

13 EXCUSES FOR NOT BECOMING A PARISH COUNCILLOR

May sees the Parish Council elections - the Council always like new councillors to be elected onto the Parish Council.

Wraysbury Parish Council, Berkshire has on its website 13 excuses for not joining the Parish Council and suitable responses. Kennington Parish Council thought it would be both entertaining and hopefully useful for anyone thinking of standing as a Councillor:

- "I'm too young". If you are 18 you are old enough.
- "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.
- "I haven't got any planning application in at the moment". Putting in for planning 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 must leave the room.
- "I'm too busy, I couldn't commit to attending every single meeting". Meetings are rarely more frequent than one evening a month, and missing the occasional one is perfectly acceptable. Most meetings only take a couple of hours.
- "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 pro-active. Prospective employees will be impressed.
- "I haven't lived here very long and I don't know the area well". If you have lived or worked in the Parish for a year you are eligible. Your views as an 'incomer' should be welcomed, as you will probably see things more objectively.
- "I'm worried that I won't get many votes, and look silly". Even if you are not voted on this time, you may very well be approached if a vacancy occurs in the future and co-opted on.
- "Our Parish Council is full of Old Fogeys". Join up and change it then.
- "I'd look like a fool because I would not know what's going on". You will be eased in gently; there is help, advice and more formal training available. The Clerk is the legal officer in the Council, and he or she will explain the rules.
- "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 by the press; out of some 80,000 councillors, only 300 have refused to sign. The code stops situations like the planning one above.
- "I'll have to let everyone know about all my personal and business affairs". The declaration of interest asks you to declare business interests within the Parish area, to guard against bias when Parish issues are debated. As for personal affairs, get real, everyone knows about these already.
- "I'm too lazy and not interested in my community". An excellent reason for not joining.
- "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.