

Chelveston-cum-Caldecott News

Parish Council Election Special - March 2011

WILL YOUR NAME BE ON THE BALLOT PAPER ON THE 5th MAY?

As the Clerk to the Council, I am very keen to see new candidates put themselves up for election to the Parish Council.

This is not because I want to get rid of the present Councillors! Rather it is because it is important the Council has an electoral mandate to represent the parish in future dealings with other authorities and developers from a position of strength.

The parish therefore needs **at least 8 or more candidates** to stand to ensure that the new Council has been voted in by you, the parishioners.

Have you got what it takes to be one of our Parish Councillors?

Firstly the legal requirements –

You have to be:

- a British, Commonwealth or EU citizen, and
- 18 years or older on the day you become nominated for election, and
- on the list of registered electors of the parish, or during the whole of the preceding 12 months
 - occupied land as owner or tenant in it, or
 - had a principal place of work there, or
 - resided in or within 3 miles of it.

You cannot stand for election if you:

- are the subject of a bankruptcy restriction order or interim order.
- have, in the last 5 years been convicted and had a prison sentence of over three months.

Secondly the parish requirements -

a) You should be an active member of the community, who cares about what goes on in & around the parish.

b) You need to be prepared to volunteer your time, and not just at the monthly meetings.

c) You should be prepared to suggest ideas and projects and, if required, lead these to completion.

d) If your motivation is fame and glory, then this probably isn't for you. Councillors are occasionally thanked, often ignored and (if you vote the "wrong" way) sometimes derided.

If you read that Councillors can make a fortune on allowances, don't bother applying – we don't pay attendance allowances!

But you don't have any powers?

This old chestnut comes out periodically, usually over planning consent, so I'll deal with this one first.

Locally, if someone submits a planning application, the Council has a statutory right to comment. If the Council's decision and the District planning officer's decision match (for/against) then that is it (unless called in to a planning committee for other reasons). If the decisions differ, then the ENC ward Councillors are asked to comment. If their decision matches ours then it goes to a planning committee. If the ward Councillors agree with the planning officer, the planning officer's decision carries.

The Parish Council has planning determination powers relating to its own functions (e.g. the allotment buildings).

BUT...the Coalition Government announced changes to this process in the Localism Bill in December 2010. What the final version of the Act will look like later this year is still being debated by Parliament, but the Coalition want to move more planning decisions further down to the community.

The Council is a creature of statute i.e. it can only do something because there is a statutory power or duty to perform that function. There are a lot of statutes about and successive Governments keep adding to them (e.g. *Crime & Disorder Act 1998*, *Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act 2005*). It is for the Councillors to decide which powers/functions the Council will use.

Powers currently used include Precepting (raising money through the Council tax), providing public lighting (the street lamps), maintaining the verges (the monthly grass cut, the benches, litter and dog bins), maintaining the war memorials, providing the allotments and, if negotiations are successful, providing a play area and so on.

But the Parish Council doesn't have any money to do anything?

Over the last term (4 years) the Council has raised over £34k in taxes, and received nearly a further £20k in grants, donations and VAT refunds.

The biggest costs are grass-cutting and street lighting (£22k), with the rest being spent on various projects and running costs within the parish.

Looking ahead, the Government are changing the developer contribution arrangements, such that the Council will receive funding from the Community Infrastructure Levy on any new houses built in the parish for community infrastructure projects.

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But what has the Parish Council ever done for us?

In the last 4 year term the Council has –

Changed to a new grass-cutting contract to provide 8 cuts, with the option of extra cuts in the peak growing season, whilst saving nearly £1k a year.

Replaced 11 old 80w mercury street lamps with more efficient 35w sodium lamps (a quarter of the current stock) and, in two cases, recovered the replacement costs from the drivers who had damaged them.

Organised the dedication service for the 305th Bomb Group memorial in May 2007 and also the visit by the 40th Bomb Wing in May 2009.

Considered 40 planning applications, of which only 5 were decided differently by ENC/NCC, as well as undertaking a major exercise against industrialisation of the former MOD site.

Worked with NCC's highways contractors to sort out flooding issues on the B645, Raunds Rd and the Green and to provide drop kerbs in Caldecott.

Worked with NCC's Rights of Way team to replace the old bridge on the footpath to Chelveston Cliffs.

Approached landowners to find a site suitable for allotments within the parish, following a petition from electors, agreed lease terms with a farmer and now 16 plots are starting their second season.

Replaced one village seat in Caldecott and installed two dog bins (Foot Lane and near Disbrowe Court) to reduce incidences of dog fouling.

Became the first Parish Council in the district to achieve Quality Council status (a national certification) and published a walks leaflet (in conjunction with Dean & Shelton PC) featuring the rights of way over the Chelveston Plateau.

Carried out the 7 yearly Parish Appraisal to understand the needs and aspirations for the parish – used to shape future Council priorities.

Entered into negotiations with the new owners of Chelston Rise with the aim of transferring 14 street lights and the play area to the Council, the latter with access for all the parishioners.

Worked with the charity Trustees to reorganise the village hall governance for the benefit of the parish.

Operated a web-site to promote its activities and host the village history project – these pages are very popular with the site hits of over 17,000 in 2010.

So how often do the Councillors meet?

The Council normally meets on the second Monday of every month, save for August unless there is urgent business to be conducted. There may be additional planning meetings or site visits.

All the current Councillors have served from the May 2007 elections with a maximum possible meeting attendance of 45 (to February 2011).

Councillor	Attendance*	%
Adrian Dale	41	91.1
Martin Emerson	42	93.3
Michael Foulger +	39	86.7
Glenn Harwood #	26+16	93.3
Mick Izzard	45	100
Patricia Mommersteeg	37	82.2
Melvyn Wooding	40	88.9

* Attendance means attended the Council meeting, or attended another meeting on behalf of the Council.

Cllr Harwood serves on both the Parish & District Councils. His attendance at conflicting ENC meetings is included in his total.

+ Cllr Foulger suffered a stroke in January 2010 and was not well enough to return to Council duties until June.

Potential Councillors should note the Council currently has a high level of attendance and this will be expected of them if elected.

I want to be part of this, what do I do?

Apply to the Returning Officer at
East Northamptonshire Council
Cedar Drive
Thrapston
Northants
NN14 4LZ
(01832) 742119
elections@east-northamptonshire.gov.uk

You will need two sponsors who are also on the parish's electoral roll to support your application.

All valid forms have to be received by **noon on Monday 4th April 2011**. Assuming there are more than 7 candidates, an election will be called, to take place on Thursday 5th May 2011.

Candidates are permitted to canvass for votes, within certain restrictions – you can't buy or bribe voters!

The winners are those with the highest number of valid votes, working down until all 7 places are filled. The new Council will meet for the first time at the Annual Parish Council Meeting on Monday 9th May 2011, when they will choose their Chairman for the coming year.

Don't delay, register your interest now!

Edited by the Clerk

Legal Notice – This newsletter is not an election document and does not seek to promote or support any candidate(s).

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