

HYDE PARISH COUNCIL

VACANCY – JUNE 2019

Do you think you might like to become a member of Hyde Parish Council?? If so, here is some information to help you make up your mind.

1. What is a Parish Council?

The parish council is the smallest unit of local government, part of the democratic framework of the country, representing the interests of your community. The Localism Act of 2011 is an important part of the Government's ambition to devolve power to local level. It is therefore important to engage with your community in a positive and proactive way.

2. What does the Parish Council do?

The councillors' aim is to serve the residents of the parish at this level of local government. A parish council has few actual powers and achieves its ends by liaising and acting as a channel of communication between residents and the District, County Councils and, in our case, the National Park Authority. Parish councils are frequently consulted about local and national developments. The parish council receives income by means of a "precept" (an element of the Council Tax), the precept for Hyde for 2019/20 is £9950. Councillors make grants and other payments to local organisations whose activities benefit residents.

3. Who are Hyde parish councillors?

The number of councillors for a parish depends on the size of the parish – Hyde has 7 representing just over 800 residents. The current councillors are Maggie McKenzie, Ann Sevier, Bernie Tully and Tina Woodley, plus three vacancies. There is a happy mixture of those who have lived in the parish all their lives and those who have come to live here much more recently. All the current members started a new term of office in May 2019 and will have to stand again if they wish to serve for a further 4 years in May 2023. The clerk is appointed by the council and is responsible for administration, finance, advising councillors and carrying out their wishes.

4. Are councillors paid?

No. Councillors are not paid, although they can claim expenses for representing the council at meetings outside the parish. Councillors are volunteers and are held accountable by local people for things that happen locally. The clerk receives a salary based on a nationally agreed scale.

5. How often does the Parish Council meet?

Meetings generally take place every second Wednesday of each month, from 7pm to about 9.30pm. There is also an Annual Parish Meeting open to all residents which is held in May and occasionally other meetings may be held for specific purposes.

6. What form do the meetings take?

There are almost always planning applications to be considered. The parish council is consulted on these, although the National Park Authority is the planning authority for much of our parish with the New Forest District Council having responsibility for the small area alongside the A338 outside the National Park. Other regular agenda items include matters concerning the roads and the commons as well as correspondence, finance, reports from representatives and other matters of topical interest to the parish.

7. What responsibilities do individual councillors have?

Each councillor has a specific area of responsibility e.g. planning, the Commons, community safety, rights of way, traffic, transport, or representing the parish council on a number of local bodies. All councillors normally share in the delivery of Parish Council Newsletters 4 times a year and become involved in other matters as they arise.

8. Code of Conduct and Register of Interests.

A code of conduct for all tiers of local government including parish councils was introduced in 2002. Briefly, it requires all councillors to act responsibly and to declare and register their (and their spouses/partners) financial and other interests, including employment or business and interests in land or property in the area of the parish council. If you would like to see a copy of the document which you would have to sign up to, please contact the clerk.

9. What are the qualifications required for being a councillor?

Prospective candidates must be at least 18 years old, on the list of electors of the parish or occupy land in the parish as an owner or tenant, or have a principal place of work here or have resided in or within three miles of the parish for twelve months.

You are expected to help make difficult decisions in an open and reasoned way – you will therefore have a responsibility to be well informed about your community. You need to have the interests of the parish at heart and be willing to give time as indicated above (normally up to 3 hours each week). Parish councillors are not elected on party political lines and training is given to new councillors.

10. When do the elections take place?

Every 4 years by secret ballot. If only the number of candidates for which there are places come forward they are all considered elected without the need for a ballot. If a casual vacancy occurs during the 4 year term of office the usual practice is to co-opt a new member although all parishioners have the right to request a ballot – the cost of a mid-term ballot is met by the parish council (and by consequence, local residents via the precept) and currently this cost is approximately £2000.

Further general information may be obtained from The Good Councillors Guide which can be downloaded via www.nalc.gov.uk – if you are unable to access the internet or have further questions, please contact the Clerk.

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