

Parish councils and the community

In England alone there are over 9,000 parish councils and town councils. Here are the tiers of local government.

- Herefordshire Council – Herefordshire is divided into 53 Wards, each with an elected Ward Member (County Councillor). We are in Castle Ward, represented by Clive Skelton.
- Parish Councils (134 in Herefordshire), each with elected parish council members. Elections take place every 4 years and the last one was in May 2015.

Each parish and town council have a limited amount of duties, as they are local authorities. With agreement of the district council or county council, if they decide to use them, the parish and town council have wide powers.

Parish councils should maintain a close relationship with the local community. The public are encouraged to be observers at the council meetings. An annual “parish meeting” should be arranged, which is a meeting of residents, but facilitated by the parish council.

Source:

http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk/your_council/parish_councils/the_role_and_powers_of_parish_.aspx

Parish councils are run by councillors, who volunteer their time to make their community a better place. Their work falls into three main categories:

- Representing the local community
- Delivering services to meet local needs
- Striving to improve the quality of life in the parish

Parish councils have a broad range of powers and duties covering planning, provision of amenities, and other local services, from youth projects to traffic calming measures. With help from Herefordshire Council, many parish councils across the county employ a **lengthsman** whose duties include drain and ditch clearing, grass cutting and general local maintenance.

Each parish council is different and will have different needs, which are often identified through the **parish plan** process. Parish councillors have an important role in working with their communities to develop a parish plan.

A **Parish Liaison and Rural Services** post in Herefordshire Council provides information and advice to the public and to parish councils and liaises between local councils and Herefordshire Council. They also provide advice and support to communities working to develop or retain rural services.

How does a parish council work?

Parish councils have regular meetings which must be advertised and open to the public. Apart from councillors, each parish council has a clerk who provides administration for the council.

Parish councils are responsible for managing their own budgets. They are financed through the **precept**, an amount of money calculated as an estimate

for the coming financial year and collected as **part of your council tax**. Parish councils can also apply for other funding, such as **grants and awards**. Parish councils actively encourage input from residents on what the community needs, so that they can budget for that activity.

What can parish council do?

Parish councils have a range of powers and duties in relation to the communities they serve. You can see these listed in the Powers and Duties of Local Councils.

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 Build
- Community Right to Challenge
- Community Right to Bid

Further information can be sought from Herefordshire Council Website at www.herefordshire.gov.uk

Source:
<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/government-citizens-and-rights/democracy/council-parish-town-council-and-councillors>