

Becoming a Parish Councillor

Thank you for your interest in becoming a Parish Councillor. There is no application form as such, but applicants are asked to send a short written resume of their background and interests, [including why you would like to be a Parish Councillor] to the Clerk to the Council. If having read the following, you are still interested, then I will ask you to send me this summary and I will put your application to the next Council meeting.

You may already have an understanding of what it involves in being a Councillor, but here is a brief summary of what a Council is and what being a Councillor involves.

The Council is a corporate body with a legal existence of its own. It consists of a Chairman and Councillors. Its decisions are the responsibility of the whole body. The council has been granted powers by Parliament including the important authority to raise money through taxation (the precept) and a range of powers to spend public money. Whilst Parish councils have the legal power to take action, they have fewer duties and greater freedom to choose what action to take. This allows them to play a vital part in representing the interests of the communities they serve and improve the quality of life and the local environment. Furthermore they influence other decision makers and can, in many cases, deliver services to meet local needs. The Parish Council is in control of many of the basic services that are often taken for granted. Some of its main powers include providing and maintaining the playing fields, children's play equipment areas, open spaces, the cemetery, footway lighting, seats and shelters for public use.

Denmead Parish Council operates through Committees for Finance, Amenities, Highways and Planning. Membership of committees and sub-committees is reviewed at the Annual Council Meeting held in May when members have an opportunity to express their preferences and it is normal for members to sit on two committees. When members are co-opted during the municipal year they have to fill existing vacancies. On this occasion there are vacancies on all of the main Committees of Planning, Amenities and Highways & General Purposes. Members attend meetings of the committees on which they serve and full council. Council and Committees meet on a 6 week cycle on a Wednesday evening apart from Planning, who due to time deadlines from WCC, meet every three weeks.

Councillors are other members of the team. Electors aged 21 or over, and resident in the Parish and who meet certain other criteria are eligible to become Councillors. They must attend meetings when summoned to do so.

The Councillor's task is to bring local issues to the attention of the council, and help it make decisions on behalf of the local community. Each individual will interpret their role in different ways. Each will have different enthusiasms and interests, skills and attitudes. For example, some work with ideas while others are very practical; some like accounts while others prefer reports. The parish council needs a range of skills to work as a team.

In general, councillors contribute to the work of the whole council by

- suggesting ideas;
- engaging in constructive debate;
- responding to the needs and views of the community;
- representing their constituents;
- behaving in an ethical way and being open about interests;
- commenting on proposals to ensure the best outcome;

- voting – to enable the council to make decisions.

An individual councillor (including the chairman) cannot make a decision on behalf of the council. Before taking office, a Councillor must:

- Sign a declaration of acceptance of office
- Declare any interests
- Agree to abide by the Code of Conduct
- Declare any interests at meetings

If you are co-opted you must adopt the Code of Conduct by signing a declaration of acceptance and also complete the Register of Interests Form.

The Parish Council's website: www.denmead-pc.gov.uk includes Agendas and Minutes of the committees which will give you an indication of the matters discussed.

The 2023 timetable of meetings is also on the website.

Hopefully, the above gives you a flavour of what is involved. If you want more information, please feel free to contact me by email, telephone or in person at the Parish Office and I'll do my best to answer your questions.

All meetings are open to members of the public so if you wanted to attend one to see for yourself, you would be most welcome.

Please contact Sarah Young, Parish Clerk for more information. parishclerk@denmead-pc.gov.uk