



What are the two meetings that must be held in spring of each year?

Annual Meeting of the Council v Annual Parish Meeting

These are two quite different meetings that must be held at this time, so let's have a look at them.

We'll start with the Annual Meeting of the Council.

This meeting is required by law, as shown in this extract from the Local Government Act, 1972 (*Part 2 - Parish Councils, Section 7, Item 1*)

"A parish council shall in every year hold an annual meeting"

Like any other organisation or company, the Parish Council needs to hold an annual meeting to carry out those things that only need doing once a year, which may include;

- electing a Chair
- electing a Vice-Chair
- electing or co-opting Councillor(s)
- appointing working committees
- reviewing policy documents such as GDPR, risk assessment, Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, etc.
- renewing operational codes, including those of conduct, communication, privacy, transparency, etc.
- agreeing subscription to various bodies, such as NALC

Companies and organisations usually refer to these meetings as being their "*Annual General Meeting*".

Then there is the Annual Parish Meeting.

It may help you to remember the difference between the two meetings if I explain that the **Annual Parish Meeting** is a legacy from the Middle Ages, from a time when Local Councils did not exist and all local decision making was carried out by meetings of the whole community which usually took place in the church vestry.

In legal terms, this is a quite separate body from the Parish Council, even though it's the Parish Council that arranges it (which we do, simply because if we don't, it's unlikely that anyone else will). Whilst decisions made during this meeting are not binding on the Parish Council, our Chair believes that it's wise to take heed of what is said at the meeting, which is why he strongly encourages all Councillors to attend.

The **Annual Parish Meeting** is open to all electors (*parishioners of election voting age*) within our Parish, who have the right not only to attend but also to speak on any matter of local interest. This contrasts with a parish council meeting where electors who are not Councillors have no automatic right to speak, although our Chair does bend the rules and allow members of the public to speak during the meeting under certain circumstances as well as welcoming comments and concerns from them after the meeting is officially closed.

The **Annual Parish Meeting** has its own set of Minutes, which are kept separate from the Parish Council meeting Minutes. These Minutes can only be approved by electors at the next **Annual Parish Meeting** which, of course, won't be held until twelve months later. However, our Parish Clerk brings the draft minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting to the next meeting of the Parish Council (usually held on the 1st Tuesday of June) for review since otherwise matters are unlikely to

get progressed. But it is important that the Parish Council does not actually approve these minutes, as they do not belong to the Council.

What are the timetables for these two Meetings?

- The Parish Council must hold its Annual Meeting on any day in May.
- The Annual Parish Meeting must be held each year between March 1st and June 1st.

Who chairs the Annual Parish Meeting?

Our parish has a parish council, so the Chair of the council must, if s/he is present, take the chair. If the Chair is not present, the Vice-chair of the Council must preside. If the Vice-Chairman is not present, then the Meeting must elect a Chair, for this meeting only, from amongst the local electors present.

Who can vote at the Annual Parish Meeting?

Only electors have a vote at the Annual Parish Meeting.
Interested members of the public from outside the parish do not.

Can we merge the two meetings and hold them together?

In a word - NO!

As explained above, in legal terms the two meetings are quite separate and are accountable to two separate bodies;

- the Annual Parish Meeting is accountable to the electors as a whole
- the Annual Meeting of the Council is accountable to the Parish Council

We choose to hold both meetings on the same evening for convenience, but we make sure that there is a clear distinction between the two. Each meeting is formally opened and closed by the Chair so that everyone present knows which meeting is taking place at any given time.

We deliberately hold the Annual Parish Meeting first, so that any electors present who are not Councillors and who do not wish to attend the Annual Meeting of the Council can, if they wish, leave when it is finished.

We also make it clear to any non-councillors that they can take part in the Annual Parish Meeting and are welcome to attend the Annual Meeting of the Council, though they may not speak until after the Chair has closed the meeting.

If you'd like to know more, you can;

- google both names
- you can use our website's Contact Form to ask for more information
- you can contact our Parish Clerk

And lastly, what makes a good Annual Parish Meeting?

Lots of councils complain that they find it difficult, if not impossible, to get a good turnout at the Annual Parish Meeting, even though they are held with the best intention of being in the best interest of every resident in the parish. And we're no different.

There are no easy solutions to this problem and it is sometimes tempting to feel that people will only turn out if a good local row is brewing.

However, here are some things that might help;

- create an invitation and distribute it door-to-door, to each household in the parish
- invite representatives of every organisation or group in the parish to give a short talk
- include a period for informal socialising and serve simple refreshments

- invite a speaker to give a talk on a topic of local or topical interest
- ensure that the meeting and agenda are well-publicised in the Knapton News and the Church
- send invitations to all local organisations and groups to come along
- make people feel welcome from the moment they come through the door - if they feel they have gate-crashed some sort of private gathering, they won't come again
- avoid the meeting becoming monopolised by one individual or interest group

It is an ideal opportunity to publicise some of the work that we have done during the year, to talk about the money that the Council has spent on behalf of the community, and the extremely modest cost and good value of the Local Council's services