

Councillor Application Pack

Briefing about Aylburton Parish Council

Function of the Parish Council

Aylburton Parish Council has been serving its community since 1894. As the most ancient form of local government in England, parish councils date back to the eighth century. Today, the parish council operates as a statutory, elected local authority, acting as a representative voice for local opinion while maintaining close and regular contact with residents. It also serves as a focal point for voluntary organisations within the area.

The council delivers a range of services for the local community, including grass cutting, provision and maintenance of benches, bus shelters, dog waste bins, notice boards, recreational land, litter picking, flower displays, churchyard upkeep, allotments, and the distribution of community grants and donations.

Members of the public are welcome to attend council meetings, which take place monthly on the first Tuesday at 18:30, except in February and August. Residents have the opportunity to address the council during the public forum session. Meetings are generally held at the Methodist Church Community Hall, but from April 2024, the venue moved to Aylburton Memorial Hall.

Aylburton is a small, rural parish with no wards. The council is comprised of seven councillors and a Clerk, with the number of councillors proportionate to the parish's size.

Roles within the Organisation

The council functions as a corporate body, with all decisions made by majority vote during meetings. The Chairman – a title used regardless of gender – is responsible for ensuring that meetings are conducted in accordance with standing orders and financial regulations, efficiently and promptly. The Clerk to the Council serves as the Proper Officer and Responsible Financial Officer, handling the council's statutory obligations.

What We Do

The parish council undertakes a wide variety of services for the parish, funding projects through the 'precept' collected via the local council tax by Forest of Dean District Council. In addition to delivering services, the council collaborates with Forest of Dean District Council, Gloucestershire County Council, and other local organisations such as Two Rivers Housing and Lydney Park Estate.

- Liaison with Highways regarding road and pavement issues, including campaigning for improvements and resurfacing.
- Funding quarterly newsletters ("Ducktown Echo") for every household, written and designed by community volunteers.
- Considering all planning applications affecting Aylburton and submitting comments to Forest of Dean District Council as appropriate.
- Representing parishioners and referring their concerns to the correct authority when not within the council's remit.

Co-option of Parish Councillors (Casual Vacancy)

Eligibility of Candidates

The parish council can consider any eligible person to fill a vacancy. A candidate qualifies to be elected and serve as a councillor if they are a British, Commonwealth, Irish, or European Union citizen and are at least 18 years old on the day of nomination or election. Additionally, they must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Be on the electoral register for the Parish on the relevant day and thereafter.
- Have owned or tenanted land or premises in the Parish for the twelve months preceding that day.
- Have had their principal or only place of work within the Parish for the twelve months preceding that day.
- Have resided in the Parish or within three miles of it for the twelve months preceding that day.

With the exception of qualification (1), these eligibility criteria continue for the full term of office until the next ordinary elections.

Certain disqualifications apply, including:

- Holding a paid office or employment under the parish council.
- Holding employment in a company controlled by the local authority, as specified by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (except section 73).
- Being subject to a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order.
- Having been sentenced to imprisonment (suspended or not) for not less than three months within the preceding five years, without the option of a fine.
- Being disqualified under any enactment relating to corrupt or illegal electoral practices.

Applications

Candidates must:

- Submit a short application form with information about themselves.
- Confirm their eligibility for the position according to statutory rules.

After receipt and confirmation of eligibility, the next suitable parish council meeting will include an agenda item to receive applications and assess candidate suitability. Eligible candidates will be invited to attend.

The Clerk (or Chairman, if the Clerk is absent) will circulate copies of eligible candidates' application forms to all councillors at least three clear days before the meeting at which co-option will be considered. All documents will be treated as strictly private and confidential.

At the Co-option Meeting

At the meeting, each candidate will have up to five minutes to introduce themselves, provide background and experience, and explain why they wish to join the parish council. This process takes place in the public session, after which a resolution is passed to exclude the public and press for a

private councillor discussion on candidate suitability. Following the discussion, the candidates and public are invited back, and a recorded vote is held as per Standing Orders.

To be co-opted, a candidate must receive an absolute majority of votes (50% plus one of those present and voting). If more than two candidates stand and no one achieves a majority, the candidate with the fewest votes drops out, and further rounds of voting continue until an absolute majority is achieved. In cases with only one candidate, co-option is usually, but not always, automatic. Co-option must be by absolute majority, as stated in LGA 1972, Sch. 12 s39.

