

## **The Parish Clerk**

Becoming a Parish Clerk is one of the most rewarding jobs in a local community – a competent Clerk underpins a good Parish Council.

Parish Clerks usually pride themselves in having a good deal of common sense, confidence to handle a varied administrative workload, being a good organiser, IT literate and able to get on with most people. Underwriting these qualities is a sense of public duty - of wanting to help others in the community.

The Clerk is the 'engine' of an effective parish council. The role of Clerk is to ensure that the Parish Council as a whole conducts its business properly and to provide independent, objective and professional advice and support.

The Clerk and Parish Councillors are mutually supportive and could not really exist without each other. Parish Councillors are elected by residents - the Parish Clerk is paid for by residents. The Clerk's salary is part of Lambourn Parish's Precept (Council Tax allocation). Parish Councillors are volunteers who are committed to trying to maintain/improve their communities and are passionate about trying to make a positive influence.

The Clerk is the 'Proper Officer' of the Parish Council. This is a legal way of saying 'point of contact'. A Parish Council needs a formal address to which legal papers and documents can be sent, and the Clerk is the person whose name and address is used for this formal role. The Clerk is the person to whom all correspondence should be sent and replies from the Parish Council will come via the Clerk. This makes sure that the lines of communication are kept simple and uncomplicated.

The Clerk is also the 'Responsible Financial Officer' of the council. This means that in law the Clerk is personally liable for the financial probity of the Parish Council – in other words, that all Precept money is budgeted for, spent in accordance with proper powers, and that the accounts are correctly drawn up and audited.

The Clerk, in discussion with the Chair, draw up the Agendas for each Parish Council meeting. Usually there is a certain amount of background information to be read in advance of the debates, and the Clerk researches and collates these reports. An important aspect is to advise on any legal considerations that would have to be borne in mind.

After a Parish Council meeting, the Clerk produces the 'Minutes' which is the legal document recording what was decided, and then sees to it that the decisions are implemented. This might mean anything from submitting the Parish Council's comments on planning applications to reporting highways defects, circulating information to residents or moving forward projects.

Sounds pretty daunting doesn't it! – but like everything else in life once you know how, then it's all fairly straight forward and a very rewarding role.