



Serving the community

Blaby Parish Council

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What is a parish or town council?

There are over 8,700 parish and town councils representing around 16 million people across England. They form the most local level of government and cover many rural and urban areas.

What's the difference between a parish council and a town council?

Not a great deal. They both have the same powers and can provide the same services. The only difference is that a town council has decided that it should be known as a town council instead of a parish council, and has a mayor.

What services can it provide?

A parish or town council has an overall responsibility for the well-being of its local community. Its work falls into three main categories:

- representing the local community
- delivering services to meet local needs
- striving to improve quality of life in the parish

A Parish Council might provide and/or maintain some of the following services:

- allotments
- burial grounds
- car parks
- community transport schemes
- footpaths
- bridleways
- bus shelters
- commons
- crime reduction measures
- leisure facilities

It can also work with Blaby District Council and Leicestershire County Council for other services, for example:

- litter bins
- local youth projects
- open spaces
- public toilets
- planning
- street cleaning
- street lighting
- tourism activities
- traffic calming measures
- village greens

How does it make decisions?

The Parish Council is made up of a number of councillors who meet regularly to make decisions on the work and direction of the council. As an elected body, the Parish Council is an "it" and, through its councillors, is responsible to the people it represents – that's the local community.

Attending a council meeting is the best way to find out what it does. Have a look at our website www.blabyparishcouncil.org to see what the Parish Council has been dealing with recently.

Where does it get its money from?

Each year a sum of money called a 'precept' is collected through your council tax. This money is used by the parish council to improve facilities and services for local people and run the Council. Parish councils can also apply for grants and loans.

How are parish or town councillors elected?

Parish or town councillors are elected to represent a geographical area known as a ward - they are elected by people who live in the area.

What do parish or town councillors do?

Councillors have three main areas of work:

1. Decision-making: through attending meetings and committees with other elected members, councillors decide which activities to support, where money should be spent, what services should be delivered and what policies should be implemented;
2. Monitoring: councillors make sure that their decisions lead to efficient and effective services by keeping an eye on how well things are working;
3. Getting involved locally: as local representatives, councillors have responsibilities towards their parishioners and local organisations. This often depends on what the councillor wants to achieve and how much time is available.

The day-to-day work of a councillor may include:

- going to meetings of local organisations
- going to meetings of bodies that affect the wider community, such as the police, the Highways Authority, schools and colleges
- bringing parishioners concerns to the attention of the council

Could I be a parish councillor?

As a councillor you can become a voice for your community and affect real change. It helps if you're a "people person" who enjoys talking to other residents but, more importantly, you need to have the concerns and best interests of the parish as a whole at heart. Councillors are community leaders and should represent the aspirations of the public that they serve.

Parish Councils are the most local part of our democratic system and are closest to the public.

How much time does it take up & when?

On average, less than a couple of hours a week. Obviously there are some councillors who spend more time than this – and some less, but in the main, being a parish councillor is an enjoyable way of contributing to your community and helping to make it a better place to live and work. Council meetings are mainly held in the evening – as are most meetings of the other groups which councillors attend on the Council's behalf.

Talking and listening to your fellow parishioners can be done at any time but you must be able to spend a couple of hours once a month on a Tuesday evening attending the Council meeting.

Am I qualified?

Most people are. However there are a few basic rules. You have to be:

- a British citizen, or a citizen of the Commonwealth or the European Union, and
- 18 years or older on the day you become nominated for election, and
- You have during the whole of that same 12 month period resided in the parish or within 4.8 kilometres (3 miles) of it.

You cannot stand for election if you:

- are the subject of a bankruptcy restriction order or interim order
- have, within five years before the day of the election, been convicted in the United Kingdom of any offence and have had a prison sentence (whether suspended or not) for a period of over three months without the option of a fine.

There are also some other disqualifications relating to candidacy, but they are too complex to outline here.

Getting elected

To get voted in as a local councillor you'll need to be at least 18 years old and a British, Commonwealth, Irish or European Union citizen. You'll also need to be able to say yes to one or more of these questions:

- are you registered to vote in the area
- have you rented or owned land or premises in the area for the whole of the last 12 months
- have you had your main job in the area during the last 12 months
- have you lived in the area for the whole of the last 12 months