



Kingsbridge Matters

Kingsbridge Town Council Newsletter
Spring 2011
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ELECTION SPECIAL

Make your voice heard on 5th May

Make sure your council represents YOU

Did you know that your local town councillors are consulted on nearly everything that happens in your community?

Kingsbridge Town Council is responsible for a wide range of issues in the town. Whether you are at work, rest or play, the town council is probably involved somewhere to a greater or lesser degree.

Councillors take an active part in deciding what services can be provided to the community, and that affects you, your family and friends. They have a wide range of responsibilities. Not only does the council own and maintain property and land, it makes financial grants to local organisations, it looks at - and makes recommendations on - all planning applications in the town, and is consulted on highway improvements and public rights of way.

Other duties include the management of Trebblepark allotments and the Embankment Road cemetery, organising the Bandstand summer concerts and some Fair Week events, and providing lots more services which impact on your quality of life – for example there's a public information service from Quay House on local community matters.

Most important of all, the council lobbies strongly to improve facilities for you

Throughout the country, local councils are delivering more services for residents than ever before, and with changes to legislation and central government's agenda for "The Big Society", parish and town councils may have even more powers in the future.

So why vote in local elections?

- *Make your views known.* If you leave voting to others then your opinions will not be heard.
- *It doesn't take long, but the effects are long lasting.* Councillors' decisions can affect the future of your whole community. Voting in local elections takes only a few minutes, but the result will have an impact on your life for the next four years – that's how long a councillor is in office. The next local election won't be until 2015.
- *Choosing the right person.* By choosing a candidate who represents your views you will be sending a clear message to key decision makers about how you feel on important issues.
- *Choosing someone local.* Councillors live alongside you in your community; they are the most local level of government, they are easily contactable and directly answerable to the community every time they walk out of their front doors.
- *Make sure your council tax is spent well.* Money is raised primarily through your council tax to fund council actions, and you need to be sure that you have voted for the right people to look after your community.

Information on who is standing for election, and what they hope to achieve will be available in early April, and displayed in the Council Offices and around the town.

If you don't vote, others will, and their views may change your life.

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD
Vote in the local elections on Thursday 5th May 2011

What is a town or parish council?

There is no difference between the way parish and town councils are run; they have the same powers and act within the same legislation. A town council is simply a parish council that has decided to appoint a mayor.

These 'local' councils are the tier of government **closest to the people**, and aim to represent the hopes and concerns of the local community.

Their basic responsibility is to try to improve quality of life in their community. They are empowered to represent residents at outside meetings, lobby outside bodies or apply for external grant funding.

Local councils often don't have a permanent office or full-time staff and will meet in the local hall or school. This doesn't mean that they aren't effective or efficient. Many work very hard for their electors and can run a wide range of services very effectively.

All councils must meet at least four times a year (although most meet more often) and their meetings must be open to the public, although for certain restricted items of confidentiality they may occasionally exclude members of public.

Here in Kingsbridge the town council has a range of ongoing projects including the wish to develop the town's parks at the Recreation Ground and Duncombe Park. It also wants to build on its close relationships with local organisations.

The council's mission statement is: **'to promote and develop the well-being of our community through working together'**.

You can help us make Kingsbridge a better place.

How is your council funded?

Parish and town councils are not voluntary organisations, charities or (a common mistake) anything to do with the church.

They are funded from a small percentage of the council tax charge made by district/unitary authorities to householders. They don't receive any government funding or business rates.

Although a few councils in the country pay a small allowance to their councillors, Kingsbridge Town Council has chosen to retain its unpaid status, so councillors don't receive remuneration.

All local councils are strictly audited each year.

Why stand for election for Kingsbridge Town Council?

Let's take a look at what's required to become a Town Councillor:

- do you want to make a difference in your community?
- do you have a specialist knowledge, skill, experience or interests to offer?
- are you forward thinking?
- are you a good listener?
- are you prepared to add your voice to the debate and make decisions?
- can you take criticism as well as accolades?
- are you prepared to stand up and be counted?
- do you have a good sense of humour?

do you tick most of the above? then you may wish to consider standing for election on 5th May.

STOP PRESS

Drop-In at Quay House

Current Town Councillors and the Town Clerk will be available 10.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. and 5.00 p.m. to 8.00 p.m. on Tuesday 22nd March in Quay House to discuss the Local Election process, to explain the role of the Town Council to anyone who is considering standing for election as a Town Councillor, and to answer any of your questions.

Making a difference

Martin Johnson, Town Clerk, says: *"Town and parish councils depend on local people taking an interest in what happens in their community, whatever their background. You can bring a wealth of knowledge and community understanding into the local team by standing as a town councillor."*

"If you are interested in becoming a councillor, or know someone who might just need some encouragement now is the time to act, get the forms and send them off."

What does a councillor do?

Most people think that councillors just attend council meetings - but nothing could be further from the truth. The duties, and pleasures, of being a local councillor are many and varied, but many councillors say that it's the ordinary day-to-day contact with local people that is the most important part of the job.

