



Countesthorpe Parish Council



What is a Parish Council?

The main duties of a Parish Council are to represent the concerns of local residents and provide services to meet local needs.

As a tier of local government they are elected bodies, with discretionary powers and rights laid down by Parliament to represent their communities and provide services for them.

Local government is divided into three tiers – County Council, District Council and Parish Council – each with its own level of responsibility for provision of services.

Leicestershire County Council

Responsible, across the whole of the county, for:

- Education
- Police
- Fire and Rescue
- Public Transport
- Highways
- Social Services
- Libraries
- Strategic planning
- Museums
- Trading Standards

Blaby District Council

Responsible, across a defined area within the county, for:

- Benefits
- Leisure Services
- Building Control
- Licences & Permits
- Dog Wardens
- Recycling
- Elections & Electoral Registration
- Refuse Collection
- Environmental Health
- Sewage Matters
- Home Improvements
- Town & Country Planning
- Housing
- Litter including dog fouling issues

Countesthorpe Parish Council

Responsible, within the parish, for:

- Provision of playing fields and recreation facilities
- Provision and maintenance of burial grounds
- Provision of roadside seats, street furniture etc.
- Maintaining a watching brief on such things as road safety, public nuisance, planning applications, public transport etc.
- Ensuring that County and District Councils fulfil their responsibilities in the Parish

Parish Council Funding

The funding for parish councils is allocated by the district council and is taken from the area's council tax; this is called an *annual precept*. The income and expenditure for the next financial year are calculated in the form of a projected budget which identifies the amount of money required to provide the services needed.

This amount is added to the local council tax then returned to the parish in two half-yearly instalments.

Councils can also apply for various UK grants and funding as available and appropriate.

Countesthorpe Parish Council

Based in the Village Hall, Countesthorpe Parish Council consists of a maximum of 18 Councillors (inclusive of a Chairman and Vice-Chairman). This number is set by the District Council relative to the size and needs of the parish.

The Parish Council meets on the second Thursday of each month; public and press may also attend.

The meeting is the subject of a pre-advertised agenda, in order that councillors and the public are aware of issues to be discussed and voted on. Any issues requiring a vote must be decided upon by a majority of councillors present and voting.

Countesthorpe Parish Council

The council also employs a number of people who fulfil various necessary roles:

- Manager and Assistant Manager (Clerks to the Council)
- Admin assistant
- Librarian
- Groundsmen
- Village Hall staff (bar supervisor, caretaker, cleaners)

Committees and Working Parties

Sub-groups are in place to act on specific areas. They are divided into two types:

- Committee - Recommendations can be passed within the committee itself
- Working Party - An advisory group, recommendations must be passed by the full council

Meetings are held regularly and must be quorate i.e. all meetings must have a minimum number of attendees to be legally compliant.

New councillors will be expected to join at least one of the sub-groups.

Committees and Responsibilities

- Planning - to consider applications for building works and submit comments to the Blaby District Council planning department
- Village Hall - to manage the infrastructure and operation of the hall
- Library - to ensure the smooth running of the library in order to provide a good community service

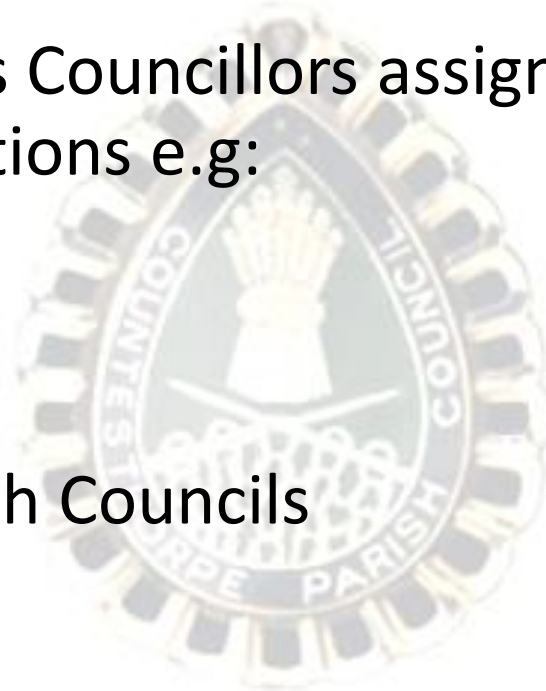
Working Parties and Responsibilities

- Estates - maintenance, repairs and improvements to Parish Council owned buildings, parks and land
- Finance - setting budgets, tracking income and expenditure, considering payments for approval
- Events - organising events and functions within the community on behalf of the Parish Council

Representatives

The Parish Council also has Councillors assigned as representatives to other bodies and organisations e.g:

- Police Liaison
- Local Association of Parish Councils
- Footpath Wardens



Role of a Parish Councillor

The role of a Parish Councillor is to represent the residents within the parish and to listen to and understand the views and needs of the community. There is a responsibility to be well-informed regarding local views and events.

Councillors should contribute to the work of the council by suggesting ideas and engaging in constructive discussion and debate relating to local views and needs. Councillors must strive to ensure the best outcome and, where necessary, vote to enable the council to make decisions.

Formal and informal training can be provided.

Electing a Parish Councillor

Councillors are elected representatives – the role is unpaid – and serve for a 4-year term. Scheduled elections take place every four years; existing councillors may put themselves forward for re-election.

If a vacancy occurs between scheduled elections, the vacancy is advertised and candidates are selected by one of two methods:

- Election - this occurs if, within fourteen days of the vacancy notice being posted, ten electors write and request an election
- Co-option - if an election is not requested, the Parish Council is able to co-opt candidates without an election taking place

Electing a Parish Councillor

Once elected or co-opted, they are expected to comply with the councillor Code of Conduct and council policies.

The new councillor will need to complete and submit two documents:

- Declaration of Office. This document accepts the position of councillor and must be witnessed by another member of the council or clerk to the council
- Register of Members Interests. This document is to state what property, land or other pecuniary interests within the parish a councillor may have, and is needed to identify any possible conflict of interest which may arise during council affairs

How to Become a Councillor

To qualify to become a parish councillor you must be:

- a British citizen, a citizen of the Commonwealth or the EU
- at least 18 years old on the day you are nominated as a candidate

You must also meet **at least one** of the following criteria:

- (1) Be registered on the electoral roll within the parish; (2) be resident in the parish; (3) be resident within three miles of the parish; (4) be working full time in the parish, **for at least 12 months prior to the nomination or election day**

How to Become a Councillor

A person is disqualified from holding office as a parish councillor if:

- they hold a paid office, or other place of profit in the council
- they are the subject of a bankruptcy restriction order or interim order
- they have been convicted of a criminal offence and sentenced to more than 3 months imprisonment within the last five years
- they are guilty under any enactment of using corrupt or illegal practices

How to Become a Councillor

If you meet the qualifying criteria, it is suggested that initially you attend a full council meeting as a public observer.

If you think that becoming a Parish Councillor is for you, contact the council office (by letter, email or in person), supplying a brief CV and personal statement.

You will be notified if an election is to take place and be given information relating to the process. Otherwise, you will be invited to attend a Parish Council meeting where the council members will hear from you and vote on your application (co-option).

Interested?

Any Questions?

More information can be found at:
www.countesthorpeparishcouncil.co.uk/