

THIRTEEN EXCUSES USED FOR NOT JOINING THE PARISH COUNCIL

Excuse 1: *I'm too young!*

Answer: If you are twenty-one you are old enough.

Excuse 2: *What's the point of just joining a talking shop, they don't do anything?*

Answer: Have you ever been to a meeting? Basing your judgement on watching 'The Vicar of Dibley' is definitely not valid.

Excuse 3: *I haven't got any planning applications in at the moment!*

Answer: Putting in for planning has nothing to do with sitting on the council. In fact, if your own application is being discussed by the council you must leave the room.

Excuse 4: *I'm too busy, and couldn't commit to attending every single meeting.*

Answer: Meetings are one a month and four quarterly finance meetings, and missing the occasional one is perfectly acceptable. Most meetings only take one or two hours.

Excuse 5: *I'm concentrating on finding a job or furthering my career!*

Answer: Being a local councillor is a definite plus point to add to a CV – it shows you can make decisions, work in a team, are community minded and proactive. Prospective employers will be impressed.

Excuse 6: *I haven't lived here very long and don't know the area well.*

Answer: If you have lived or worked in the parish for a year, you are eligible. Your views as a 'newcomer' would be welcomed, as you will probably see things more objectively.

Excuse 7: *I'm worried that I won't get many votes and look silly.*

Answer: Even if you are not voted on, you may be approached if a vacancy occurs and be co-opted on. Go on, attend a few meetings and if interested send a letter of interest to the Clerk to be considered for future vacancies.

Excuse 8: *Our parish council is full of old fogeys!*

Answer: Join up and change it then!

Excuse 9: *I'd look a fool because I won't know what's going on.*

Answer: You will be eased in gently, with help, advice and more formal training available. The Clerk is the legal officer to the council and he/she will explain the rules.

Excuse 10: *I'll have to sign that Code of Conduct thing that the press keeps on about.*

Answer: The Code of Conduct is nowhere near as onerous as made out in the press. The Code stops situations like the planning one above.

Excuse 11: *I'll have to let everyone know all about my business and personal affairs.*

Answer: The 'Declaration of Interests' will ask you to declare business interests within the Parish area, to guard against bias when parish issues are debated. As for personal affairs, get real, everyone knows about those already!

Excuse 12: *I'm too lazy, and not interested in my community.*

Answer: An excellent reason for 'not' joining.

Excuse 13: *I prefer to let others do the work, and then criticize from the sidelines afterwards.*

Answer: Another valid reason for 'not' joining, but do bear in mind that expressing your views in the pub, rather than at a Council Meeting will not change a thing in your parish.

More importantly, if council numbers are not kept up, the Parish Council will cease to exist and decisions will be made by Milton Keynes Council instead.