

## **What the Parish Council does**

There are over 9000 parish and town councils in England, covering a third of the population. They were first set up after the 1894 Local Government Act, which split parish councils from parochial church councils which manage the affairs of the local Church of England parish. To this date, parish councils are not allowed to allocate any funds for maintaining church property. The 1972 Local Government Act gave parish councils the right to be consulted about all planning applications. The 2011 Localism Act allows parish councils to apply for a 'General Power of Competence', and to prepare a neighbourhood plan. Parish councils are statutory local councils and councillors are 'summoned' (not 'invited') to attend its meetings. Martley Parish Council has nine councillors, who are elected for four-year terms. At its annual general meeting each May, the Parish Council elects a chairman and vice-chairman, and nominates members to its working parties and to various other local bodies. The Council meets monthly and members of the public can address the Council during the first half-hour of its meeting (called 'democratic time').

People living in the Parish fund the work of the Parish Council by paying a small sum (called a 'precept') as part of their annual Council Tax. In Martley, this contributes to the maintenance of the playing field and play areas, the burial ground, the Memorial Hall and library, and covers the remuneration of the part-time Parish Clerk. The Council can also use its funds to support local organisations. The County Council transfers a sum each year to the Parish Council, which it uses to pay the village lengthsman to keep roadside verges tidy. One of the most important tasks of the Parish Council is to work with our district and county councillors to represent the views of the people of Martley to other public authorities.

In May each year there is an open parish meeting, in which the chairman summarises the work of the Council over the preceding year and reviews the challenges for the future. Representatives from local organisations and public authorities are invited to attend and tell us all of their activities.