



# "Your Parish Council Needs YOU"

We Need Your Help



## What is a Parish Council?

A Parish Council is a local authority that makes decisions on behalf of its parishioners. It's the first tier of local government and may be the first place parishioners go to with their concerns or thoughts. The Parish Council is a vital part of the community and Kedington can have up to nine Councillors.

## Why become a Parish Councillor?



You will be forgiven for thinking that Parish Councillors are a group of older people who meet now and then to repeatedly discuss dog poo, street lights and parking.

As important as these are, this is not the case. Come along to one of our meetings and see for yourself the variety of community related topics that are discussed and decided on. As a Parish Councillor you'll become someone parishioners look to for help, guidance and support. Someone who can influence decisions for the benefit of the parishioners you serve.

## What decisions do Parish Councils make?

One of the processes that the Parish Council is mainly involved in as a statutory consultee, is planning applications. Parish Councils have limited powers to make decisions but in everything they do they negotiate with and strive to influence other organisations that make the final decisions, such as the County and District Councils and the developers themselves. These organisations know that the Parish Council reflects how the community feels about something and take its views. The Parish Council constantly strives to deliver better services and facilities.

The Parish Council also owns and maintains the Silver Street Park and the Old School Field and the play and exercise equipment situated there. The Parish Council also maintains other assets in the parish i.e. the litter, dog poo and grit bins, the various benches, the village sign, the Air Memorial and the War Memorial.

## How much time does it take up?

The Parish Council usually meets once a month, except in August, and members of the public can attend and are very welcome to do so. There is usually one or more District and County Councillor present also. Parishioners can ask for an item to be placed on the agenda and the agenda is placed on all the Parish notice boards and the Councils' website. The meetings generally last about one and a half to two hours, depending on the items on the agenda.

Councillors may also help out at other events and functions.

Maybe at the Community Hub?



Or the children's activity day?



Or even the visit of Father Christmas to the parish?



## How long does a Parish Councillor serve for?

Parish Councillors can serve for a maximum of four years before having to stand for re-election. There are elections this year on the 4<sup>th</sup> May.

You can however, become a Parish Councillor at any time during that four-year period if there are any vacancies.

## Am I eligible to be a Parish Councillor?

To be a Parish Councillor you must:

- be a least 18 years old and
- 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.

To be eligible to stand for election for a particular Parish, you must:

- be a registered elector of the Parish or
- for the whole of the previous 12 months have occupied (as owner or tenant) land or other premises in the Parish or within three miles (4.8 km) of the Parish boundary or
- during the previous 12 months have worked in the Parish (as your principal or only place of work).

You cannot stand for election if at the time of your nomination and on polling day:-

- you are employed by the Parish Council or
- you are the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order or
- you have been sentenced to a term of imprisonment of three months or more (including a suspended sentence), without the option of a fine, during the five years before polling day or
- you have been disqualified under the Representation of the People Act 1983, relating to corrupt or illegal electoral practices and offences relating to donations.

As a Parish Councillor, you will have to sign up to the Code of Conduct.

## What powers do Parish Councils have?

Parish Councils have a wide range of powers which essentially relate to local matters, such as looking after open spaces and play areas and much more. The Parish Council also has the power to raise money through taxation. This is the precept and is the Parish Council's share of the council tax. The precept demand goes to the district council, the billing authority, that collects the tax for the Parish Council.

## Parish Council Duties

The duties and functions of a Parish Council are many and varied. The Council meets monthly except in August and considers planning applications and other matters including those referred to it by local residents. All meetings are open to the public. There is also an annual meeting that all parishioners are invited to attend. All meetings are advertised on the Parish Council notice boards and its website. Parishioners can bring to the attention of the Parish Council anything that concerns them, either directly or through the Clerk. If the matters raised are not the responsibility of the Parish Council, the Clerk can refer them to the relevant authority.

## Don't take our 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, or speak to one of our Councillors and find out what they think of the role and what it involves.

We look forward to seeing you soon.