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PARISH COUNCILLOR BASICS

Firstly, the Parish Council's website www.gurnardpc.co.uk has some relevant information on the Council and Members pages.

1. If a casual vacancy occurs, the Parish Council always tries to fill it through a by-election initially. Co-option only occurs where seats are not filled at an election, or where a casual vacancy occurs between elections for which no bye-election is requested or demanded.
2. Any candidate should be clear as to why they wish to join the Parish Council. If there is a "secret agenda" such as wishing to further or implement a particular project, joining the Council will result in no greater influence for that project than if the suggestion was made by an elector. The candidate should have a genuine desire to "serve" their community in any way they can.
3. All Councillors have to abide by the Code of Conduct. They will sign a declaration of acceptance of office when co-opted/elected, and will also sign a document stating they will be bound by the code of conduct (a copy of the code will be provided prior to signing). A Register of Interests has to be completed by all Councillors when they take office, which will include spouse/partner details too & will be posted on line – most Councillors are happy to do this, but they cannot stay in office if they won't.
4. Each Full Council meeting usually lasts for about 2.5 hours (there are 11 per year on the 2nd Wednesday of every month), and Planning Committee meetings (usually once a month on 4th/5th Wednesday) can vary from 10 minutes to 40 minutes but not often longer. (all usually at 6pm)
5. One week before each meeting, Councillors will receive an e-mailed agenda and supporting papers. The Clerk will provide (where possible) background to each agenda item, or request that councillors provide a written report. The Councillor is expected to study these papers before the meeting to fully appraise themselves with the items, to enable informed decisions to be made at the meeting without background having to be explained. This could be up to one hour's study over the days before the meeting, depending on the agenda.
6. Most Councillors are appointed to outside bodies, such as the IW Association of Local Councils, Gurnard Village Hall Management Committee, and working parties may be formed at any time if a project demands it. This would require additional time, usually in the evenings. Most of these "bodies" meet less frequently than monthly. The Councillor appointed to any outside body would give a report on any meetings attended at the following Full Council meeting. There may also be some "work" emanating from these outside body meetings.
7. Agendas will always be varied, and will equally split between "locally interesting" items and other equally "interesting" items from the wider circles of Local Government – ie: this is not ALL about Gurnard.
8. This is only a basic look at the role – if you're still keen after reading this and you need to know more, come back to the Parish Clerk or a serving Councillor.
9. The Parish Council role is increasing enormously. Localism is resulting in greater devolution of some services.

10. The above time commitments are the basic minimum – some Councillors in the Parish Sector commit much more, leading projects and the like. E-mails are sent each day to Councillors with Local Government reading material, possibly up to 6/10 each day - these are mostly for information, although some will require opinions or actions but it is necessary to access your e-mail account most days.
11. Some Councillors are asked to become Bank Account signatories – applicants who have a current bankruptcy order against them are disqualified from holding office.