

MAKE A CHANGE, BECOME A PARISH COUNCILLOR

Somerford Keynes Parish Council is calling on residents with a keen interest in their community to stand in the local elections in 2019.

What do Councillors do?

Parish Councillors are the people who best know their community, both because they live there themselves and because they listen to the views of their Parishioners. It is the job of Parish Councillors to champion their community and represent its needs and wishes to higher tiers of local government. We are democratically elected representatives of our constituents (albeit a small constituency!) and have to abide by certain rules to try to ensure that we maintain fairness and integrity. Parish Councillors are volunteers and are therefore unpaid.

The Council is helped in its job by the Parish Clerk, who is a paid Local Government Officer. The Clerk takes minutes at Parish Council meetings, does most of the administrative work and, very importantly, prepares the Council's annual Budget.

How does this specifically relate to being a Councillor in Somerford Keynes and Shorncote?

Our Parish is quite small, so we don't have a large budget or many assets. Nevertheless there are some things which our Parish Council must do, and some things which we should do but are not mandatory.

What the Parish Council must do (a lot of this is done during Parish Council meetings):

- Set a budget. This is done annually, with the Clerk doing most of the work.
- Hold meetings (at least four a year, although we would expect one every month except August). When standing for election you should be in a position to attend most of these meetings, although of course personal circumstances might intervene later. Meetings are on the evening of the first working Monday of the month.
- Hold an Annual Meeting for Parishioners (otherwise known as the 'Annual Parish Meeting').
- Deal with the administration of the Clerk's employment.
- Ensure the Parish's assets are correctly administered.
- In its capacity as Trustee, send a representative to Village Hall Committee meetings.

Procedures are in place for the smooth running of all of the above.

What the Parish Council should do:

- Communicate regularly with Parishioners, by newsletter, the Clerk's email list, and/or the website.
- Respond to important Planning and Minerals applications.
- Maintain links with local leisure facilities, LME and the Cotswold Water Park Trust to ensure good communications between these organisations and the Parish, and to communicate any problems to them in a timely way.

- Represent general concerns and issues to CDC and/or GCC, either directly or through our District/County Councillor (note: it is not the job of the Parish Council to represent individual concerns – there just isn't the time). These concerns could be to do with highways/footpaths, parking, services or a multitude of other things.
- Ensure that the Neighbourhood Development Plan is carried forward, and that a further Plan is in place for 2031.
- Arrange or facilitate Parish events: the Parish Spring Clean, Royal Celebrations etc.

Please note that the Parish Council conducts a lot of its business by email – for example, this is how planning applications are received and agendas and meeting minutes sent out.

How long does it take?

We have found that, in normal circumstances, we spend about two hours per week on average dealing with Council business, although this time might be unevenly spread throughout the month, with more time being spent just before and after Parish Council meetings. Some Councillors might take on an extra, temporary, project which might require more time. However this is not mandatory.

Can I stand?

There are only a few rules to stand for election. You must:

- be a British citizen, or a citizen of the Commonwealth, or the European Union;
- be 18 years of age or older;
- live in an area that is served by a local council.

Please note that there is a requirement for Parish Councillors to fill in a Register of Interests soon after election, which will be published on CDC's website. In addition, Councillors must declare it if they have a personal or pecuniary interest in any item discussed at a Parish Council meeting.

How can I get involved?

Contact Somerford Keynes Parish Council at skpcclerk@gmail.com to find out more.