

What is a Parish Council?

A parish council is a local authority that makes decisions on behalf of the people in the parish. Town and parish councils are the first level of local government. They provide communities with a democratic voice and a structure for taking community action.

It is the level of government closest to the community, with the county authority above it in the hierarchy. As the authority closest to the people, we are invariably the first port of call people go to with their concerns or ideas. For this reason, we are a vital part of any community.

What decisions do Parish Councils make?

Parish councils can extend their powers to do anything to improve the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of their community as long as it is within the law.

Probably the most common topics that parish councils get involved with are planning matters (they are statutory consultees) and other localised issues. Minety has historically had an issue with flooding, and the parish council are key in ensuring parishioners are aware of their roles and responsibilities. As a community, we want to ensure everyone is kept safe and free from the stress and financial burden that flooding would cause.

On their own, parish councils have limited powers to make decisions, but are responsible for managing their own budgets. These are financed through the precept, an amount of money determined by the parish council and collected as part of your Council Tax. This money is used to improve facilities and services for local people. Parish councils can also apply for other funding, such as grants and awards, and have the authority to award grants, in certain circumstances, from the precept.

Organisations that have the final say on bigger decisions know that a parish council gives the best reflection of how a community feels about something and our views are taken seriously. But we need to hear what the community has to say to best represent it.

Parish Council Duties

Minety Parish Council has 9 councillors. As of February 2021, we are one councillor short of a full complement.

The duties and functions of a parish council are many and varied so it is an interesting position to hold.

We meet once a month (except August) and meetings are designated as one hour in duration, but will run as long as the items on the agenda to be discussed demand. The agenda is available roughly one week prior to the meeting, and can be seen on the website.

We discuss and decide upon planning applications and any other matters referred to it by local residents. There is also an annual parish meeting which all parishioners are invited to, traditionally held in the village hall; but in current times, all meetings are being conducted via Zoom. All meetings are advertised on the council notice boards and on the website – meetings take place on the second Tuesday of each month.

Residents can bring to the attention of the parish council anything that concerns them, either directly or through the clerk.

If matters raised are not the responsibility of the council, the clerk can bring them to the attention of the proper authority, or point the parishioner in the right direction.

How much time does it take up?

All councillors have specific roles and responsibilities assigned to them, which take varying amounts of time to deal with. The time of year has a big impact on things like flooding and footpaths, as an example.

How long does a parish councillor serve for?

Once elected, parish councillors sit on the council for a term of four years. If they then want to stay in the post they can stand for re-election. Councillors can also be co-opted, which happens when the council is running short of a full complement and the current members are entitled to vote on a new member without the need for an election. This usually means the prospective candidate will write a brief resumé and attend a parish meeting for an informal interview before the councillors then take a vote whether to appoint them.

Am I eligible to be a Parish Councillor?

To become a parish councillor in Minety, you must

- Be a British or commonwealth citizen,
- have owned a property in the parish for at least 12 months; or
- have worked in the parish (as your principal or only place of work) for the previous 12 months; or
- for the whole of the previous 12 months lived in the parish or within three miles of the parish boundary; and
- be at least 18 years old.

Why become a Parish Councillor?

If you want to make a difference to your community, have a say in how the precept is spent, or help your neighbours with pressing community matters, perhaps being a parish councillor is for you.

Minety is a relatively small community, but is vibrant and full of life, with two pubs, a club, a shop, an outstanding primary school and a sports facility supporting a rugby, football and tennis club. Plus, having recently had FTTP broadband installed in the village, the future is looking bright. You can help to have a say in how that future is determined.

Parish councils actively encourage input from residents on what the community needs, so that they can budget for that activity.

Parish councils have a range of powers and duties in relation to the communities they serve. You can see these listed [here](#).

Information about the role of a parish councillor and guidance on standing for election can be found on the [National Association of Local Councils \(NALC\) website](#) which provides these publications:

- [All about local councils](#)
- [It takes all sorts: Local councils: represent your community, make a difference](#)

The [Localism Act](#), which came into force in 2011, passes more power to communities and encourages those communities to become more self-reliant. Community rights powers are a cornerstone of this legislation.

These involve:

- [Neighbourhood planning](#)
- [Community Right to Challenge](#)

Find out more detail at the UK national [Community Rights website](#).

For further details on the Localism Act and the various rights, visit the [Department for Communities and Local Government website](#).