

Fabian Tract No. 53.

THE PARISH COUNCILS ACT

What it is and How to Work it.

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THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 1894.

With an Introduction, copious Notes, Appendix, and Index.

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THE PARISH COUNCILS ACT.*

I. WHAT IT IS.

IN 1894 Parliament made a law, usually called the Parish Councils Act, which every working man and working woman ought to know about. It is a law for giving the working folk who live in villages the power to manage their own affairs. It is a charter of liberty which makes them citizens of their own parish and equal with the squire and the parson in its management. And more than this, it also alters for the better the way in which the Board of Guardians, the men and women who administer the Poor Law, are chosen. In future the country villages need no longer depend on the goodwill of this man or that woman for their comfort and prosperity, but will be able to deal with their own concerns in their own way.

But this law is very long and very difficult to read. And so, in these pages, the whole meaning of the law (except as it applies to London) is given in plain and simple words, which every one can understand. Everything is explained as clearly as possible. But questions will arise, and doubtful points will be found. If any workman writes a letter or a post-card about these, addressed to the Secretary of the Fabian Society 276 Strand, London, a full and clear answer will be sent to him without charge.

How the Working People can Manage the Business of their own Parish.

Hitherto nearly all the public business of the villages and country parishes has been done by the squire and the parson and the farmers, just as they thought best. In future the people themselves can do it as they like. There will be a Parish Meeting in every country parish, and a Parish Council in most of them, and, over all, a District Council.

The Parish Meeting.

In every rural parish (that is every parish not in a town or under a Local Board†) there will be from December, 1894, a Parish Meeting, which will meet at least once a year, and in all cases after six o'clock in the evening. **The Parish Meeting will consist**

* The Act itself can be obtained from P. S. King and Son, 12 King Street, Westminster, price 5d. post free. Many handbooks to the Act have been published. Among the cheaper of these may be mentioned *The Parish Councillor's Handbook*, by Corrie Grant (Liberal Publication Department, 41 Parliament Street, London), price 6d.; the *Practical Guide to the Parish Councils Act* (Ward and Lock), price 1s.; and the *Ready Reference Guide to the Parish Councils Act* (G. Philip and Son), price 2s. 6d. See advertisement of last at p. 19.

† Or under "Improvement Commissioners," but these cases are very rare.

of every man or woman in the parish who has a vote for Parliament or for the County Council, and, in addition, of those married women whose names are on the register. It will choose its own chairman once a year. If there is an important vote to be taken by the parish it will be taken by secret ballot. The Parish Meeting will practically take the place of the Vestry meeting, with these differences, that it will not manage church affairs, which will still be done by the Vestry, and that several quite new powers are given to it.

The Parish Council.

Every rural parish will have a Parish Meeting, but not every one will have a Parish Council. Only those which have a population of 300 or more will have a Council as a matter of course. Parishes which have a population of less than 300 but at least 100, *may* have a Council if they like. They may pass a vote in the Parish Meeting demanding a Council, and the County Council is then obliged to make arrangements for the election of one. If the population of a parish is less than 100 it may still ask for a Council, but the County Council will have the power to refuse it. The Parish Council will be elected by the people assembled in Parish Meeting, or by a ballot held in the evening. It will be easy for the workmen to elect whom they like to sit on the Council, because they are always in a majority, and no one will have more than one vote for each member. Any man or woman who has a vote in the parish can be elected as Parish Councillor, and even those who have no vote can be elected if they have lived in the parish or within three miles of its boundary for a year. The number of Councillors will be from five to fifteen, as fixed by the County Council according to the population of the place, and their term of office will be one year. The Parish Council will choose its own chairman, and the parson will not preside by right.

The Parish Meeting and Council will have many powers, all of which are set out on pages 16, 17, 18. But before we come to speak of them there is another governing body to be considered.

The District Council.

At present the Board of Guardians in the country unions has two different sets of duties: first, to manage the Poor Law; second, to be the "Sanitary Authority," that is to say, to look after the drains, unhealthy houses, water supply, and also allotments in some cases. In future there will be two separate bodies—

- (1) The District Council, which will be the Sanitary Authority.
- (2) The Board of Guardians, which will manage the Poor Laws only.

The Board of Guardians will consist of the Guardians elected by parishes in any town or Local Board District and the District Councillors elected in rural parishes. In the villages, therefore, the persons elected District Councillors will be also the Guardians.

Local Boards will change their name and become Urban District Councils.

The Highway Boards will be abolished, and the District Councils will take over their duties ; but the County Council may continue the Highway Boards in office for a period not longer than December, 1897.

The District Councillors and the Guardians will be elected everywhere by ballot when there is a contest, and on the basis of one voter one vote for each candidate to be elected. Every man or woman who has a vote for Parliament or for the County Council, and every married woman whose name is on the register will have a vote for the District Councillors. They will serve for three years, and one-third of them will retire every year unless the County Council decides, on the application of the Board, that they should all retire together. Any person whose name is on the register of voters may be elected a District Councillor or Guardian, or anyone who has lived in the District for a year previous to the election. The Justices of the Peace will no longer have the right to sit on the Board of Guardians without being elected. On the other hand, the elected chairman of the District Council, unless a woman,* will be a Justice of the Peace by virtue of his office.

