

Kingsbridge

MATTERS

ELECTION SPECIAL

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Kingsbridge
Town Council
Newsletter

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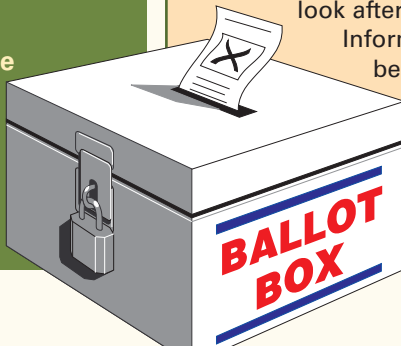
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Make your voice heard on 3rd May

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 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 Treblepark 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, which includes the issue of Devonwide travel passes.

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 funding opportunities becoming increasingly available, parish and town councils will 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 2011.

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 3rd May 2007

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 have a mayor.

Local councils can have many powers - it is how councillors decide to use these powers that will make a difference to their communities. 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 deliver or co-ordinate services to meet local needs, and try to improve quality of life in the parish. They are empowered to represent residents at outside meetings, lobby appropriate 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 the public.

Here in Kingsbridge the town council has a range of ongoing projects including the wish to develop the former allotments land off Derby Road for affordable housing, and an ambition to install a CCTV system in the town centre.

It also wants to build a close relationship with local organisations involved in the Town Consultation Panel.

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

Why we got involved...

"You cannot complain about how your town is run unless you are prepared to try and do better."

Cllr Keith Wingate
(Chairman of Property Committee)

"Regrettably, after 14 years on the Council I am no longer eligible (due to a house move) to stand again for Kingsbridge Town; I hope my successor will experience the satisfaction I have had in taking part in what has to be the most worthwhile task in the community."

Cllr Eric Heavisides
(Deputy Mayor)

"It's been really good to get involved in doing things to improve life for the residents of Kingsbridge."

Cllr John Cowling
(Chairman of Policy Committee)

Why vote.....

Cllr Tony Child, Kingsbridge Mayor calls on residents to get involved in the forthcoming local elections:

"I often hear people say that their opinions aren't listened to, or that local action won't count. But that's not true. The reality is that if you vote – you decide what gets done. It's an important way of having your say on the issues you care about and in choosing who will take decisions on your behalf."

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.

Local councils can range dramatically in size - from a large town council representing 70,000 people to a small parish that may only have 200 residents. They are given annual budgets which can be anything from £1,000 to sums in excess of £5,000,000, depending on size.

All local councils are strictly audited each year.

Local government finance is currently under scrutiny, which may result in proposals to change the way that local councils manage and fund their services.

A town council is the collective voice of its community

Have you ever wanted to make a difference in your community? Becoming a councillor means being at the heart of local democracy and represents a big investment by you as an individual and is both rewarding and challenging.

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 sends out newsletters, runs a website, and holds a public open forum at council meetings. It also runs a town consultation panel, and has open days for the public to see how the town council operates. Residents have access to all council meetings, and minutes are posted on the website. Councillors also hold surgeries to 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. The town council meets on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month. As well as full council meetings, there are frequent 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. The council is currently represented on 25 outside bodies, 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.
- **Ceremonial Duties:** There will be times when councillors are asked to attend civic functions as part of their duties. These range from remembrance parades to civic dinners along with a variety of other public functions. The council also organises the annual Glove Hanging Ceremony, sets up summer concerts, and town crier competitions, all of which can require councillor attendance.
- **Responsibility:** Kingsbridge 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. 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.

For further information: Call the town clerk on 01548 857073

Want to become a councillor?

What's required

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

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.

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 Council election staff (telephone 01803 861129) 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**

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."

Election timetable

- **Notice of election - Tuesday 27 March 2007** (this will be displayed locally)
- **Nominations close - noon Wednesday 4 April 2007** (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 will be noon Tuesday 10 April 2007**
- **Close of Withdrawals - noon Wednesday 11 April 2007** (deadline for withdrawing your nomination)
- **Notice of Poll - Wednesday 25 April 2007**
- **Polling Day - Thursday 3 May 2007 (from 7.00 a.m. to 10.00 p.m.)**

RULES

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

- Over 18 years of age from 3 May 2007.
- On the Electoral Register for the council area for which you wish to stand, or have worked in the area for the preceding 12 months.
- A British, Commonwealth or European Union citizen.
- A local government elector of the parish; or a person who, during the whole of the twelve months before nomination as a candidate, occupied land or other premises as an owner or tenant in the parish; or has, during the same period, resided in that area or within three miles thereof, or has, during the same period, had a principal or only place of work in that area.

You cannot stand for election if you:

- Are bankrupt and an Order or Interim Restriction Order has been imposed.
- 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 stand for election (but you can work for other local authorities, including the principal authorities that represent the same area).

Kingsbridge Town Council contact details:

Quay House, Ilbert Road, Kingsbridge TQ7 1DZ.
Telephone/Fax No. 01548 853296.
E-mail: reception@kingsbridge.gov.uk
Website: www.kingsbridge.gov.uk

Opening hours: 9.30am-1pm, Mon-Fri. Town Clerk - Martin Johnson.

The town council meets in the council chamber at Quay House on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at 7pm, except during August. All meetings are open to the public, and start with a public open forum when Kingsbridge electors can ask questions or make statements. Minutes of all the town council meetings are available at Quay House and on the council's website.