



# Why be a Parish Councillor?

Meet neighbours

Make a difference

Develop skills

Learn new things

Do you often wish for changes in your community?

Do you find yourself saying '*someone should change that*'?

Well, that someone could be you!

Being a Parish Councillor can take just a few hours a month, usually in the evenings. It's often an unelected position and is voluntary. Lots of training is also available to help you be comfortable.

The main roles of a councillor:

- Represent the views of the residents of the parish and, through it, to Somerset Council
- Let residents know about important issues affecting the parish
- Help make decisions on a range of topics, including how to spend the ~£40k budget each year
- Help support or own the delivery of projects in the parish that you and residents care about

## What is asked of you?

Usually you are asked to attend one meeting, once a month. The Clerk can help with a lot of the administration and you're responsible for speaking for, and to, residents. You also have the opportunity to take responsibility for certain projects which you report back on, based on your interests and the local needs. These may take additional time during the month depending on what you can contribute and your passion for those projects.

You're also asked to attend some online training when you first start to help you know more about the role and, where wanted, keep up to date on changes in good practices..

## What kind of things can you get involved with?

Currently the Council is working on several interest projects that make a positive impact on our community but it's also possible for new councillors to choose their own activities. These include:

<b>Playground</b>	Help us plan and implement the new playground in Long Sutton
<b>Planning</b>	Input the Council's responses to local planning applications
<b>Village hall</b>	Support the development of the village hall, one of our prized assets
<b>Pavilion</b>	Work on the business plan to build a new sports pavilion
<b>Speeding</b>	Liaise with the police and use our speed indicator device to improve road safety
<b>Environment</b>	Join our environment group to enhance nature and wildlife in our region
<b>Flooding</b>	Work to build our community resilience to flooding
<b>Footpaths</b>	Help maintain the walking routes around our village

Please get in touch if you'd like to know more: [clerk@longsutton-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@longsutton-pc.gov.uk)

## Some more details

Being on the parish council is all about teamwork. Individual councillors do not have, and cannot be given, powers to make decisions on behalf of the parish council. This applies to the chairman as much as to the other councillors, although the chairman does have personal responsibilities in connection with the running of formal meetings.

The Clerk is also an essential lynchpin in the team. The only member of the Council who is employed and paid a salary, they take care of a lot of the administration and help ensure the Council is legally compliant with all its duties. Other Councillors take responsibility for signing off bank records etc.

A large part of the role of a Parish Councillor is informal, requiring listening and talking to people, including the local elected members of the unitary council. There are rules and guidelines outlined in our Code of Conduct which help you know what's appropriate and where it's OK to say no, or yes.

## How do I know what to do?

Lots of great training is available from a basic half day introduction to specialist training for those who want to take on more responsibility.

Councillors are expected to undertake some training that supports them in fulfilling the councillor role. The training, provided by Somerset Association of Local Councils, provides essential training about the role of the council and councillors, the parish clerk, and the councils finances/budget setting. Further training will cover responding to planning applications and also more about the code of conduct. The training is fully supported and financed by the parish council, Training is always online.

## Can I meet with other Councillors?

The Parish Council team is supportive and engaged, with lots of active members who can help newcomers. We meet in person 11 times a year for formal council meetings and more often if required. We always try to meet up at the events hosted by groups such as the Environment group too.

It's also possible to engage with other councillors outside of our Parish through the Local Community Network (LCN). Since Somerset Council is now an amalgamation of Somerset County Council and the four district councils, a regular meeting of the 18 Local Community Networks takes place quarterly. There is a member of each parish or town council within that LCN. (currently Cllr Cox).

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