



How do I become a Parish Councillor?



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What is a Parish Council?

Parish Councils have existed in their current format since the 1894 Local Government Act with many revisions and additions since then. They are the first tier of Government. There were 10,250 Parishes in 2018 with 9,000 having a Parish Council. A Parish Council is a corporate body with a separate and distinct legal identity to the Councillors who make up the Council and officers who are employed by the Council. It is governed by its Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Code of Conduct and Policies and Procedures. It can only do that which it is authorised to do by statute and must not act beyond its legal powers. To ensure public confidence all its decisions must be transparent and comply with statutory requirements. Agendas are published in public noticeboards and online. It is subject to both an internal and external annual audit. Members of the public are allowed to attend meetings and inspect the Council's written records.

Boxley Parish Council

Boxley is the largest Parish in Maidstone with over 7,000 residents. It has 15 Councillors representing all areas of the Parish, supported by the Parish office which is open 5 days a week. The Parish Council is funded by residents by way of a Precept.

Boxley Parish Council supports various local organisations such as Vinters Valley Nature Reserve, Walderslade Woods Group, village halls and local schools.

The Parish Council responds to and comments on planning applications, structure plans, government, Maidstone Borough Council and Kent County Council discussion documents. They get involved in crime prevention measures and any other initiatives or issues that improve the quality of life for residents of the Parish. They manage Franklin Drive Play area, the Weaving Diamond Jubilee Orchard, the Burial ground and an Allotment site at Dove Hill. The Parish Council runs the popular venue for hire, Beechen Hall. Parish Councillors implement policy, set the precept and budgets and develop new initiatives.

Residents are kept informed of Parish activities by way of the Website, Newsletter, Community Alert emails and Facebook.

What would my commitment be?

Councillors are elected every 4 years. You can resign at any time should you need to. A small allowance can be claimed by elected Councillors to cover expenses. You will need to attend the 10 monthly Parish Council meetings which are usually held on the first Monday of the month. You could also join one of the Committees to get further involved.

Boxley has a:

- Finance and General Purposes Committee which looks at financial and personnel matters and meets 6 times a year.

- Estates Committee which looks after all the Councils property and meets 6 times a year
- Environment Committee which looks at planning, highways and any other environmental issues and meets 18 times a year (10 of these are short meetings that follow on from Full Council meetings).



There are also working groups that are formed to look at specific projects in more detail as needed.

You will need to have a willingness to read documents (agendas/reports) and to consider the community's needs and represent these at meetings.

You will need to agree to work to a Code of Conduct which clearly states what behaviour is required on a day to day basis and what to do in certain situations.

You can be as involved as your time permits.

Who can be a Parish Councillor?

To be a Parish Councillor you must be:

- Over 18 years of age
- An elector of the Parish
- or have lived in the Parish or within 3 miles of the Parish boundary for the whole of the 12 months before your nomination as a candidate
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There are other qualifications and some things which would disqualify you such as being subject to bankruptcy restrictions or criminal convictions. (more information can be obtained from Maidstone Borough Council – 01622 602007 or the Parish Office).

You do not have to be a member of a political party; Parish Councils are supposed to be non-political.

What type of people serve on a Parish Council?

Councillors are as diverse as the community they represent. Some initially stand for election because they are concerned about a local issue; they have got angry about poor service or because they just wish to put something back into the community in which they live. Most continue to stand because they realise they can actually make a difference to their community.

Parish Councillors come from all walks of life and their individual experiences, skills and views make the Parish Council vibrant and diverse. You do not have to agree with other Councillors all the time. Generally adequate time is given at

meetings to explore the various views and concerns and then a decision is taken by voting.

How do I get elected?

Elections are held every 4 years. You need to complete a nomination paper and return this to Maidstone Borough Council.

If a vacancy occurs between elections then it is filled by By-election or Co-option. Notification of the Casual Vacancy will be advertised on the Parish Noticeboards.

Further information can be obtained by:

- Attending some meetings. These are all open to the public and advertised on noticeboards. A list of dates and locations can be obtained from the Parish office or the website.
- The Parish Council website has copies of minutes and meeting Agendas, Parish information, policies, procedures and leaflets.
- Existing Parish Councillors
- The Parish Office

