

Rusthall Parish Council is made up of **nine** Councillors who give up their time to help administer, with a part time clerk, the affairs of the Parish. They meet monthly as a Full Council and additionally as members of various committees and working groups covering such matters as Planning, Finance and Allotments. Members of the public are welcome at these meetings.

The Parish Council is funded by a precept, the amount householders of the Parish pay as part of the Council Tax, in order to maintain facilities and to do whatever they can to preserve and improve the quality of life for the residents and visitors alike.

What are local councils?

There are 8,700 parish, town, community and neighbourhood councils (local councils) representing around 16 million people across England. They form the most local level of government and cover many rural and urban areas.

What's the difference between parish, town, community and neighbourhood councils?

Not a great deal. They all have the same powers and can provide the same services. The only difference is that a town council has decided that it should be known as a town council instead of a parish, community or neighbourhood council, and can decide to elect a mayor.

What services do they provide?

Your local council has overall responsibility for the well-being of your local neighbourhood. Their work falls into three main categories:

- **Representing your local community**
- **Delivering services to meet local needs**
- **Striving to improve quality of life in the parish.**

Your council **might** provide, maintain or contribute to the following services:

- Allotments
- Bridleways
- Burial grounds
- Bus shelters
- Car parks
- Commons
- Community transport schemes
- Crime reduction measures
- Footpaths
- Leisure facilities
- Litter bins
- Local youth projects
- Parks and open spaces
- Planning
- Public lavatories
- Street cleaning
- Street lighting
- Tourism activities
- Traffic calming measures
- Village greens

What do councillors do?

Councillors have three main areas of work:

- **Decision-making:** through attending meetings and committees with other elected members, councillors decide which activities to support, where money should be spent, what services should be delivered and what policies should be implemented.
- **Monitoring:** councillors make sure that their decisions lead to efficient and effective services by keeping an eye on how well things are working.
- **Getting involved locally:** as local representatives, councillors have responsibilities towards their constituents and local organisations. This often depends on what the councillor wants to achieve and how much time is available.

The day-to-day work of a councillor may include:

- Going to meetings of local organisations such as tenants' associations
- Going to meetings of bodies that affect the wider community, such as the police, the Highways Authority, schools and colleges
- Taking up issues on behalf of members of the public, such as making representations to the district or borough council
- Running a surgery for residents to raise issues
- Meeting with individual residents in their own homes.
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How do they make decisions?

Your local council is made up of a number of councillors who meet regularly to make decisions on the work and direction of the council. As elected bodies local councils are responsible to the people they represent – that's your local community.

Where do they get their money from?

Each year a sum of money called the "precept" is collected through your council tax.

This money is invested back into your local neighbourhood by your local council to improve facilities and services for you and your neighbours. Local councils can also apply for grants and loans and, if they own property, can receive money from rent or leases.

How are councillors elected?

At election time, candidates submit a nomination paper and the electors for the ward or parish vote for their preferred candidate(s). Dependent on how many seats are required to be filled, the candidate(s) with the most votes is elected.

Who can vote in local council elections?

To vote in any election you need to be on the electoral register, be a British citizen, Irish citizen, European Union citizen or citizen of a Commonwealth country (including Cyprus and Malta) and be 18 years of age at the time of the election.

Could I become a local councillor?

As a councillor you can become a voice for your community and effect real change. Councillors are community leaders and represent the aspirations of the public that they serve. Parish, town, community and neighbourhood councillors are the most local part of our democratic system and are closest to the public.

How much time does it take up?

Quite often councillors say that their duties occupy them for about three hours a week. Obviously there are some councillors who spend more time than this – and some less – but in the main, being a local councillor is an enjoyable way of contributing and helping to make your community a better place to live and work in.

Am I qualified?

You have to be:

- A British citizen, or a citizen of the Commonwealth or the EU, and 18 years or older on the day you become nominated for election.
The candidate must also meet **at least one** of the following four qualifications on the day they are nominated and on polling day:
- They are registered as a local government elector for the parish or town council area in which they wish to stand, or
- They have occupied as owner or tenant any land or premises in the parish during the whole of the 12 months before the day they are nominated, or
- Their main or only place of work during the last 12 months has been in the parish or town council area, or
- They have lived in the parish or town council area (or within 4.8 kilometres of it) during the whole of the last 12 months

You cannot stand for election if you:

- Are the subject of a bankruptcy restriction order or interim order.
- Have, within five years before the day of the election, been convicted in the UK of any offence and have had a prison sentence (whether suspended or not) for a period of over three months without the option of a fine.
- Work for the council you want to be a councillor for.

When are the next elections?

May 2015

For further information contact the clerk on 07805475397 or by email

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