A successful candidate present at the meeting will sign a Declaration of Acceptance of Office, agreeing to abide by the parish council's Code of Conduct and may take office immediately. If absent, they will sign at or before the next meeting. Failure to sign results in automatic disqualification.

Holding a Position of Public Office

Upon co-option, the Clerk will notify Forest of Dean District Council Electoral Services Office. The new councillor must complete a Notification of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests form, which the Clerk submits to the Monitoring Officer within 28 days. Failure to comply, without reasonable excuse, is a criminal offence, attracting a fine of up to £5,000 and disqualification for up to five years.

It is also a criminal offence to knowingly or recklessly provide false or misleading information in the notification.

Councillors must attend all council meetings and uphold the seven Nolan principles of public life:

1. Selflessness
2. Integrity
3. Objectivity
4. Accountability
5. Openness
6. Honesty
7. Leadership

When representing the council, councillors must:

- Treat others respectfully
- Not bully or behave in an intimidating manner
- Not seek to improperly confer advantage or disadvantage
- Use council resources appropriately
- Not disclose confidential information

Role Description

Role: Parish Councillor

Responsible to: The Corporate Body (Parish Council) and all residents of the parish

Responsible for: Effective leadership, governance, liaison, and setting budgets

Purpose: Representing the views of residents

Regular liaison is expected with other councillors, staff, local authorities, residents' associations, community and charitable groups, and residents.

Period of Service: Elections are held every four years. The next scheduled elections are in May 2023.

Councillors co-opted between elections serve until the end of the current four-year term of office.

Salary: This is a voluntary, unpaid position. However, mileage and subsistence allowances are payable if eligibility criteria are met.

History of Parish Councils

The present system of parish councils was established in 1894. There are currently around 10,000 parish councils across the country. As the first tier of local government, parish councils are closest to individual communities and are best placed to identify and address local needs.

Aylburton Parish Council is apolitical, meaning it is politically neutral. Councillors are expected to represent only the interests of residents, not any political party.

Support and Training

Induction and orientation are provided by the Clerk, Chairman, or both. Ongoing training is available through the Gloucestershire Association of Local Councils and other tailored sessions, which may take place during the day or in the evening. The Clerk can also offer advice as needed.

How to Find Out More

For further information, visit the National Association of Local Councils website: www.nalc.gov.uk. Alternatively, you may attend a council meeting or speak with current councillors or the Clerk.

Main Duties and Responsibilities

1. Attend parish council meetings.
2. Prepare for meetings and be well-informed about the issues to be discussed.
3. Participate constructively in the governance of Aylburton Parish Council.
4. Contribute to the formation and scrutiny of the council's policies, budgets, strategies, and service delivery, including any live Strategic Plan.
5. Work with other councillors to ensure the parish council is properly managed.
6. Stay up to date with developments affecting the parish council at local, regional, and national levels.
7. Promote the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the Parish, considering the strategic effects on neighbouring communities and the council as a whole.
8. Represent the interests of the entire Parish and raise residents' enquiries, representations, and complaints at Council meetings.
9. Listen to and represent the views of the whole community when participating in Council business and working with external organisations.

10. Support the parish council in arrangements to build community capacity and promote measures contributing to the Parish Strategic Plan.
11. Comment on planning applications and planning matters, including the Local Plan.
12. Take part in meetings and make sound judgements for the community, abiding by majority decisions.
13. Represent the parish council on outside bodies to which appointed.
14. Maintain proper standards of behaviour when representing the parish council.
15. Fulfil statutory and local requirements as an elected member, including compliance with codes of conduct and high ethical standards, such as maintaining confidentiality and not using council resources for political purposes.
16. Participate effectively as a member of any committee or working party to which appointed.
17. Act as an ambassador for the parish council, promoting its work on behalf of the community.
18. Uphold the parish council's Standing Orders, Code of Conduct, and Nolan principles, ensuring impartiality of Council staff is maintained.
19. Contribute to the Parish newsletter to enhance accountability by providing details of official activities and contributions to council operations as appropriate.
20. Undertake appropriate training courses as available and when possible.
21. Use the parish council's email server for all communications; new members are provided with a unique councillor email address.