

## **Parish Council Elections – 7<sup>th</sup> May 2015 - have you got what it takes?**

### **What are local councils?**

There are over 9,000 parish, town, community and neighbourhood councils (local councils) representing around 16 million people across England and they form the most local level of government. Each year a sum of money is raised locally called a 'precept' is collected through your council tax. The money is invested back into your local neighbourhood by your local council to improve facilities and services for you and your neighbours. Many local councils also supplement the money collected locally through applications to grant and fund providers securing further resources to invest in the community. It is your local councillors representing the aspirations of the community who will decide how to spend this money.

### **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 building to discuss dog fouling and car parking, making decisions that have little impact on the community they serve.

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.

### **How much time does it take up?**

Winster Parish Council meets on a monthly cycle, to which members of the public are also invited. Meetings usually last no more than two hours, depending on what business has to be transacted. Parish Councillors may also be required to attend committee meetings and also represent the council on outside bodies within the parish – Burton Institute Management Committee and The Heathcote Charity are two examples.

Occasionally councillors are asked to spare time during the day for site meetings for example with the highways or planning department.

### **What decisions do parish councils make?**

The Parish Council has an overall responsibility for the well being of your local neighborhood. The work of the Authority falls into three main categories: representing the local community, delivering services to meet local needs and striving to improve the quality of life – in the local area.

Parish Councils may provide, maintain or contribute to the following services: allotments, bus shelters, litter bins, car parks, parks and open spaces, planning, public toilets, street cleaning; and many more!

## **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. Before a member can take up office he or she must, sign a declaration of acceptance of office and register their interests in the authority's register of members' interests.

## **Am I eligible to be a parish councillor?**

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

- be a citizen of the UK, Commonwealth, the Republic of Ireland, or of another Member state of the EU;
- be at least 18 years old; AND
- be an elector of the parish; or
- in the past 12 months have occupied land or 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.

## **Will I get any training?**

Training for parish councillors is highly recommended and details will be provided after the election.

## **Don't take my 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, speak to one of the councillors and find out what they think of the job.

## **Interested?**

The nomination pack and set of forms is now available to view and download from Derbyshire Dales District Council web site - <http://www.derbyshiredales.gov.uk/your-council/elections/2015-elections/town-and-parish-council-elections> alternatively call the Election Office at Matlock Town Hall. Telephone 01629 761335.

**Rob Greatorex**  
**Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer**  
**Winster Parish Council**