

Parish meetings

Every parish in England must have a parish meeting under the law which is the Local Government Act 1972, s9(1). There are 3 “varieties”.

Parish councils/town councils which stand alone have to have an annual parish meeting for anyone on the electoral roll to attend. All have the right to speak and vote at this meeting.

Where a parish is “attached” to a parish council, then the individual parishes have their own parish meetings. For example, if Gayles were to become attached to Ravensworth, then each village would continue to have its own parish meeting. Likewise if Ravensworth and Gayles were to merge into one parish council, each village would continue to have its own parish meeting. Most of these parishes would have a parish councillor(s) representing their residents. Again there must be an annual meeting. But the separate parishes could also call parish meetings to deal with items purely local to themselves, eg a planning application. Again, anyone on the electoral roll has the right to attend, speak and vote at the parish meeting.

Gayles Parish Meeting is a parish meeting that is not attached to a parish council. To have a form of direct democracy like this is uncommon in this country. On a Parish Meeting there are no councillors: only the “officers” are elected which happens at the Annual General Meeting.

The powers and functions of such a parish meeting can be found on a [Legal Topic Note](#) on the website of the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). This link is via Google. [Another version](#) can also be found via Google. The [powers and functions of a Parish Council](#) are much broader. Another way of comparing them is in NALC’s Toolkit... the easiest way to access this is via a search engine such as Google.

So every meeting that is held in Gayles is a parish meeting, provided it is correctly [convened and there is a forum](#). Business must be conducted in an open way with properly organised meetings and [agendas](#), and proper records of decisions, the [minutes](#).

Parish meeting or parish council?

There are different rules about whether or not a parish council must be created for the parish or whether it is discretionary (The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007). The aim of the thresholds is to “extend the more direct participatory form of governance provided by Parish Meetings to a larger numbers of electors.”

Where there are more than 1,000 electors the principal council is under a duty to create a parish council (Section 94 of the 2007 Act). Councillors on a parish council are either elected where sufficient candidates stand or co-opted where there is no “rival”.

In parishes with 151 to 999 electors the principal council may recommend the creation of either a parish council or a parish meeting.

This information has been copied from Broughton Parish website and some details altered.