**What is a Parish Council?**

Local councils are the first tier of governance. They are democratically elected local authorities and exist in England, Wales and Scotland. The term 'local council' is synonymous with 'parish council', 'town council' and 'community council'.

There are over 10,000 local councils in England and Wales, representing the concerns of local residents and providing services to meet local needs. Parish councils have a wide range of powers including looking after community buildings, planning, street lighting, allotments. They also have the power to raise money through council tax.

Local councils are made up of locally elected councillors. They are legally obliged to hold at least one meeting a year. Most meet on a six-weekly cycle to discuss council business and hear from local residents. **UPC meets in full on a monthly basis and has five committees that meet regularly to progress the decisions of the Parish Council.**

**How do you become a parish councillor?**

To qualify to be a parish councillor you must be:

· A British citizen, or a citizen of the Commonwealth or the European Union.  
· At least 18 on the day that he or she is nominated as a candidate  
· A registered local government elector within the parish  
· A resident in the parish, or within three miles of the parish, or working full time in the parish for at least 12 months prior to the nomination or election day.

**What can a Parish Council do?**

Parish councils have a variety of powers and duties, all of which impact directly on the community.

**The following are all under the remit of local councils:**

· Allotments  
· Burial Grounds, Cemeteries, Churchyards and Crematoria  
· Bus Shelters  
· Bye-laws – the power to make bye-laws concerning:baths and washhouses (swimming pools), cycle parks, mortuaries and pleasure grounds  
· Clocks – public clocks can be provided and must be maintained  
· Community Centres, Conference Centres, Halls, Public Buildings  
· Drainage – of ditches and ponds  
· Entertainment and the Arts  
· Footpaths  
· General Spending – parish councils can spend a limited amount of money on anything they deem of benefit to the community that is not covered by the other specific responsibilities described in this list  
· Gifts – parish councils may accept gifts  
· Highways – lighting, parking places, right to enter into discussions about new roads and road widening, consent of parish council required for diversion or discontinuation of highway, traffic signs and other notices, tree planting and verge maintenance  
· Land – acquisition and sale of  
· Legal proceedings – power to prosecute and defend any legal proceedings in the interests of the community, power to take part in any public enquiry  
· Litter - provision of litter-bins and support for any anti-litter campaigns  
· Planning – parish councils may be notified of any planning applications for the area  
· Postal and Telecommunication Facilities – power to pay a public telecommunications operator any loss sustained in providing services in that area  
· Public conveniences – provision and maintenance of public toilets  
· Recreation – provision of recreation grounds, public walkways, pleasure grounds, open spaces, village greens, gymnasiums, playing fields, holiday camps and boating ponds  
· Rights of Way – footpath and bridleway maintenance  
· Seats (public)  
· Signs – danger signs, place names and bus stops signs  
· Tourism – financial contributions to any local tourist organisations allowed  
· Traffic Calming  
· War Memorials  
· Water Supply – power to utilise stream, well or spring water and to provide facilities for general use