

Do you know what the Parish Council does and have you thought about becoming a Parish Councillor?

23 January 2023

Your Parish Council is a local authority that makes decisions on behalf of the people in the parish. It is the first layer of government closest to the community.

As the authority closest to the people, the parish council is the first point of contact for people to go to with their concerns or ideas and for this reason, the parish council is a vital part of the community.

Why become a Parish Councillor?

If you live in a community when something 'big' has happened, you'll know that's when people need support and guidance and it's the parish council that they turn to.

As a parish councillor, you become someone your community will look to for help, guidance and support, a community leader with the power to influence decisions for the benefit of the people you serve. Training will be given and you are supported by The Clerk who will advise and provide administrative support.

Seeing your community change for the better because of decisions you have helped make, is something that will give you a sense of achievement and pride.

What decisions do Parish Councils make?

The most common areas that parish councils get involved with are planning matters (they are statutory consultees), crime prevention, managing open spaces and campaigning for and delivering better services and facilities.

On their own, parish councils have limited powers to make decisions. However, they do have the ability to negotiate with, and the power to influence, those other organisations that do make the final decisions and, in this respect, parish councils are extremely powerful. The organisations that make the final decisions know that a parish council gives the best reflection of how a community feels about something and the views of the Parish Council are taken seriously.

Parish Duties

Halebank Parish Council currently has 7 Parish Councillors with 1

vacancy. The duties and functions of a parish council are many and varied so it is an interesting position to hold.

We meet 11 times a year. Meetings are held in the evening for approximately 1- 2 hours. We discuss and decide upon planning applications and any other matters referred to by residents. There is also an annual parish meeting to which all parishioners are invited. Residents can bring to the attention of the parish council anything that concerns them, either directly or through the clerk. If matters raised are not the responsibility of the council, the clerk can bring them to the attention of the proper authority.

How much time does it take up?

In addition to the regular meetings, some councillors have specific duties requiring them to attend other meetings to represent the council, e.g. acting as a representative on an outside body, or helping develop a new project for the community.

Such meetings don't happen often, so it's not going to take over your life.

How long does a parish councillor serve for?

Once elected, parish councillors sit on the council for a term of four years. If they then want to stay in the post they can stand for re-election.

Councillors can also be co-opted. This requires the prospective candidate to write a brief resumé and attend a parish meeting for a short informal interview.

The councillors will then take a vote and appoint the most suitable candidate.

Am I eligible to be a Parish Councillor?

To be able to become a councillor for Halebank Parish Council you must:

- be an elector of the parish, or;
 - for the whole of the previous 12 months have occupied (as owner or tenant) land or other premises in the parish, or;
 - during the previous 12 months have worked in the parish (as your principal or only place of work), or;
 - for the whole of the previous 12 months lived in the parish or within three miles of the parish boundary.
- be a least 18 years old.

Don't take our word for it!

The best way to find out what it's like to be a parish councillor is to talk to someone who's doing it now.

Come along to a parish council meeting, or speak to the clerk, Wendy Gregory, by telephone on 07926995697 or by email clerk@halebankpc.or