

## What is a Parish Council?

Parish and Town Councils form the first tier of government. They have powers to provide many services and facilities. They represent grass roots views, and influence the decisions made by others on the way our communities are shaped and developed. Your Parish Council has the statutory right to be consulted on planning applications and will also be consulted on community and planning strategies. Parish Councils are rarely organised along party political lines. Contact Worcestershire CALC (details below) for more information.

### The Conduct of Parish Councillors

All Parish and Town Councils are required to adopt the Code of Conduct which individual Councillors must sign up to. This code demands that they must: declare their interests in a public register; not bring their Council into disrepute; leave the room for discussion on any item in which they have a prejudicial interest.

### Serving Your Community

Parish and Town Councillors are elected every four years. Where a casual vacancy occurs for a Councillor, there must be a bye-election if at least ten electors demand one. If not, your Parish Council must seek to co-opt a person to serve alongside existing Councillors.

To find out more about being a Parish Councillor and for a free copy of The Good Councillor's Guide, contact:

**Worcestershire County Association of Local Councils, 141 Church Street, Malvern WR14 2AN, Tel 01684 891825, Fax 01684 891299**  
[www.worcscalc.org.uk](http://www.worcscalc.org.uk)  
[enquiries@worcscalc.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@worcscalc.org.uk)



## Parish Councils and the Law

Parish Councils are statutory local authorities. They have an element of sovereignty and are not answerable to the other two tiers of councils in the county. They must make decisions in an **open, accountable and transparent** way. Their accounts are subject to internal and external audit, the results of which must be posted on your notice board. They should have a Complaints Procedure.

Each Parish Council is required to set an annual budget. To fund its budget the Parish Council sets a **precept**, which is an amount of money included in your council tax, for financing the work they undertake in the community on your behalf.

The **Clerk to the Parish Council** is its **Proper Officer** who often works from home in a part-time capacity. This statutory post demands a professional commitment. Clerk and Councillors should work as a team with mutual respect. Notices of **Parish Council Meetings** must appear on your village notice boards and it is good practice for contact details of Clerk and Councillors to appear alongside.

### Training & Development

Councillors and Clerks are encouraged to undertake ongoing **training** as a commitment of office and to ensure that the Parish Council obeys the law and is modern and effective in representing your community. A **Parish Plan** or Action Plan is a very useful tool to identify and prioritise projects within the community. It ensures that your Parish Council is responsive to your community's needs and aspirations. The other tiers of local government will be expected to take account of these priorities in their planning.



## Parish and Town Councils in Worcestershire

There are 151 Parish and Town Councils in the county, forming the first tier of government.



### You and Your Parish Council

Your Parish Council – which is the same as a Town Council – usually meets at least 6 times per year and it is good practice to have a period for public question time at each meeting. In addition, your parish must hold an Annual Parish/Town Meeting which is a public meeting at which residents may raise any matter that affects the community. Your Parish Council is encouraged to publish reports on its activities, and you have the right to inspect the Parish Council minutes and accounts.

### Quality Parish Status



If your Parish Council has achieved Quality Parish Status – the charter mark for Parish Councils - it will have satisfied a number of tests including having a qualified Clerk and regularly communicating with residents on its activities. A Quality Parish will have more influence and is eligible to bid for special grant.

### Councils Working in Partnership

The Parish Charter sets the framework for the three tiers of local government to work together to deliver value for money local services, including through the successful Lengthsman Scheme and by County and District Councillors attending Parish Council meetings.

**Worcestershire County Association of Local Councils: the representative body for Parish & Town Councils in the county.**