collected are invested in the needs of the Parish or Town Council itself. They are elected bodies and as such are responsible and responsive to their local electorate.

Parish and Town councils in England have a number of basic responsibilities in improving the lives of their local community. Essentially these falls within three main categories:-

- Representing the whole electorate within the parish;
- Delivering services to meet local needs;
- Striving to improve quality of life in the parish.

There are many individual powers and in Willingham these include:- the cemetery, bus shelters, trees, litter bins, Pavilion and sports ground, playing fields & play area, Public Hall, Ploughman Hall and Community Orchard.

What does it mean to be a Parish Councillor?

What happens if you become a councillor?

Councillors are elected to represent the parish of Willingham for a period of 4 years.

Once elected they have to sign a statutory declaration form agreeing that they will abide by the Model Code of Conduct Order 2012.

The General Principals are:-

- Selflessness
- Honesty and Integrity
- Objectivity
- Accountability
- Openness
- Personal Judgement
- Respect for Others
- Duty to Uphold the Law
- Stewardship
- Leadership.

New Councillors must also complete the 'Register of Interests' as well as undertaking training. Training is paid for by the council.

For more information on the Code of Conduct, Register of Interests and training please contact the Clerk.

What do councillors do?

Councillors have three main components to their work:-

1. *Decision Making* - Through meetings and attending committees with other elected members, councillors decide which activities to support, where money should be spent what services should be delivered and what policies should be implemented.
2. *Monitoring* – Councillors make sure their decisions lead to efficient and effective services by keeping an eye on how well things are working.
3. *Getting involved locally* - As local representatives, councillors have responsibilities towards their constituents and local organisations. These responsibilities and duties often depend on what the councillor wants to achieve and how much time is available, and may include:
 - Going to meetings of local organisations.
 - Going to meetings of bodies affecting the wider community.

How much time does it take up?

Meetings take place on the first Wednesday of each month and usually run for about two hours. Prior to this meeting there are papers to read. Each member of the councillor is encouraged to become actively involved in the Council's activities and in Willingham we have Lead and Deputy Lead Councillors for our various areas of activity along with a Planning committee. The Lead and Deputy Councillors oversee the day to day running of services within their specific areas in conjunction with the Clerk and the planning committee meet as and when required (normally once or twice a month). Representatives also attend meetings of outside bodies which take place at various times in the year. For further information on the above please contact the Clerk.

Becoming a councillor: Am I Qualified?

Most people are qualified but there are a few rules. You must:-

- Be a British subject, or citizen of the Commonwealth or the European Union, on the day of election;
- Be aged 18 and over;
- Be a registered local government elector for the council area for which you want to stand **or**
- Have during the while of the 12 months preceding that day occupied as owner or tenant any land or other premises in the council area: **or**
- Have during that same period had your principal or only place of work in the council area; **or**
- During that 12 month period resided in the council area.

You cannot stand for election if you:-

- Are subject of a bankruptcy restriction order or interim order;
- Have, within five years before the date of the election, been convicted in the United Kingdom of any offence and have had a sentence of imprisonment

(whether suspended or not) for a period of over three months without the option of a fine;

- You work for the council where you want to become a councillor (but you can work for other local authorities, including the principal authorities that represent the same area)

I am not a member of a political party and do not want to be

Most Parish and Town Councillors are not party political – and many who are tied to a party as a councillor for another sector, do not stand as a political candidate for their Parish Council.

Why should I become a councillor?

As a councillor you can become a voice for your community and affect real change. Councillors are community leaders and represent the aspirations of the public that they serve. Parish and Town Councils and therefore councillors as their elected members form the level of governance closest to the public.

Want to know more?

If you are interested and want to know more about the work of the council please contact the Clerk, Mandy Powell, on 01954 261027 or email clerk@willinghamparishcouncil.gov.uk

You are also welcome to attend any Parish Council meeting. There is a 15 minute public forum at the start of each council meeting. Council meetings are usually held on the first Wednesday on the month. Meeting dates along with agendas and minutes can be found on the Council website.