



Great Gonerby Parish Council

The role of Parish Councillors

1. Great Gonerby Parish Council has 11 Councillors. It is really important that the Parish Council has a range of different ages and demographic profiles to ensure that it truly represents the majority of the village. Standing as a Parish Councillor can make a real difference to the community. Residents often ask what this entails, what sort of a commitment being a Parish Councillor requires and what qualifications you need to become a Councillor. This document answers these questions.

2. **What is a Parish Council?** A Parish Council is a democratically elected body established by legislation. It is the first tier of local government and has a range of statutory powers and duties and, following the Localism Act 2011, it has more flexibility to make a difference to its community, no matter how small. Parish Councils have a statutory power to precept (tax) the local electors in the area to finance activities following decisions made by the Parish Council.

3. A Parish Council does not have statutory responsibility for services such as waste collection, street parking, traffic regulation, planning, licencing and education. These responsibilities lie with the unitary authority, but the Parish Council is consulted when changes to services are proposed, or for planning applications affecting the village.

4. **What is the role of a Parish Councillor?** A Parish Councillor is an unpaid holder of a public office. The main role of a Parish Councillor is to actively participate in the collective decision-making processes of their Parish Council. They do not have any authority to make decisions about Parish Council business on their own. A Councillor's normal term of office, when elected by a general ballot, is for four years. Occasionally, vacancies will arise during the 4-year period and subject to various statutory notices, consultations and periods of time, these can be filled by co-option. This process is known as Casual Vacancy.

5. **Who can become a Councillor?** Anyone over the age of 18 who is a citizen of the UK and who lives or works in the Parish or within 3 miles of it may put themselves forward to be a candidate. No formal qualifications or experience are required.

6. **Main commitment required of a Parish Councillor.** As a minimum, a Parish Councillor is required to attend meetings of the Parish Council. These are usually held on the first Monday of every month in the Memorial Hall on Belton Lane starting at 7.15 pm and lasting no more than 3 hours. Councillors must read the agenda and accompanying documents which are circulated approximately 1 week in advance of the meeting. They are then expected to participate in the debates and decision making at the meeting.

7. **Additional roles.** Great Gonerby Parish Council has a few sub-committees that Parish Councillors can opt to be selected to join if they hold a particular interest in them, or for which they have a particular skill set. The Parish Council organizes other community events throughout the year, which Councillors are requested to support. There are other events, occasionally including meetings with the District or Lincolnshire County Council, for which attendance is not mandatory, but encouraged. Formal inspections of the Parish Council's cemeteries and reporting anything awry in the Parish to the Parish Clerk are the responsibility of all Councillors.

8. **Training.** Each new Councillor will be requested to attend a training course for new Councillors, which is either held online or in person locally. Many of the formal training courses that Councillors could attend for specialist additional roles are also held online; therefore, Councillors should be computer literate. Councillors are given their own Parish Council email address which they must use for all official business to comply with the General Data Protection Regulations.

9. **Parish interest.** Otherwise, all that is required is a genuine interest in what happens in the Parish. The Parish Council will try to retain and enhance the Parish's character and its facilities but at the same time embrace and be part of the process of planning for the future.

10. **Becoming a Chairperson/Vice Chairperson.** A Future Chairperson or Vice Chairperson should have at least 14 months experience and a 75% Parish Council meeting attendance. Incumbents of both roles must volunteer and be voted in by a majority vote of the Parish Councillors.