

WHAT DOES THE STAMBRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL AND COUNCILLORS DO?

What is a Parish Council?

There are over 8,700 parish and town councils representing around 16 million people across England. They form the most local level of government and cover many rural and urban areas. Stambridge Parish Council is part of Rochford District Council there are 14 Town/ Parish within the District.

What services can it provide?

A parish or town council has an overall responsibility for the well-being of its local community.

Its work falls into three main categories:

- representing the local community
- delivering services to meet local needs
- striving to improve quality of life in the parish

The Stambridge Parish Council (SPC) and the Essex County Council (ECC) provides and maintains some of the following services

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| • allotments (SPC) | • bridleways (ECC) |
| • Play areas (SPC) | • bus shelters (SPC) |
| • car parks (SPC) | • commons (RDC) |
| • transport schemes (ECC) | • crime reduction (SPC) (ECC) |
| • footpaths (SPC) (ECC) | • leisure facilities (SPC) (RDC) |

It can also work with Essex County Council (ECC) and Rochford District Council (RDC) for other services:

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| • litter bins (RDC) | • street cleaning (RDC) |
| • local youth projects (RDC) (ECC) | • All street lighting (SPC) |
| • open spaces (RDC) | • tourism activities (RDC) |
| • public toilets (RDC) | • traffic calming measures (ECC) |
| • planning (RDC) | • village greens (SPC) |

How does it make decisions?

The parish council is made up of a number of councillors who meet regularly to make decisions on the work and direction of the council. As an elected body, the parish council through its councillors, is responsible to the people it represents – that's the local community. Stambridge Parish Council presently consists of six Councillors and has one vacancy.

Attending a council meeting is the best way to find out what it does. Have a look at the other pages on this website to see what the Parish Council has been dealing with recently.

Stambridge Parish Council meets on the first Monday of each month unless there is a bank holiday

(see modified date on website) and except August (Recess), we have 11 regular meetings a year.

Where does it get its money from?

Each year the Parish Council asks for a sum of money, called a 'precept', which is collected through your council tax. This money is used by the parish council to improve facilities and services for local people and run the Council. Parish councils can also apply for grants and loans.

How are parish or town councillors elected?

Parish or town councillors are elected to represent a geographical area known as a ward or – mainly in smaller parishes– the parish or town council area as a whole.

They are elected by people who live in the area.

If the parish is divided into wards an election is held in each ward, the same way elections are held in district wards and in county electoral divisions. If the parish doesn't have wards there is just a single parish election. Most parish elections are on the same cycle, with elections in 2011, 2015, 2019 and so on.

What do parish councillors do?

Councillors have three main areas of work:

1. 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;
2. Monitoring: councillors make sure that their decisions lead to efficient and effective services by keeping an eye on how well things are working;

3. Getting involved locally: as local representatives, councillors have responsibilities towards their parishioners and local organisations. This often depends on what the councillors 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
- going to meetings of bodies that affect the wider community, such as the police, the Highways Authority, schools and colleges
- bringing parishioners concerns to the attention of the council

Could I be a parish councillor?

As a councillor you can become a voice for your community and affect real change. It helps if you're a "people person" who enjoys talking to other residents but, more importantly, you need to have the concerns and best interests of the parish as a whole at heart. Councillors are community leaders and should represent the aspirations of the public that they serve.

Parish councils are the most local part of our democratic system and are closest to the public.

Why don't you stand for your local parish council and see what difference you can make to your local community?

How much time does it take up & when?

On average, less than a couple of hours a week. Obviously there are some councillors who spend more time than this – and some less, but in the main, being a parish councillor is an enjoyable way of contributing to your community and helping to make it a better place to live and work. Council meetings are always held in the evening – as are most meetings of the other groups which councillors attend on the Council's behalf.

Talking and listening to your fellow parishioners can be done at any time but you must be able to spend a couple of hours every first Monday of the Month (excluding August as recess) (in the evening 7.00-9.30pm) attending the Council meeting.

Am I qualified?

Most people are. However there are a few basic rules. You have to be:

- a British citizen, or a citizen of the Commonwealth or the European Union, and
- 18 years or older on the day you become nominated for election, and
- live or work in or near the parish, within 3 miles

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 United Kingdom 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.

Not too complicated - **Your Council Needs You!**