

BENEFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

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BENEFIELD PARISH COUNCIL – What we do

A parish council is a **civil local authority** found in England and is the first tier of local government. They are elected corporate bodies, have variable tax raising powers, and are responsible for areas known as civil parishes, serving in total 16 million people.

Benefield Parish Council has 7 seats and is non-political in make-up. Councillors are elected every 4 years to represent both Upper and Lower Benefield but Councillors can, of course, decide to submit themselves for re-election and continue to serve longer.

The Parish Clerk is not a member of the Council but is a paid employee acting in a combined statutory role as secretary and treasurer of the council.

The Parish Council is responsible for setting a precept for services provided and work for the benefit of the entire community.

Meetings of the Parish Council are normally held on a Monday evening usually every 6 weeks, in Benefield Village Hall although currently due to the present situation the meetings are held using Zoom.

The Annual Parish Meeting is not a Council Meeting, but rather is a meeting of local government electors registered for the area for which it is held. It must be held between 1st March and 1st June. It is entirely separate from the Annual Parish Council Meeting, though is sometimes held on the same evening.

The Annual Parish Council Meeting must by law be held in May. This is a statutory requirement. The first business of the Annual Parish Council Meeting must be the election of the Chairman. This is a statutory requirement. If no Chairman can be elected the meeting cannot continue beyond this agenda item.

Benefield Parish Council has adopted a Code of Conduct, which sets out the rules that govern the behaviour of its members. All elected and co-opted Members are required to adhere to the Code of Conduct and must complete a declaration of interest form to register their financial interests.

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The principal roles of an elected Councillor are:

- To understand and communicate the views, needs and aspirations of residents to statutory and non-governmental bodies as required.
- To retain the existing character and community spirit of the Parish while encouraging the development of a strong, inclusive and vibrant community.
- To offer advice and assistance on Council services.
- To manage the council's assets and finances effectively and in accordance with statutory requirements.
- To respond to planning applications and other statutory consultations on time, ensuring that the recommendations adhere to statutory regulations and the interests of the community.
- To decide Council policy, monitor performance and scrutinise decisions made.
- To keep informed of changes to legislation and ensure that procedures and Parish Council policies are reviewed and line with such changes.