



**Why Become A Parish Councillor?
And how to go about it....**

Are you interested in becoming a Parish Councillor?

If you are passionate about your local community, we need you. Councillors make a huge difference to the quality of life of local people and how local issues are dealt with. We need people from all backgrounds and experiences who reflect the communities they serve to put themselves forward for election.

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. Go along to a parish council meeting, speak to one of the councillors and find out what they think of the job.

Our parish council website has the names and contact details of the current councillors, and the dates of our meetings. As does our bi-monthly Parish Newsletter delivered to all residents across our parish. www.laverstockford-pc.gov.uk

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

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 and roads & highways.

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 district or county 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.

Why become a Parish Councillor?

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.

How much time does it take up?

Councils usually meet once a month for the council meeting to which members of the public are also invited. Meetings may last two or three hours, depending on what's on the list of items to discuss. Some councils may also have sub-committees to deal with specific subjects, such as planning matters.

In addition to the regular meetings Councillors are required to give time for 'ad hoc' meetings – for example with architects or agents to discuss planning applications that the council must give its opinions on.

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 stay in the post they can stand for re-election.

This does not mean that you have to stay for four years. If you find it's not for you, or you can no longer meet the commitment, you can stand down.

Am I eligible to be a Parish Councillor?

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

- be a UK or Commonwealth citizen; or
- be a citizen of the Republic of Ireland; or
- be a citizen of another Member state of the European Union; and
- be at least 18 years old.
- To be eligible to stand for an election for a particular parish, you must:
- be an elector of the parish; or
- in the past 12 months have occupied (as owner or tenant) land or other premises in the parish; or
- work in the parish (as your principal or only place of work); or
- live 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.



The Role of a Parish Councillor

Role Parish Councillor **Responsible to** All people resident within the Parish

Regular liaison with

Other councillors, local authorities, residents

Period of service

Four years with possible extension.

Salary

This is a voluntary position with some expenses able to be paid in certain cases.

Main purpose

Representing the views of all residents within your parish.

Secondary purpose

- As part of a local council you will have responsibility for running local services which may include: open spaces, play areas, village halls, community car schemes and potentially much more.
- Deciding on how much to raise through the council tax in order to deliver your council's services.
- Influencing and shaping the long term development policy for the parish, and as part of the planning process, comment on planning applications in the parish.
- Improve the quality of life and the environment in their local area.
- Working to identify issues which are important to the lives of the residents you represent.
- Working to bring about improvements through local projects, lobbying other service providers and working in partnership with other parishes and agencies.

Training is available and mentoring from council officers, and other councillors.

Nomination process

To stand as a candidate at any election a nomination paper must be submitted. The nomination paper gives details of name, address and political description (if any). You can contact the Electoral Services team for a nomination pack.

All nomination papers require a signature from two (one proposer, and one seconder) registered electors within the parish. The proposer and seconder must be on the Wiltshire Council electoral register that is in force on the 25th working day before the poll.

For more comprehensive information regarding parish elections, please visit the Electoral Commission's website.

Guidance notes

Full name and home address must be included on the nominations. If desired, a description can be included. The description, if any, must consist of either:

- the word “Independent”. This word must be used on its own and cannot accompany any other word
- a description (of not more than six words in length) which is the registered political party description.

You can leave the description blank if you would prefer.

Candidates cannot submit a nomination paper using a political party description unless they have their permission to do so and a certificate from them saying that they are authorised to use their description.

If you are standing as candidate, please take a look at the Guidance for Candidates at Parish council elections in England | Electoral Commission for further information.

We would advise prospective candidates to attend the Parish Candidates and Clerks briefing run by the Electoral Services Team.

Wiltshire Council Local Elections 2025

Key dates and links

Tuesday 11 February, 6pm - Candidate and agents webinar

Tuesday 11 March - Notice of Election (Pre-election period begins)

Wednesday 12 March – Wednesday 2 April, 10am-4pm, nominations delivered to designated council office

Thursday 3 April, 4pm - statement of persons nominated

Thursday 1 May – POLLING DAY

Tuesday 6 May - all existing councillors retire (even those who have been re-elected)

Tuesday 6 May - new councillors take office

Local elections - Wiltshire Council - www.wiltshire.gov.uk/local-elections
Guidance for Candidates at Parish council elections in England | Electoral Commission - www.electoralcommission.org.uk/guidance-candidates-parish-council-elections-england

