

QUEDGELEY PARISH COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

ISSUE THIRTEEN

SPRING 2011



Welcome to the
Thirteenth Edition of
Quedgeley Parish
Council's



We are almost at the end of another financial year and Parish Council elections are due to take place on the 5th of May. Each and every person is important so please cast your vote to make sure you get the parish councillors you want.

Anna Mozol

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"Working with the Community for the Community"

PARISH COUNCIL ELECTIONS

5TH MAY 2011

COME AND VOTE !!



Your council chair, Anna Mozol, says: "Some people may think their opinions don't count, or that local action won't make any difference, but that's not true and we aim to set the record straight. The reality is that if you vote - you decide what gets done. It's an important way of having your say on the issues you care about and in choosing who will take decisions on your behalf. From the right to make representations on planning applications, to the state of footpaths and street lighting, parish and town councils have a wide range of ever increasing responsibilities and duties. They make decisions which affect your every day life".

Soon you will be asked to vote for someone to represent your views and surveys tell us that although many people want a say in how their area is run, they don't know who their councillors are. The message is simple – come along to our meetings, get involved and find out more. It doesn't matter if you don't want to become a local councillor yourself, although you might know someone who does. By just voting and getting involved you will be able to ensure a better local service.

Parish and Town Councils are exactly the same; there is no practical or legal distinction between them. A town council is a parish council that has made a decision to (generally) elect a mayor and call itself a town. These councils whether large or small are there to represent the wishes of their communities and to provide or support many local services.

Your Parish Clerk, Peter Richardson, says: "Not using your right to vote is like inviting someone else to tell you how your life and community should be run. Look out for more details on our notice boards and website. Find out more about your local council and help them to understand and represent your community needs."

Contact Information

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What is a Parish Council?

A Parish Council is the tier of local government **closest to the people**, and represents the concerns and aspirations of a genuine local community. It is not a voluntary organisation, not a charity nor (a common mistake) anything to do with the Church.

Your Parish Council has a permanent office in School Lane and meets every month in the Quedgeley Community Centre. The Council makes every effort to ensure that it is as effective and efficient as possible and works very hard for its electors running a wide range of services. It is a larger Parish Council covering quite a large population of about 15,000 providing a wide range of services from sports and leisure facilities, support for local groups, a memorial garden and burial ground, some closed-circuit television systems, as well as providing two community centres

Despite being strictly audited each year, Parish Councils are the most non bureaucratic and the cheapest kind of local authority in existence.

What Parish Councils do?

As Parish Councils were created in law, they can only act within the law by exercising their powers and functions which have been conferred on them by Statutes (i.e. Acts of Parliament). Anything a Parish Council tries to do outside these powers is *ultra vires*, in other words, outside the law.

Section 11 of the Local Government and Rating Act 1997 also acknowledged that some communities not yet represented by this tier of local government (Parish or Town Council) might choose, and could petition, to demand its own elected Parish or Town Council. An indicator of how important local representation can be to people.

The range of powers available to Parish Councils continues to change and proposals announced by the new coalition government especially in relation to 'Decentralisation and Localism' give a clear indication about the government's plans to reinvigorate local politics by giving more power to councils and communities. Legislation enacting the changes will come into force at a later date, but the message is clear: - services are to be improved by bringing them closer and making them more responsive to local communities. Already Local Council responsibilities are many and varied, including (not a comprehensive list) the purchase of land and buildings, providing and maintaining village greens, the provision of recreational facilities, crime prevention measures and traffic calming. In future these responsibilities will be far greater.

Parish Councils have many powers if they choose to use them. It is how and which of these powers that councillors decide to use, that makes a vibrant forward thinking Parish Council and can bring positive benefits to its community. The basic responsibility of a Parish Council is to make the lives of its local communities more comfortable by representing the whole electorate within the parish, delivering or co-ordinating services to meet local needs and striving to improve quality of life in the parish.

Parish Councils can also comment on planning applications and be represented at public enquiries.

Parish Councils range in size from a large Town Council representing 70,000 people to the smaller parish that may only have 200 people. We do not receive Council Tax directly from the public, but are primarily funded at present from a small percentage of the Council Tax charge made by District/Unitary authorities to local householders. Their annual budgets can be anything from £1000 to sums in excess of £5,000,000, with some even raising further income from services they provide. Parish Council budgets are a tiny part of the whole Council Tax and Parish Councils do not receive any Government funding or income from business rates. The way that local government is financed is under great scrutiny and there is likely to be a fundamental change the way that the whole of local government manage their services to the community and the way they fund them.

Whatever the make up of your council, it embodies the representation of people's hopes and concerns for ensuring that local services are provided efficiently and effectively for the benefit of community wellbeing. A well informed council is aware of what its community needs and strives to provide this through team work, accessing grant funding, representation at other meetings and lobbying appropriate bodies.

Parish Councils have a duty to appoint or employ a Clerk to record and carry out the council's decisions. Depending on their size and the services provided, they may employ other staff for the benefit of the community. All councils must meet at least four times a year (although most meet more often) and their meetings must be open to the public, although for certain restricted items of confidentiality they may occasionally exclude the public.



What does a councillor do?

Most people's impression of what a councillor does is that they just attend council meetings and nothing could be further from the truth. The duties and pleasure, of being a local councillor are many and varied, however it is the ordinary day to day contact with local people in their own community that is the most important part of being a councillor.

