

## **South Wonston Parish Council Councillor Vacancies - Guidance**

South Wonston Parish Council is made up of locally elected Councillors and aims to represent the interests of the community, articulating its needs and wishes, seeking to maintain the quality of life and character of the area and the provision of local services. The Parish Council when at its full compliment consists of eight Councillors, who are unpaid. The Councillors are elected to offices (jobs) each year at the Annual Meeting of the Council (in May). Meetings are held monthly (except August) usually on the second Monday of the month.

The Parish Council looks after the interests of the Parish where empowered to do so, bringing any other matters relating to the parish to the attention of the relevant authority. It also responds to consultation documents and requests from a diverse range of other bodies and authorities. The Parish Council owns and manages the Recreation Ground off Lower Road and the pavilion. Additionally the Parish Council owns the lighting units on Downs Road, the bus shelters and benches. The Council receives the money it needs to carry out its responsibilities from Winchester City Council, this is called the precept (a mandatory demand) and the amount is shown as part of the Council Tax Bill levied on each household in the parish by Winchester City Council. South Wonston village and Worthy Down married quarters fall into the civil parish of South Wonston.

Whilst the Council has no powers to make planning decisions, as this is the responsibility of the District (and sometimes County Councils), planning issues relating to the parish do come before the Council for consultation and comment. This may solely require a written response or it may entail one of your Councillors appearing at a planning meeting or Inquiry, to protect the interests of the parish as a whole, such as at motocross Public Inquiry.

Members of the public are able to attend the regular Parish Council meetings to express their views on a particular planning application (or any other matter) when it is being discussed. Occasionally, with larger developments or controversial planning issues, it may be necessary to facilitate a public meeting where all parties may present their issues, prior to the Parish Council making a response to the appropriate authority.

The calendar of meetings for the year is on the website (under the 'Parish Council' section) along with the minutes of the last three meetings. There is a statutory procedure to follow regarding notice of meetings, issuing agendas and minutes and this is the responsibility of the Clerk. Important decisions

are made at the meetings of a local Council and there are Standing Orders which regulate procedure and conduct at their respective meetings. Also, Financial Regulations govern the conduct and management of the Council's finances by the Council and its officers

If co-opted to the Parish Council you will have the power to influence decisions for the benefit of the people you serve. You must be able and willing to attend meetings of the Council (including other meetings as a representative of the Council, eg other Councils, local bodies, community groups or organisations). Such meetings could be held during weekday evenings, during the day or at weekends.

### **Local Councillors should have:**

- Good interpersonal skills.
- Ability to communicate succinctly.
- Ability and willingness to represent the Council and their community.
- Ability and willingness to work closely with other members and to maintain good working relationships with all members and staff.
- An enthusiastic, flexible and committed approach to the work of the Council is required.
- Sound knowledge and understanding of local affairs and the local community

Upon co-option it is necessary to sign a declaration of acceptance of office which will include an agreement to abide by the code of conduct adopted by the Council. You cannot act as a Councillor until you have signed your declaration. You will also be required to complete a Register of Interests form when you have signed the declaration of acceptance.

A Councillor must attend meetings on a regular basis having prepared before hand by studying the agenda. He/she should take an active part in meetings to form a best judgement regarding the needs of the community and abide by majority decisions. A Councillor should maintain proper standards of behaviour and not bring the Council into disrepute and act openly and honourably in the public's interest.

## **The Chairman**

The Chairman is elected by fellow Councillors each year at the Annual Meeting of the Council in May. The Chairman is the figurehead but his authority is limited to matters of procedure and to the conduct of a meeting. Other than the power to exercise a second or casting vote, a Chairman has no rights or views greater than the rights and views of other Councillors. At South Wonston the same person may not serve for more than three consecutive years as Chairman.

## **The Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer**

A local Council is required to appoint such officers as it considers necessary for the proper discharge of its functions. The number and designations of officers appointed and their responsibilities will vary according to the size of the Council and the work it carries out. A Council, whatever its size, should have a Clerk and a Responsible Financial Officer (RFO). The Clerk is very often also the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) but in some Councils this role is carried out by another member of staff.

The Clerk is the chief officer and responsibilities include advising the Council and administration of the Council's affairs. The Clerk is an independent and objective officer who takes instructions from the Council as the corporate body and not from individual Councillors. The RFO has specific duties relating to the budget, the accounts and financial management of the Council.

If you would like any further information please contact the Clerk – Debbie Found:

## **South Wonston Parish Council**

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