

SACRISTON PARISH COUNCIL.

Becoming a Parish Councillor

Our mission: to ensure provision of high quality services for the benefit of our community in Sacriston.

Below is a brief guide to becoming a Parish Councillor and what this entails. Having read the following information, hopefully you will be in a better position to decide if you would like to stand for public office.

Legal Requirements

To stand for election you must fulfil the following criteria on the day of nomination:

- You are 18 years of age or over; and
- You are a UK, EU or Commonwealth Citizen; and
- You are registered to vote, ; or
- You have worked or have been a tenant or land owner in the locality for one year or lived in the parish or within 3 miles of it.

You may not stand for election if:

- You work for the Parish Council; or
- You are bankrupt; or
- You have served a prison sentence (including suspended sentences) of three months or more within the last five years; or
- You have been disqualified under legislation relating to illegal or corrupt practices.

What is a Parish Council?

Parish Councils represent the concerns and needs of the local community and can provide a range of services effectively. Parish Councils have powers and functions conferred by Statute. The range of powers are many and varied and continue to change and in future these responsibilities will be far greater.

Role of a Parish Councillors

- To represent the Parish and the views of its residents.
- To make the lives of the local community more comfortable by representing the whole electorate, delivering or coordinating services to meet local needs and working together to improve the quality of life in the parish.
- To plan, develop and monitor Parish Council business.
- To always work in the public interest.

Questions and answers

Why become a Councillor?

As a Councillor you will become the voice of your community and represent local views and interests. Collectively, Parish Councillors are responsible for decisions affecting a range of services.

What is the Electoral Process?

The process begins in March every four years, when a 'Notice of Election' is published. This gives details of the nomination timetable and who to contact if you would like to stand for election.

At the end of the nomination period the Council will publish the names, addresses and descriptions of the candidates, followed just before the election by a Notice of Poll containing details of the date of election, details of the candidates and where to vote around the town.

What is co-option?

Councillors may resign from the Council before their term of office is up. A notice is then published to see if Parishioners want to hold a by-election. If this does not happen then the Parish Council can co-opt new Councillors onto the Council. This means that they can be appointed without an election – but they have to explain to existing Councillors why they want to join them.

Anyone interested can apply to be a councillor and be co-opted provided that they are legally able to do so (see above).

How long would my term of office be?

All Councillors elected will serve a four year term. However, if you are elected at a by-election or co-opted onto the Council you will serve until the next scheduled election.

How much time will I have to commit?

It will be for you to decide the level of commitment you are willing to give as a Councillor.

This will also depend upon your role within the Council and the number of commitments you take on which will increase the amount of time required for Council business.

When do Council meetings take place?

All meetings are scheduled to take place on the first Wednesday in the month (except August) at 6:30pm, and should last approximately two hours..

Do I get paid to be a Councillor?

As a Parish Councillor you will not receive a salary or be reimbursed for the time incurred whilst on Council business. Travel expenses for journeys out of the area may be reimbursed.

How much support will I receive?

The Parish Clerk is there to offer you support and advice on any issue.

Will I receive any training as a Councillor?

The Council has a training budget to help Members carry out their responsibilities. If you would like to know more about the Council you are welcome to attend one of our meetings.

To find out more about becoming a Parish Councillor, please contact:

- Mr Hugh Dixon
6, Springside
Sacriston
Durham
DH7 6QJ