

Why not become a Parish Councillor?

Are you looking for a worthwhile and rewarding way to help your local community? Have you thought of standing (for election) to your Parish Council? Don't always assume that somebody else will do it. Could you represent the views of local people and ensure that community interests are taken into account?

Parish Councils are the lowest tier of Government democracy in action and arguably the most local. The Parish Council is a "Body Corporate" which means that it is an "it" in law and that the decisions it takes are the responsibility of the Council as a whole. Great Somerford has 9 Councillors and meets every month except August & December. Little Somerford has 7 Councillors and meets at least 7 times a year. Each Council employs a part-time Clerk who is the proper officer responsible for general administration, finance and providing professional advice.

So what does the Parish Council typically do?

It represents and serves the whole community and is responsible for the services it provides. It establishes policies for action, raises an annual Precept (part of your Council Tax bill) and decides how this public money will be spent on behalf of the community. It must spend lawfully and achieve value for money.

- Consultation on planning applications
- Campaigning for better services
- Grass cutting to open spaces
- Consultation over traffic signing, speed limits and other related matters
- Consultation over street naming
- Parish facilities such as bus shelters, seats, notice boards
- Maintenance of the churchyard or cemetery
- Provision of allotments (Little Somerford)
- Provision and maintenance of Play Areas and Play Equipment
- Maintenance of footpaths

What in particular has your Parish Council done since May 2017?

Great Somerford	Little Somerford
Installed a Defibrillator outside the pub.	Installed a Defibrillator outside the pub.
Improved the Play Area by adding spinner bowl, monkey bars, zip wire & picnic benches with a climbing frame to come.	Refurbished the original playpark equipment
Installed a speed awareness camera in Startley & organised metro counts in Great Somerford	Renovated the railings at Little Somerford Cemetery .
Strongly involved in the Covid 19 support provided by the Street Champions.	Strongly involved in Covid 19 Community Support Group
Refurbishing & repainting village signposts .	Organises twice yearly village wide litter pick .
Refurbished the War Memorial .	
Refurbished the Gates and Railings at the Startley Cemetery	

How do we know what it's been doing?

Meeting Notices and Agendas are published on Parish Notice Boards and on their websites www.greatsomerfordparishcouncil.co.uk; www.littlesomerfordparishcouncil.gov.uk; with a summary report being provided to the Signpost magazine. Parish Council meetings are normally held in the village hall or community room and the public and press have a right to attend. During the Covid pandemic meetings have moved to Zoom or similar.

How can I become a Councillor?

Parish Councillors are elected every 4 years and the next election is scheduled for 6 May unless Covid forces a postponement till September. Any UK or EU citizen aged 18+ who is registered to vote in the area, lives in the village or within 3 miles of it or who owns land or works in the village can put themselves forward. Proposer and seconder needed.

If more than are needed apply then there is an election. If not enough candidates stand, then all who volunteered are co-opted as Councillors after the Election Day.

Some current members of Great Somerford PC will not be re-standing for election so there will definitely be vacancies if nobody else comes forward.

If you are interested, please make yourself known in the first instance to your Parish Clerk, the Chair or any member of your Parish Council. Why not come and watch a meeting?

This article has been written by the Clerks of Great Somerford and Little Somerford

Seagry and St Paul & Malmesbury Without PCs were invited to co-author but declined.