

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR PARISH COUNCILS & PROSPECTIVE PARISH COUNCILLORS

These notes are for use by Parish Councils as an outline of the process of selecting Councillors for their Council, and can also be used as a useful document to give to prospective Councillors for either election or co-option to the Parish Council so that they have an insight into what is expected from them.

PARISH COUNCIL ELECTIONS

The Parish or Town Council is made up of members, and is an elected tier of local government. The Elections are administered by the District Council on behalf of the Parish Council. The Council is ably guided and supported by its only employee, the Proper Officer, or as more commonly known, the Parish Clerk. The Parish Council works closely with elected District and County Councillors and Local Police to mutual benefit. It can also appoint non-voting expert advisers.

Membership of the Council is open to British Citizens, Commonwealth Citizens, and Euro-Nationals who satisfy the election qualifications. Candidates qualify if they are a registered elector in the Parish area or, if during the twelve months before the election or co-option they have owned or been a tenant of any land or premises, or if their place of work has been in the Parish area, or if they have lived within 3 miles (4.8km) of the Parish boundary.

There is no upper age limit, but Councillors must be over 18 years when elected or co-opted. There are some disqualifications, details of which the Clerk can give you on request.

Parish Councillors are all unpaid volunteers, but some expenses may be paid if on Council business or Councillor training and is at the discretion of the Council at a full meeting.

The Parish Council is a secular and non-discriminatory body. Prospective councillors will need to be able to demonstrate their commitment to equality and diversity.

All Council business and meetings are conducted in accordance with a set of 'Standing Orders'. If selected you will be furnished with a copy.

CO-OPTING PARISH COUNCILLORS

In the event that a vacancy arises on the Parish Council but that an election is not called within the legal time limits the Council may wish to follow the best-practice procedures set out below to fill the vacancy.

- The Parish Council will as soon as possible widely advertise locally for a minimum of 30 days that it has a vacancy on the Council and invite people to put themselves forward to be co-opted onto the Council. The Council will ensure that information about becoming a Parish Councillor is widely available in order to enable people to make an informed decision as to whether to apply.
- All applicants will be invited individually to an interview with the Parish Council at a mutually acceptable date and time. It is helpful but not compulsory, if applicants could provide the Council in advance with a C.V. or a few notes about yourself, your experience or anything that you feel will help the Council make its decision. When all candidates have been seen the full Council will then decide whom they wish to appoint and all applicants will be informed as soon as possible after that.

COUNCILLOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- You must be willing to provide contact details that will be publicly available.
- You must be able to attend meetings when summoned so to do. These will normally take place on weekday evenings. The Clerk will provide, usually by email, notice of the meeting and the agenda at least 3 days beforehand. You will be furnished with a series of proposed meeting dates and every effort will be made to adhere to them, but sometimes it may be necessary to call an extra-ordinary Council or Committee meeting.
- You will be expected to undergo relevant training courses at various locations, to widen your knowledge of council activities and responsibilities and to assist you in debate and decision-making.
- You must be prepared to work as a member of a team for the wider benefit of the community.
- As a member of the Council you will be responsible to all of the people residing in the Parish and must take an interest in the local issues and activities that affect them.
- You will develop an understanding and a willingness to represent the community as a whole and will be keen to improve the quality of life and the environment of local people.
- You will sign a declaration that you have been given, and have read, the 'Model Code of Conduct for Parish and Town Councils' and will abide by it. This is a legal document.
- You will have a duty to register specific financial and other interests. The Clerk will provide you with the necessary forms and when signed, will retain a copy and the originals will be sent to the Monitoring Officer at Waveney District Council.