

WHAT DOES A COUNCILLOR DO?

Listening: One of the most important tasks of a Parish or Town Councillor is listening to and understanding the views of people in their community.

Meetings: A councillor agrees to attend all meetings (reasonably possible) that he or she is **summoned** to. In addition to monthly full council meetings, there are further committee meetings or working groups. Most meetings are held in the evening but some committees and group representation may be during the day.

Representation: Parish Councils also need representation at other local government meetings or on local bodies/organisations and councillors may be asked to serve on certain groups or attend functions on behalf of the parish council. Councillors act as ambassadors for their community keeping everyone aware of local needs and concerns. Councillors represent the voice of their community as a whole, whilst being aware of and considerate to, specific minority needs.

Ceremonial Duties: In some larger councils there will be times when councillors are asked to attend civic functions as part of their duty to the community, for example Remembrance Parades.

Extra skills: Parish and Town Councils provide a focus for the community to identify concerns and projects and endeavour to solve them locally themselves. Councillors working as a team will need to deal with employment issues, budgeting, asset management, staff management, project management or grant funding and probably lots more if they are creative and involved. All councils must be aware and owe a duty to their community to manage staff considerately. Accounts must be kept and whilst the clerk (or Responsible Financial Officer) will be employed to carry out this duty, councillors together as a team are responsible for the financial decisions made and implemented. A clerk is employed to advise and seek advice on behalf of councillors to assist them in their decisions. Councillors are there to consider the information gathered and make a group decision on all matters. No individual councillor is responsible for any single decision. This is democracy at its best.

Training and support: Legislation allows for councils to pay for training and ongoing training for councillors is sound business management.

Responsibility: All councillors are expected to abide by the Parish Councils Code of Conduct. Each local council must adopt and publicise a Code of Conduct that is in line with the Nolan principles. The Code deals with councillors obligations about their conduct, including the registration and disclosure of their interests. Complaints about councillors' conduct are dealt with by the principal authority. The responsibilities detailed in the Code of Conduct are designed to protect councillors as well as the people they serve and give clear guidance so that councillors may undertake their duties with confidence.