Bramley Parish Council

serving the community since 1894

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What is a Parish Council and why become a Parish Councillor?

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A parish council is a local authority that makes decisions on behalf of the people in the parish. It is the level of government closest to the community, with the district authority (Waverley Borough Council) above it in the hierarchy.

As it is the authority closest to the people, parish councils are invariably the first place people will go with concerns or ideas. For this reason, they are a vital part of any community.

Why become a Parish Councillor?

If you've never been to a parish council meeting before, you may be forgiven for thinking that parish councillors are a group of (probably older) people who meet now and then in a draughty village hall. If, however, you live in a community where something 'big' has happened, you'll know that when people in the community need support and guidance, it is sometimes the parish council that is turned to.

By becoming 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. Seeing your community change for the better, as a result of decisions you have helped make, is something that can give you a sense of achievement and pride.

What decisions do Parish Councils make?

Parish councils make all kinds of decisions on issues that affect the local community. Probably the most common topics 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.

It's true to say that on their own, parish councils have limited powers to make decisions. But they do have the ability to negotiate with, and the power to influence, those other organisations that do make the final decisions (such as the borough council, health authorities, police etc).

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 its views will be taken seriously.

How much time does it take up?

The Council usually meets once a month for the full council meeting, to which members of the public are also invited. These meetings last approximately 1½-2 hours, depending on the agenda set for the meeting to discuss. Some councils have committees to deal with specific subjects, such as Planning matters or particular projects. In addition to the regular meetings, councillors are occasionally required to attend other meetings representing the council; for example acting as a representative on an outside body, community activities or helping develop a new project for the community. Such meetings won't happen every day, 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 maximum of four years. If they then want to remain in the post they can stand for re-election.

Am I eligible to be a Parish Councillor?

To stand for election on a parish council, you must:

- be a UK or commonwealth citizen.

- be a least 18 years old.

To be eligible to stand for an election for Bramley parish, 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.

You don't have to be connected to a political party.

If you do become a parish councillor, you will have to sign up to the Code of Conduct.

What powers do parish councils have?

They have a wide range of powers which essentially related to local matters, such as looking after community buildings, open spaces, play areas, street lighting and much more. The council also has the power to raise money through taxation, the precept. The precept is the parish council's share of the council tax. The precept demand goes to the billing authority, the district council, which collects the tax for the parish council.

Parish Duties

Bramley Parish Council has 9 Councillors who stand for election every four years. The duties and functions of a parish council are many and varied.

The Council meets monthly (excluding August) to discuss progress on current projects and any other matters referred to it by local residents. Two further short meetings to discuss Planning applications are scheduled each month. Depending on the number of applications that need to be reviewed, these tend to last around 15-30 minutes. From time to time, and depending on the complexity of the applications to be discussed, these meetings are cancelled and planning applications are reviewed online. All meetings are open to the public and there is a forum during the meeting at which members of the public can raise concerns and ask questions. There is also an annual meeting which all parishioners are invited to attend. All meetings take place in the evening are advertised on the council notice boards and on the Parish Council website. 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.

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 one of our councillors and find out what they think of the job. Their contact details can be found at:

www.bramleyparish.co.uk/community/bramley-parish-council-15042/councillors/