

The Role of Ilminster Town Council



The Town Council has a complement of fifteen Councillors and meets monthly. It is supported by the following Committees: Resources, Planning Highways and Transport; Open Spaces. Councillors are members of all Committees. There are meetings on most Tuesday evenings which are open to all Members (and the public) to attend. Meetings start at 7.30pm and usually last no more than 2 hours.

The Town Council has a number of functions including managing the cemetery - interment procedures and recording of burials, looking after open spaces such as the recreation ground, the canal and Herne Hill, maintaining and providing play facilities, providing and maintaining street furniture, and responding to planning applications on a consultative basis. In addition to this the Town Council also acts as an important channel or platform for local people's views or concerns including those outside of the Town Council's responsibility that can be passed onto the relevant local authority such as the district or county council.

The Town Council is the lowest tier of local government and closest to the public and has the ability to make a significant difference to the quality of life in the community it serves. It is often the more seemingly small things in a community which matter the most to local residents – such as litter, dog poo etc.

The Town Council is able to exercise functions and powers conferred upon it by legislation.

Ilminster Town Council Offices

The Town Council Office is open to the public Monday to Friday between the hours of 10am to 12noon

The Role of a Town Councillor

Town Councillors have a responsibility to:

- Attend meetings when summoned to do so, (the notice to attend a Council meeting is, in law, a summons, because you have a duty to attend)
- Consider, in advance of the meeting, the agenda and any related documents which were sent to you
- Take part in meetings and consider all the relevant facts and issues on matters which require a decision including the views of others expressed at the meeting
- Take part in voting and respect decisions made by the majority of those present and voting
- Ensure, with other Councillors, that the Town Council is properly managed
- Represent the whole electorate.

All Town Councillors have to abide by the Councillors Code of Conduct, a copy of which is included in the application pack.

Individual Town Councillors have no statutory authority to act or make decisions on their own, therefore all decisions are either made in formal Council / Committee meetings or delegated authority is given to the Town Clerk.

Training for Councillors

Training sessions are organised by the Somerset Area of Local Councils of which Ilminster Town Council is a member. New Councillors are urged to attend this as it will help prepare them for their role as a Councillor.

Training may also be provided from time to time on specific topics such as planning or the Code of Conduct.

The Town Clerk and the Town Council Employees

In many ways the Town Clerk and staff are the face of the Town Council when responding to members of the public on the telephone or face to face in the office.

The Town Clerk is the principle executive and adviser of the Town Council and carries responsibility for its administration and financial affairs and is accountable for the effective management of its resources. The Town Clerk is employed on a part-time basis.

The Town Clerk is responsible for the staff of the Town Council which comprises:

- Three part time office staff comprising the Deputy Clerk and two Administration Officers
- Three Open Spaces Wardens, who maintain the Recreation Grounds, play areas, cemetery and the Minster churchyard as well as the large woodland area of Herne Hill.

The Clerk oversees the paperwork surrounding Committee meetings (agenda, minutes), action on decisions reached and the general correspondence flowing into the office. The Clerk is sometimes called upon to represent the Town Council at various events.

The Town Clerk not only delivers actions required by the Town Council but also is expected to provide clear, informative advice to assist in the decision reaching process. The Town Clerk is expected to be proactive in identifying issues of relevance to the Town Council, researching detail and suggesting courses of action.