

The Catsfield Flyer...

WELCOME TO CATSFIELD PARISH COUNCIL'S
Newsletter 2016 - Issue 14



Catsfield Annual Parish Assembly 2016

Will take place in Catsfield Village Hall on
Wednesday 13th April 2016 at 7.30pm

What is a Parish Assembly (also known as a Parish Meeting)?

Every English Parish must have a Parish Meeting (Local Government Act 1972, s13(1)).

This meeting consists of the local government electors registered for the area for which it is held i.e. all those have a right to vote in Catsfield. It can be convened by the Parish Council Chairman, two Parish Councillors or six electors for the area for which it is to be held.

The meeting must be held each year between 1st March and 1st June (incl.) and must be after 6pm in the evening!

So that's the law.....what happens in practice?

This is an interesting and informative annual gathering / social event when your elected representatives at Parish, District and County level report back on their year.

Local groups and organisations are invited to attend and to report on their activities over the previous 12 months.

**** Please accept this invitation to come & find out more about the community in which you live & work ****

At the end of the business part of the meeting, you are invited to circulate around the hall and chat over a refreshment or two!

Casual Vacancy for a Parish Councillor

Due to the resignation of Cllr. Rachel Tottman we have a further casual vacancy on Parish Council.

Following the recent 'Notice of Vacancy' for Catsfield Parish Council, no requests were received by the Returning Officer at Rother DC to fill this vacancy. The Parish Council is therefore required to fill the vacancy by co-option.

Have you considered becoming a Parish Councillor?

Parish Councillors have an opportunity to make a real difference to their community, at a small cost in time and effort. Have you considered becoming a Parish Councillor? It may be easier and more rewarding than you think. But what is involved? Here is some background information you might find interesting.

What is a Parish Council?

Parish Councils are the elected first layer of local government and, as such, are closest to the electors. The next levels are the district and county councils. Parish Councils are funded by a precept raised as part of the Council Tax and take responsibility for a range of local matters and community needs, such as maintaining playgrounds, a Community Pavilion, grass cutting, street lighting, litter picking, bus shelters, speed watch and other local facilities under the Council's control. Beyond this, they identify, support and manage local project initiatives and can fund grants to local organisations. Parish Councils are consulted by the District Council on matters such as planning applications in the parish.

Catsfield Parish Council has 7 Councillors. The Councillors need to be 18 years or over and are elected by the public to serve a four-year term. Catsfield Parish Council is non-political and its Councillors represent the Village rather than any organisation. While the next elections to the Council are in 2019, there are many aspects of the Council work you can get involved in now.

What does a Parish Council do?

A Parish Council is a channel for the expression of local views to influence local policy, and acts as a local sounding board. The Council comments on planning applications for developments within the parish, or occasionally beyond when it is considered that these may impact on the parish, for example by generating traffic through the village. The Councillors know their parish and the concerns of local residents and are able to use this know-how in responding to the applications.

Parish Councils have legal responsibilities to fulfil. Council meetings are held in public and need to be properly convened and run, Health & Safety issues require compliance, accounts need to be maintained in proper order. Catsfield Parish Council holds meetings once every month. Some of the work of the Council is divided among committees such as Planning and the Playing Field. Councillors are nominated areas of responsibility as appropriate. Additionally, there are working parties formed to research and progress one-off projects such as traffic calming, building a new pavilion, upgrading the children's play area etc.

A key objective of the Council is to widen contact with the local community. While funds are limited, the Council can respond to requests of support from local organisations. Each year the Council also promotes local projects which it manages and completes itself. Recent projects in Catsfield Parish have included the Children's Play Area, Traffic Calming in Church Road and improvements to parking at the Playing Field. Such projects are perhaps where the council can most directly contribute to the community. They provide both Parish Councillors and residents with the opportunity to identify and submit ideas that will benefit the electors.

What does a Parish Councillor do?

Councillors represent the electors in the parish. They are accessible to residents to listen to their concerns and to deal with them or to pass them for action to the appropriate authorities directly or via the Parish Clerk. Councillors may represent the Council on local bodies and in meetings with other authorities. They help prepare responses to district, county or national consultations when relevant local issues are involved. Councillors can provide leadership on local initiatives. Catsfield Councillors are revising the Local Action Plan which highlighted what our village values and the key issues it faces. Needless to say, traffic figured high! Councillors are involved in the Community Speed Watch scheme, and are working on traffic issues within Catsfield.

The championing of local projects and providing leadership over local issues is an important, and rewarding, aspect of a Councillor's role. Persistence in dealing with the authorities and utilities is an essential virtue. This was amply demonstrated in getting the speed limits along The Stream lowered. In everything they do, Councillors need to bring integrity and common sense to their approach and look for viable, pragmatic outcomes that can be achieved.

All this work involves time, of course. Meetings have to be attended. Planning applications and other documents have to be reviewed. The work load varies, but an average weekly estimate of 3-5 hours would be reasonable. In return is the immense satisfaction of putting something back into the community. Councillors have substantial support in performing their duties. Firstly, there is the Parish Clerk. This is a paid position, and provides an experienced person to look after the administration of the council as well as to be on hand to offer advice and guidance to the Councillors. Training is available to a new Councillor which is of high quality and covers all aspects of the role. The Council acts very much as a team and fellow Councillors are there to support each other. Help is also available from organisations such as SALC (Sussex Association of Local Councils) and RALC (Rother Association of Local Councils).

Interested?

If you would like to find out more about being a Catsfield Parish Councillor and learn how you might get involved in parish activities, contact any of the current Councillors or the clerk by phone on 01424 893526 or email at clerk@catsfieldpc.co.uk. You can also visit the parish website at www.catsfieldpc.co.uk and meet and spend time with Councillors to find out in more detail what they do and what attracted them to the role. You will be very welcome.

As this has been an exceptionally 'wordy' newsletter, we will leave you with a few pictures of Village life - 2015...