This then is the machinery of the new Act in the country districts :

1. The Parish Meeting in every rural parish.
2. The Parish Council in all of these which have a population of 300 or more, and in some with a smaller population.
3. The District Council.
4. The Board of Guardians, consisting of District Councillors from the villages, and Guardians from the towns and Local Board Districts.

The power of these bodies is very great, and the comfort and happiness of the people will depend in no small degree upon the men and women who are elected to them.

The Powers of the Parish Meeting.

(See also pages 16 and 18).

The Parish Meeting will have other duties besides that of electing the Parish Council where there is one. It will be able to decide that the village shall have a recreation ground, a village hall and library, lights in the streets, a new burial ground, &c. No right of way may be stopped if it refuses its consent. The full accounts of all parish charities (except those relating to the church or church affairs) must be laid before it, and if they are not satisfactory it may refuse to pass them, and may appeal to the Charity Commissioners. It may also discuss any other matters which are of interest to the parish, and any resolutions which it adopts will be instructions which the Parish Council must carry out. The Parish Council is in many ways merely the executive committee of the Parish meeting. In the small parishes where there is no Parish Council the Meeting will be the sole governing authority, and then it will have further powers. (See page 18).

* This is one of the instances in which the law deals unequally with men and women.

The Powers of the Parish Council.

A complete list of these will be found on pages 16 and 17, but some of them must be treated more fully.

Perhaps the most important thing that the Parish Council will have power to do will be to obtain land for allotments. To the agricultural laborer the possession of a bit of land near his home and at a reasonable rent means a supply of food in the shape of bacon or vegetables or flour to the value of perhaps six or seven pounds a year; it also gives him occupation when he is out of work, or if he is too old to work for a farmer; and it makes him feel a good deal more independent. To the miner, the quarryman, the factory-worker, an allotment is also a help in feeding a family; it is a support in case of a trade-dispute; and men employed in factories will find its cultivation a healthy occupation after the day's work. All the ways provided for acquiring allotments, wherever there is any desire for them, ought to be made use of to the utmost.

Allotments and Common Pasture.*

How can land be obtained for them?

There are several ways, which briefly are as follows:

1. HIRING BY AGREEMENT.—

(a) The Parish Council may be able to come to an agreement with some landowner for a convenient piece of land. This undoubtedly is the best method of proceeding, because the Parish Council may itself carry it out without the need of obtaining the consent or depending on the action of any other body; because there is no limit to the amount of land which may be let to one man; because the land may be hired for any number of years that may be most convenient; and because this system is by far the cheapest.

(b) In case for any reason the Parish Council is unwilling to act on its own account it may ask the District Council to do so; or any six electors in the parish may apply to the District Council over the heads of the Parish Council. The District Council may then hire the land by agreement, but it cannot make a longer lease than thirty-five years, and it may not let any allotments larger than an acre. If the District Council refuses to act, the six electors or the Parish Council may appeal to the County Council to do so.

2. COMPULSORY HIRING.—But sometimes it is found that the landlords and farmers for one reason or another refuse to let land for allotments. In that case, they may be made to. The Parish Council, however, cannot itself do this. It can only apply to the County Council, and *if that body is satisfied* that there is a demand for allotments, and that suitable land cannot be obtained at a reasonable rent by agreement, it may hold a public inquiry into the case. After having held the inquiry, the County Council may make an order giving the Parish Council power to hire the required land compulsorily on terms to be fixed by an arbitrator. The arbitrator will be appointed

* Get Fabian Tract, No. 58, "Allotments and How to Get Them." (See page 20.)

by the Parish Council and the landlord or farmer concerned, if they can agree on one ; and if not, by the Local Government Board. If the County Council refuse to make the order after having held the inquiry, the Parish Council may appeal to the Local Government Board, which may take the matter out of the hands of the County Council and itself make the order. But unfortunately the County Council is able to stop the whole process by refusing to be "satisfied" at the outset as to the necessity for action at all, and in that case, by a great blot in the Act, there is no appeal.

When land is compulsorily hired, the lease must not be for less than fourteen nor more than thirty-five years. The allotment let to any single individual must not be larger than four acres of pasture, or one acre of arable and three acres of pasture. And if the land taken is permanent pasture, it may not be broken up without the consent of the landlord.

3. **BUYING BY AGREEMENT.**—In this case it is the District Council which will have power to buy land on being asked to do so by the Parish Council or by any six electors in the parish. If it refuses to act, there may be an appeal to the County Council to take action instead. Here a limit of one acre is fixed to the size of the allotments.

