

How to become a Polstead Parish Councillor

Polstead Parish Council has produced this overview on being a parish councillor in order that the details are relevant to how PPC operates and to give you contact details for PPC's councillors and clerk should you require any further information.

Polstead Parish Council

Nick Brandt	(Chairman)	01206 263134
Michael Hackford	(Vice Chairman)	01206 263368
John Baxter		01206 269965
Amanda Flather		01787 210228
Richard Kilshaw		01206 262008
Anne MacWilson		01787 210335
Theresa Ravensdale		01206 263446

Parish Clerk	Dave Crimmin	01787 375085
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Email	polsteadpc@btinternet.com	
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Website	www.polstead.suffolk.gov.uk	
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Babergh District Council		01473 822801
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Introduction to becoming a Polstead Parish councillor

- Do you ever find yourself complaining about things in your local neighbourhood?
- Do you ever say "Why doesn't the Council do something about it?"
- Are you prepared to try and change things and put something back into your community?

If the answer to the questions is YES, have you ever thought of standing for election to Polstead Parish Council? It's a great opportunity to get involved in making real decisions affecting your local community.

What do Parish and Town Councils do?

Their activities vary widely from place to place. In some areas, they usually provide and maintain recreational and sporting facilities such as playing fields, village halls and village greens. Larger councils can provide or help to provide public facilities such as swimming pools, community centres, cinemas and museums. Parish and Town Councils are generally also responsible for bus shelters, village seats and public lavatories, they may also help with maintaining churchyards and plant trees and pick up litter.

The role of a Parish councillor

Many people have completely the wrong idea about parish councils – they're certainly not like "The Vicar of Dibley", and are quite separate from the local church. Parish and Town Councils are the smallest units of local government and the closest to their electors. These elected bodies will play an ever-increasing role in the future of local government whilst National government is seeking to enhance and modernise local government as a whole, making it more accountable to the local communities that they serve.

Being a Parish or Town councillor would give you a pivotal role in this process – as the voice of the local community and championing the users of local services. Parish and Town councillors have a long tradition of promoting the well-being of their areas and a sense of pride in their local community.

Making a difference

A good and active council can make a big difference to the quality of life in the community it serves. In order to be a good and active council, however, it needs to have committed and enthusiastic councillors!

Could this be you?

The next election of Polstead Parish councillors takes place on Thursday 5th May 2011. The timetable for these elections is as follows:

Nomination papers will be available from the Parish Clerk or Babergh District Council on 21st March 2011.

Completed nomination papers must be delivered to the Babergh District Council by noon on Monday 4th April 2011. This date and time are fixed by law.

If the number of candidates does not exceed the number of seats available, an election is not contested, and the result will be declared before polling day.

If an election is contested, polling will take place on Thursday 5th May 2011.

What do Councils get involved with?

Depending on the facilities and amenities in your Parish or Town, Councils could be involved in any or some of the following:

Allotments
Car Parks
Cemeteries
Education*
Environmental Health
 Home Safety
 Street cleansing**
Highways & Transport*
Museums & Art Galleries
Parks and Open Spaces
Planning*
Public Conveniences
Recreational Facilities
Sport and Recreation

* Councils may be involved on a consultative basis

** On an agency basis

This list is not intended to be exhaustive, because Parish and Town Councils vary in what they do, and get involved in many different aspects. Although the above may not all be relevant to your particular council, they could be asked to become involved on a consultative basis.

Council Meeting and Time Commitments

Polstead Parish Council holds an annual meeting of the council in May of each year, and then meets on a monthly basis (excluding July and December). These meetings are important, as they are the place where decisions are made. Most Parish and Town Councils, no matter how big or small, tend to have some form of committee system in operation. A particular subject that affects all Parish and Town councils is planning. Because planning matters can arise frequently, some councils set up planning committees. Other subjects which can have their own committee include Finance, Recreation, Personnel and Grounds and allotments. Currently, Polstead Parish Council does not have a committee system in place.

