

## Perhaps you could become a Parish Councillor?

Parish Council elections are held every 4 years but if a vacancy occurs between elections due to the resignation of a Councillor, a 'casual vacancy' occurs. If residents do not call for a formal election, Council can fill the vacancy by Co-Option - a very straight forward process. Candidates put themselves forward by writing to the Clerk (see info below). At a meeting of Council, members consider the information from candidates and vote on which candidate to Co-Opt. The selection will be an open, fair process with the public present. The successful candidate takes office immediately and can take part in the remainder of the meeting should they wish to do so.

### What is involved?

You would attend full Council meetings which are held every 2 months (usually on the third Thursday commencing at 7pm) and also attend meetings of the Planning and Finance and General Purposes Committee which meet on the same evening as Council. Additional meetings may be held as required. Agenda and papers for meetings are delivered by email.

Whilst there is a natural focus on parish issues and needs, it is also important to look at wider issues and policies which will impact on the parish e.g. policies of the Government, County and District Council (soon to be changed by Devolution), and the Environment agency. There would be opportunities to represent Council on specific issues such as planning, policing, highways, resilience and neighbourhood planning, and to attend occasional external meetings in connection with this.

**Am I eligible?** - In order to be a Parish Councillor, you must:

- be aged 18 years or over and be a British citizen, or an eligible Commonwealth citizen, a citizen of the Republic of Ireland, a qualifying EU citizen or an EU citizen with retained rights
- be registered to vote in the parish or worked, or owned property there for at least 12 months or live within a 3 mile radius of the parish.
- You do not have to belong to a political party.

### Disqualification:

Under s.80 of the 1972 Act, a person is disqualified from being a Parish Councillor if they:

- hold any paid office or employment with the Parish Council; **or**
- is the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order, an interim restrictions order, a debt relief restrictions order, or interim order; **or**
- have been sentenced to a term of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) of not less than three months, without the option of a fine during the preceding five years; **or**
- have been disqualified under any enactment relating to corrupt or illegal electoral practices.

See: <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/guidance-candidates-parish-council-elections-england/what-you-need-know-you-stand-a-candidate/qualifications-and-disqualifications-standing-election/disqualifications>

## How do I apply for co-option?

Please email the Clerk ([clerk@kingston-wsx-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@kingston-wsx-pc.gov.uk)) to express your interest in becoming a parish councillor and give the following information that will be circulated to existing Members of Council:

1. Name, address, telephone number and email.
2. Confirmation that you are eligible to be a parish councillor (see above).
3. Time of living/working in the parish or of living within 3 miles of the parish.
3. Confirmation that you are not disqualified from being a parish councillor (see above)
4. Explain briefly why you want to be a parish councillor.
5. Give a reason why you think you would be a good candidate to join the Council e.g. a skill, knowledge or experience through work, or your personal connection to Kingston.

## What forms and undertakings do I need to complete if I am Co-Opted?

- a declaration of acceptance of office
- a declaration that you will conform to the requirements of the Code of Conduct for Kingston Parish Council
- consent for the summons to attend meetings to be transmitted to you by email
- register of interests (held by the monitoring officer at Arun District Council and published on their website)