- **Listening:** One of the most important tasks of a local councillor is to listen to, and understand, the views of people in their community. Many public bodies and organisations acknowledge this is the hardest information to capture, and they use the skills and local knowledge of the local council to assist and inform their services.
- **Keeping in touch:** Kingsbridge Town Council keeps in touch with the community in a variety of ways: it manages a public information service at Quay House, sends out newsletters, runs a website, and holds a public open forum at the beginning of each council meeting. It also holds an Annual Town Meeting, organises public meetings, and holds exhibitions in order to show and tell the community how it operates and to communicate important proposals which may affect the town. Residents have access to all council meetings and committees, and minutes are posted on the website. Councillors are available to meet and listen to the views of the people in their ward, and Quay House can be used by any kind of community group.
- **Meetings:** A councillor agrees to attend all meetings, if reasonably possible, that he or she is summoned to. Kingsbridge Town Council meets on the second Tuesday of each month. As well as full council meetings, there are other committee meetings and working groups. Most meetings are held in the evening but some may be held during the day. Each councillor is expected to serve on one or two committees.
- **Ambassadors:** Councillors act as ambassadors for their community. Their aim is to keep everyone aware of local needs and concerns and report back on district, county and regional issues. Kingsbridge Town Council is currently represented on 25 outside groups/organisations, and councillors may be asked to serve on certain groups, and attend other seminars and meetings. Councillors represent the voice of their community as a whole, whilst being aware of, and considerate to, specific minority needs.
- **Civic Duties:** There will be times when councillors are asked to attend civic functions as part of their duties. These range from Remembrance Day parades to civic dinners along with a variety of other public functions. The council also organises the annual Glove Hanging Ceremony, summer Bandstand concerts, and Town Crier competitions, all of which can require councillor attendance.
- **Responsibility:** Kingsbridge town councillors do not represent any political party. After election, a councillor signs a Declaration of Acceptance of Office and agrees to observe an ethical Code of Conduct when dealing with matters on behalf of the community. Although the current rules are due to be revised shortly, the responsibilities detailed in the Code of Conduct are designed to protect councillors, as well as the people they serve, and give clear guidance so that councillors can undertake their duties with confidence.
- **Skills needed to get the job done:** To deal with the many tasks that face them, councillors can draw on their own skills and experiences and it is the sharing of these skills that makes a strong team. Working together they will need to deal with employment issues, budgeting, asset management, staff management, project management or grant funding and probably lots more if they are creative and involved. But there's help at hand. A Clerk is employed to get information on behalf of councillors to help them make decisions. Councillors will consider the information and make a group decision on all matters. No individual councillor is responsible for any single decision. This is democracy at its best.
- **Training and support:** Professional training programmes designed specifically for councillors are available and will be paid for by the council, and an induction course will be provided for all new starters.

Want to become a Councillor?

What's required

Councillors are elected by the public and serve 4 year terms in office. Whilst easy to apply, the rules are strict to make sure that those who stand are eligible.

Kingsbridge is split into three wards – North, East and Westville, so that residents are represented by someone with detailed knowledge of the local community. *You do not have to stand in the ward where you live.*

How to get started

Getting the nomination forms:

The town council will have them available at Quay House, but South Hams District Council election staff (telephone 01803 861234) can send additional forms to anyone who is eligible to stand, and can give advice.

Completing the nomination forms:

You will need to fill in all your personal details and those of the people nominating you, including Electoral Register numbers.

Sending the nomination forms back:

It is imperative that you submit your forms in accordance with the Timetable of Proceedings. Failure to do so will render your application null and void.

Checklist:

- Don't forget to get **everyone** mentioned to sign the forms
- Ensure that all addresses are in **full** with no abbreviations
- Include the Electoral Register **reference letters and numbers for everyone appearing on your form**
- **Be careful not to miss important dates**

Rules

If you want to stand as a councillor you must be:

- Over 18 years of age from 5th May 2011.
- A British, Commonwealth or European Union citizen.
- Registered as a local government elector within the electoral area; or have occupied as owner or tenant any land or other premises within the electoral area during the whole of the previous 12 months; or had a principal or only place of work during the previous 12 months in the electoral area; or have resided within the Parish or within 4.8 kilometres (3 miles) thereof during the whole of the previous 12 months. (The 'previous 12 months' means the 12 months preceding the day on which you are nominated as a candidate.)

You cannot stand for election if you:

- have been adjudged bankrupt, or made a composition or arrangement with creditors.
- Have, within five years before the day of the election, been convicted in the United Kingdom of any offence, and have had a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for a period of over three months without the option of a fine.
- Work for the council where you are intending to standing for election (but you can work for other local authorities, including the principal authorities that represent the same

Election Timetable

- **Notice of election: Monday 14th March 2011** (this will be displayed locally)
- **Nominations close: noon Monday 4th April 2011** (South Hams District Council can let you know after this date who is standing in Kingsbridge and other local parishes)
- **Publication of Statement of Persons Nominated: noon Wednesday 6th April 2011**
- **Close of Withdrawals: noon Thursday 7th April 2011** (deadline for withdrawing your nomination)
- **Notice of Poll: Friday 8th April 2011**
- **Polling Day: Thursday 5th May 2011 (from 7.00 a.m. to 10.00 p.m.)**

Kingsbridge Town Council

Opening hours: 9.30 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. Monday to Friday

Obtain advice & information on local government services • Report problems • View planning applications

- Buy organic bin liners • pick up clear & blue recycle bags • Pick up a Bus Pass application
- Receive community news • Hire a room for your meeting • Get married!! • And lots more

The town council meets in Quay House on the second Tuesday of each month at 7.00 p.m. (except during August). All council meetings are open to the public and start with an opportunity for people to ask questions or make statements.

Minutes of all council and committee meetings are available at Quay House and on the council's website.

Quay House, Ilbert Road, Kingsbridge, TQ7 1DZ • Telephone & Fax 01548.853296

Email: reception@kingsbridge.gov.uk • Town Clerk: Martin Johnson 01548.857073

Website: www.kingsbridge.gov.uk

South Hams District Council 01803.861234 • Devon County Council 0845.1551015 • Police 0845.277744