**Forthcoming Parish Council Elections**

The Parish of Barford St John & St Michael has to elect **7** Councillors in May to serve on the Parish Council for the next 4 years.  Parish Councils are at the heart of a thriving local community and form a key part of the democratic process. They give people a say at a very local level on proposals which affect them. They are involved in providing local facilities and in conjunction with the County and District Councils, may also be involved in other local initiatives. They represent the views and needs of their communities across a wide range of issues. They have a legal right to be notified of all planning applications within the Parish boundary and they must be consulted fully by the District Council. This means that Parish Councils can sometimes influence strategic planning issues and a range of other important matters affecting the communities they serve.

Could you be a future Parish Councillor for Barford St John & St Michael?  Are these some of the questions you would like answered before putting your name forward?

* *"I’m too young".*   If you are 18 you are old enough.
* *"What's the point of just joining a talking shop, they don't do anything".* Have you ever been to a meeting?  Basing your judgement on watching 'The Vicar of Dibley' is definitely not valid.
* *"I haven't got any planning applications in at the moment*".   Putting in for planning has got nothing to do with sitting on the Council, whatever may have happened years ago.  In fact, if your own application is discussed by the Council, you must leave the room.
* *"I'm too busy, I couldn't commit to attending every single meeting*".   Meetings are rarely more frequent than one evening a month, and missing the occasional one is perfectly acceptable.  Most meetings take less than a couple of hours.
* *"I'm concentrating on finding a job or furthering my career*".   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 pro-active.  Prospective employees will be impressed.
* *"I haven't lived here very long and I don't know the area well*". If you have lived or worked in the Parish for a year you are eligible. Your views as an 'incomer' should be welcomed, as you will probably see things more objectively.
* *"I'm worried that I won't get many votes, and look silly".*   Even if you are not voted on this time, you may very well be approached if a vacancy occurs in the future and co-opted on.
* "*Our Parish Council is full of Old Fogeys".*   Join up and change it then.
* *"I'd look like a fool because I would not know what's going on".*   You will be eased in gently; there is help, advice and more formal training available.  The Parish Clerk is the legal officer in the Council and she will explain the rules.
* *"I'll have to sign that code of conduct thing that the press keeps on about".*   The code of conduct is nowhere near as onerous as made out by the press; out of some 80,000 councillors, only 300 have refused to sign.  The code stops situations like the planning one above.
* *"I'll have to let everyone know about all my personal and business affairs".*   The declaration of interest asks you to declare business interests within the Parish area to guard against bias when Parish issues are debated.  As for personal affairs, people probably know about these already.
* *"I'm too lazy and not interested in my community".* An excellent reason for not joining.
* *"I prefer to let others do the work and then criticize from the sidelines afterwards".*   Also a valid reason for not joining, but do bear in mind that expounding your views in the pub, rather than at Council meetings will not change a thing in your village.

If, after the last time for withdrawals, there are not more candidates than seats, then the candidates nominated will be elected in an uncontested election.

Please contact the Parish Clerk or Cherwell District Council for further information.

Rosemary Watts
**Parish Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer to Barford St John & St Michael Parish Council**