

## How will you be remembered?

Notoriety? After all they made a film about Buster Edwards, one of the Great Train Robbers? Sporting achievement perhaps? Local golfer Tony Jacklin won the British and U.S. Opens and the Ryder Cup.

Of course there are many unsung heroes, particularly in sport, who give up their time freely to bring through new talent. It is their endeavours which allow real talent to flourish. But what of community spirit and endeavour? How do we celebrate that? Quite often in local place names, street names, buildings. The question is, do we know who these people were or what they did? In smaller villages they were quite often parish councillors who gave of their time freely for the good of their local community, often fighting gallantly to raise money for some local facility which no matter how small was much valued.

We owe much to the farsightedness of those who have gone before in much the same way as future generations will reap the benefits of the time and effort we put in today. So, what is a parish council and what do councillors do?

There are over 8,700 parish and town councils representing around 16 million people across England. They form the most local level of government and cover many rural and urban areas. Your parish or town council has an overall responsibility for the well-being of your local community. Their work falls into three main categories:

- representing the local community
- delivering services to meet local needs
- striving to improve quality of life in the parish

Your council might provide and maintain some or all of the following services:

- allotments
- bus shelters
- community transport schemes
- leisure facilities
- open spaces
- street lighting
- village greens
- bridleways
- car parks
- crime reduction measures
- litter bins
- public toilets
- tourism activities
- footpaths
- burial grounds
- commons
- youth projects
- street cleaning
- traffic calming

They will work with larger councils, in our case North Lincolnshire Council, to agree which of these services the parish council should provide.

OK, so how do they make decisions? Parish councils are made up of a number of councillors who meet regularly to make decisions on the work and direction of the council. As elected bodies parish and town councils are responsible to the people they represent – the local community. Attending a council meeting is the best way to find out what they do. Give the council a call and find out when its next public meeting is scheduled to take place.

Yes but where do they get their money from? Each year a sum of money called a 'precept' is collected through your council tax. This money is used by your parish or town council to improve facilities and services for local people. Parish or town councils can also apply for grants and loans and, if they own property, can receive money from rents or leases.

Parish or town councillors are elected to represent a geographical area known as a ward or – mainly in smaller parishes – the parish council area as a whole. They are elected by people who live in the area. Elections are held every four years but if there are any vacancies after an election is held then the parish council has the power to co-opt. This means it can agree to fill the place without the need for an election

Councillors have three main areas of work:

1. Decision-making: through attending meetings and committees with other elected members, councillors decide which activities to support, where money should be spent, what services should be delivered and what policies should be implemented.
2. Monitoring: councillors make sure that their decisions lead to efficient and effective services by keeping an eye on how well things are working.
3. Getting involved locally: as local representatives, councillors have responsibilities towards their constituents and local organisations. This often depends on what the councillor wants to achieve and how much time is available.

As a councillor you can become a voice for your community and affect real change. Councillors are community leaders and represent the aspirations of the public that they serve. Parish councils are the most local part of our democratic system and are closest to the public.

Interested? South Ferriby currently have a vacancy on the Parish Council. For further information, please contact

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