The time commitment one has to devote to serving on a Parish or Town council will also vary depending on the size of the council and the population it serves. The time spent will also be governed by the individual's personal commitments. The message is very much that in most cases you can spend as little or as much time as YOU want to on council business. However, you must be prepared to serve your community to the best of your ability and you must be prepared to attend meetings. If you require further information on this matter it is suggested that you contact the Parish Council's Clerk, Dave Crimmin, whose contact details are at the front of this guide.

Becoming a Polstead Parish councillor

Who can stand ?

You can stand for election to a Parish or Town Council if you are:

- 18 years of age or more;
- a British citizen, other Commonwealth citizen, citizen of the Republic of Ireland or a citizen of another member State of the European Union;

And if

- you are registered as a local government elector for the parish for which you want to stand; or
- you have, for the whole 12 month period up to the date of the election, occupied (as owner or tenant) land or other premises in the parish; or
- your principal or only place of work during that same 12 months period has been in the parish; or
- you have during the whole of that same 12-month period resided in the parish or within 4.8 kilometres (three miles) of it. NB:- *you may, of course, qualify under more than one of the above categories.*

How can I stand?

The nomination process is straightforward for parish elections. The form this takes is prescribed by law. It requires two forms to be correctly completed and submitted within the time allowed by law. The forms are:-

- (a) the nomination paper,
- (b) the candidate's consent to nomination.

Forms are available from the Returning Officer at Babergh District Council Office contact number on front page, who will be able to tell you the times between which they must be submitted.

The Returning Officer has NO legal discretion to accept late nominations.

The nomination paper

You must put your full name and home address. A description may be given but it is not essential. If you do give one, it must NOT, by law, exceed six words. It may be a party political reference or some other kind of description. Bear in mind that it will appear, together with your name and address, on the ballot paper.

Nomination papers must be signed by two electors (a proposer and seconder) who MUST be registered to vote in the Parish for which you stand. The nomination paper requires their electoral letters and numbers to be given; these must be correctly stated, as they will be checked when the nomination paper is received by the Returning Officer. If you are uncertain of the numbers, your Parish Clerk should be able to advise you or you can check the information by phoning the Returning Officer.

Register of Interests

If you are successful in being elected, you will have to complete a form accepting the office of councillor, and also a Declaration of Interests. This requires you to register any financial or other interests, and is available for inspection by the public.

Election Expenses

All candidates are required to produce a record of any expenses they incurred in standing as a candidate.

Babergh District Council District and Parish Council elections and AV referendum Timetable of Proceedings for Thursday 5 May 2011

Publication of Notice of Election (latest date)	Friday 25 March 2011
Deadline for Receipt of Nomination Papers	noon on Monday 4 April 2011
Publication of Statements of Persons Nominated	by noon on Wednesday 6 April 2011
Withdrawal of Candidature	no later than noon on Thursday 7 April 2011
Appointment of Election Agents	by noon on Thursday 7 April 2011
Publication of Notice of Election Agents	Thursday 7 April 2011
Last Date for Registration	Thursday 14 April 2011
Receipt of Postal Vote Applications	by 5:00 pm Thursday 14 April 2011
Publication of Notice of Poll	Thursday 21 April 2011
Receipt of Proxy Vote Applications	by 5:00 pm Thursday 21 April 2011
Appointment of Poll and Count Agents	Tuesday 26 April 2011
First Day to Issue Replacement Lost Postal Ballot Papers	Wednesday 27 April 2011
Receipt of Emergency Proxy Vote Applications	by 5:00 pm Thursday 5 May 2011
Last Day to Issue Replacement Spoilt or Lost Postal Ballot Papers	5:00 pm Thursday 5 May 2011
Day of Poll	7:00 am to 10:00 pm Thursday 5 May 2011
Declaration of Candidates Expenses	Thursday 2 June 2011
Declaration of Candidates Expenses	Thursday 9 June 2011

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