A Parish Councillor signs a Declaration of Acceptance of Office and thereby undertakes to observe an ethical Code of Conduct when dealing with matters on behalf of the community.



Listening: One of the most important tasks of a Parish Councillor is listening to and understanding the views of people in their community. Many public bodies or organisations acknowledge this is the hardest information for them to capture and they in turn use the skills and local knowledge of the parish or town council for advice to assist and inform their services.

Meetings: A councillor agrees to attend all meetings (reasonably possible) that he or she is summoned to. In a smaller council this may only require one meeting of full council a month (there are however a few small councils that still only meet once every two months). In medium and larger councils however, along with full council meetings, there are further committee meetings or working groups. Most meetings are held in the evening but some committees and group representation may be during the day. Some of these committees may include planning, finance and staffing, properties or policy. Where committees are used however the council usually consists of a larger number of councillors and therefore each councillor is only expected to serve on one or two committees.

Representation: Parish Councils also need representation meetings or on local bodies/organisations and serve on certain groups or attend functions on behalf of Councillors act as ambassadors for their community local needs and concerns and reporting back on District/regional changes.



at other local government councillors may be asked to the parish council. keeping everyone aware of Unitary, County and

Councillors represent the voice of their community as a whole, whilst being aware of and considerate to, specific minority needs.

Extra skills: Through all of these functions councillors will draw on their own skills and experiences and it is the sharing of these skills that makes a strong team. Parish and Town Councils provide a focus for the community to identify concerns and projects and endeavour to solve them locally themselves. Councillors working as a team will need to deal with employment issues, budgeting, asset management, staff management, project management or grant funding and probably lots more if they are creative and involved. All councils must be aware and owe a duty to their community to manage staff considerately, whether it is employing one parish clerk or a whole host of office and grounds' maintenance staff. Accounts must be kept and whilst the clerk (or Responsible Financial Officer) will be employed to carry out this duty, councillors together as a team are responsible for the financial decisions made and implemented. A clerk is employed to advise and seek advice on behalf of councillors to assist them in their decisions. Councillors are there to consider the information gathered and make a group decision on all matters. No individual councillor is responsible for any single decision. This is democracy at its best.

Training and support: Training is available to any council, large or small. Legislation allows for councils to pay for training and ongoing training for councillors is sound business management. The County Secretary for the Association of Local Councils in your area will be able to provide details of professional training programmes designed specifically for councillors, see the useful contacts section in this pack for contact information.

Responsibility: All councillors are expected to abide by the Parish Councils (model code of conduct) Order 2007 No.1159, this document is available to download free of charge from: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2007/1159/contents/made> The responsibilities detailed in the Code of Conduct are designed to protect councillors as well as the people they serve and give clear guidance so that councillors may undertake their duties with confidence. This is likely to change following legislation going before Parliament this year.

WHY NOT BECOME A PARISH
COUNCILLOR AND HELP TO MAKE
QUEDGELEY A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE?

Quedgeley Parish Councillors

Chair - (Severnvale Ward)

Anna Mozol
07952 524317

Vice Chair - (Fieldcourt Ward)

Graham Smith
01452 883282

Fieldcourt Ward

Julian Powell
07946 062697

Nick Lee
01452 721531

Roger Langston
01452 721434

David Southgate
07812 936 269

Rex Vick
01452 690175

Barry Kirby
07951 330 534

Sarah James
01452 307168

Severnvale Ward

Tony Hunt
01452 725365

Jean Hanks
01452 728275

Helen Cordingley
07786 049487

Phillip Cordingley
07786 049487

Lee Thomas
01452 881900

Malcolm Holmes
07958 447 785

Emily Barrett
07979 067 043

Parish Office

Parish Clerk - Peter Richardson

Parish Administrators -

Debbie Hughes

Beverley Aldridge

01452 721552

Applying to become a councillor

Even those who have stood as councillors before may forget what the process was like 4 years ago. Whilst relatively easy, it is strict and if not followed exactly, will result in disappointment and rejection for the wrong reasons! The rules are there to ensure that only those who are eligible to stand for election in your community are considered and that those put forward have agreed to stand for election. Parish Councillors are elected by the public and serve four year terms in office; these were unpaid positions until 2004 when allowance schemes were introduced to encourage more people to stand for election. Allowances, which tend not to be very large, are at the discretion of the individual councils and most still choose to maintain an unpaid status.

If you wish to stand as a councillor you must satisfy these requirements:

- You need to be over 18 years of age
- A British citizen, a qualifying Commonwealth citizen, or a citizen of any other member state of the European Union
- On the Electoral Register for the council area for which you wish to stand,

A local government elector of the parish; or a person who during the whole of the twelve months before nomination as a candidate occupied land or other premises as owner or tenant in the parish; or has, during the same period, resided in that area or within three miles thereof; or has during the same period, had a principal or only place of work in that area.

You cannot stand for election if you:

- Are bankrupt and an Order or Interim Restriction Order has been imposed.
- Have, within five years before the day of the election, been convicted in the United Kingdom of any offence and have had a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for a period of over three months without the option of a fine
- Work for the council where you are intending to standing for election (but you can work for other local authorities, including the principal authorities that represent the same area).
- Have been convicted or reported guilty of a corrupt or illegal practice by an election court, or have been disqualified from standing for election to a local authority

For further information, nomination packs and advice please contact your Parish Clerk, Peter Richardson at the Parish Office



Parish Office opening hours:

Monday to Friday 9.30am to 2.00pm