



THIRTEEN EXCUSES FOR NOT JOINING THE PARISH COUNCIL

1. "I'm too young."
If you are eighteen (the age limit dropped from 21 to 18 way back in 2007) you are old enough (and see point 5 below.)
2. "What's the point of just joining a talking shop, they don't do anything."
Have you ever been to a meeting? Basing your judgement on watching 'The Vicar of Dibley' is definitely not valid.
3. "I haven't got any planning applications in at the moment."
Putting in for planning permission has got nothing to do with sitting on the council, whatever may have happened years ago. In fact, if your own application is discussed by the council, you would have to follow the council's Code of Conduct and national ethical standards, and the restrictions on participating in such circumstances.
4. "I'm too busy and couldn't commit to attending every single meeting".
Meetings are rarely more frequent than one evening a month, and missing the occasional one is acceptable. Most meetings only take a couple of hours.
5. "I'm concentrating on finding a job or furthering my career."
Being a local councillor is a definite plus point to add to a CV – it shows you can make decisions, work in a team, are community minded and proactive. Prospective employers will be impressed.
6. "I haven't lived here very long and don't know the area well."
If you are a Commonwealth/EU citizen and have lived or worked in the parish for a year or already have your name on the electoral roll, you are eligible..... Your views as an 'incomer' should be welcomed, as you will probably see things more objectively.
7. "I'm worried that I won't get many votes and look silly."
Even if you are not voted on this time, you may well be approached if a vacancy occurs in the future and have to opportunity to be co-opted to the council.
8. "Our parish council is full of old fogeys."
Join up and change it then.
9. "I'd look a fool because I won't know what's going on."
You will be eased in gently; there is help, advice and training available. The clerk is the officer of the council, and he or she will be able to explain the rules.
10. "I'll have to sign that code of conduct thing that the press keeps on about."
The code of conduct is nowhere near as onerous as made out in the press - and is there to protect you – i.e. the code stops situations like the planning one above.
11. "I'll have to let everyone know all about my business and personal affairs."
The declaration of interest form completed at the outset asks you to list business interests within the parish area, to guard against bias when parish issues are debated. As for personal affairs, get real, everyone knows about those already!
12. "I'm too lazy and not interested in my community."
An excellent reason for not joining.
13. "I prefer to let others do the work and then criticize from the sidelines afterwards".
Also, a valid reason for not joining, but do bear in mind, that expounding your views in the pub, rather than the council chamber, will not change a thing in your parish – and if you can't be bothered, does that mean it's fair game to criticize those who do make the effort?