4. **COMPULSORY BUYING.**—Where it is wished to buy land and the owners refuse to sell, the Parish Council, or the six electors, or the District Council may apply to the County Council, which is the only body empowered to buy land compulsorily. There is the same limited power of appeal, if the County Council fail to act, as in the case of compulsory hiring. The one acre limit again applies to land obtained in this way.

In all these cases common pasture may be provided for the parish as well as separate allotments. The rent of the allotments, or the sum charged for turning out animals on the common pasture, must always cover all the expenses connected with obtaining and managing the land. The Parish Council will have full power to manage any allotments or common pasture.

Charities.

Certain powers are given to the Parish Council to control some of the charities that may exist in the parish, but the provisions of the Act which deal with this subject are by no means satisfactory.

In the first place charities are divided into two kinds, those which are "ecclesiastical" and those which are not.

Ecclesiastical charities are—

- (a) Those whose object is some "spiritual purpose," such as the payment for a sermon on a particular subject to be given on a particular day in the year, &c.
- (b) Those which are for the benefit of the parson or the sexton, or any other church officer.
- (c) Buildings used only by one religious body.
- (d) "Any building which, in the opinion of the Charity Commissioners, has been erected or provided" since 1854, "mainly by or at the cost of members of any particular religious denomination."

Sometimes a charity is for a certain number of loaves to be distributed among the poor, and a certain sum to go to the funds of the Church, or some such combination of purposes. In those cases the charity will be divided into two and considered as though it were two separate charities, one ecclesiastical and the other not.

No ecclesiastical charity is touched by the Act except in one single case ; and that is where the overseers are the trustees. Then the Parish Council may appoint an equal number of persons as trustees in their place.

In dealing with charities that are not ecclesiastical, the Parish Council will have the following powers :

1. When churchwardens or overseers are trustees, to appoint other persons in place of them.

2. When the vestry appoints the trustees, the Parish Council will do so in future.

3. When none of the trustees are elected by the people or nominated by the Parish Council, the Parish Council may appoint additional trustees, but only so many as the Charity Commissioners think fit.

4. When the trustees transfer it to them of their own free will, and the Charity Commissioners approve, the Parish Council may undertake the management of a charity.

5. Any new scheme affecting a charity must be presented to the Parish Council, or to the Parish Meeting where there is no Council, and they may oppose its being carried out.

6. The names of the people who receive doles from the charities must be published every year as the Parish Council or Meeting think fit, and all accounts of charities must be laid before the Parish Meeting every year.

But none of the provisions with regard to the appointment of trustees apply to any charities founded since 1854, except in two cases :

(a) Where the giver is alive and consents.

(b) Where it is simply a question of transferring the right of appointment from the Vestry to the Parish Council.

The control of schools is in no way affected by this part of the Act.

Trustees appointed under the Act will sit for four years, half retiring every two years.

No trustee of a charity, his wife or children, may receive any benefit from the charity.

Of course the trustees appointed by the Parish Council will be expected to manage the charity in the way the Council thinks right, and that should be the way the people think right.

Recreation Ground.

Every village in England ought to possess a recreation ground for games of all kinds. But owing to the enclosure of village greens, or the fact that it is nobody's business to get them in good condition and keep them so, a great many rural parishes are without any convenient playground. The Parish Council will be able to supply the

want. It will have power to buy, compulsorily if necessary,* or to lease land for a recreation ground and to make regulations for its proper use, and if it is proposed to purchase the land, the money may be raised by loan.

Water Supply, etc.

An unwholesome or insufficient water supply is another very common grievance in villages. It will be the duty of the District Council to organize any new supply on a large scale. But the Parish Council may dig wells, put up windmills to wind up the water, lay pipes to bring water from a stream up to the houses, and, in fact, make use of any source of water within the parish in whatever way appears best, provided these things can be done by agreement.

It will also have power to put right any bad-smelling pond or ditch, and to call the attention of the District Council to any unhealthy cottage or other sanitary fault in the parish. If the District Council does not take action, the County Council may be appealed to, and may undertake the work.

Roads and Footpaths.

Similarly, if the District Council does not repair the highways, the Parish Council may ask the County Council to do it instead. The Parish Council may also take steps to prevent any stopping of a right of way or enclosure of common or roadside waste; but when legal proceedings are necessary it will be for the District Council, with the larger funds at its disposal, to undertake them. The Parish Council has power to buy by agreement any new right of way that would be of advantage to the people. It may also repair footpaths, except those at the side of the roads, and, if the Parish Meeting consents, it may lay out new walks and put seats along them.

The Village Hall.

In every parish which can by any means afford it, there should be a hall with a library and reading-room, which should be at once the centre of the village life and interest, a place for all kinds of meetings, and a generally useful means of education. A museum, art gallery, and science and art school may be added. The Parish Meeting may decide to have such a building, and the Parish Council will have the erection and the management of it.†

Other Powers.

In the same manner, the village may be lighted by oil, gas or electricity. Part of a river may be made convenient for a swimming-bath, or a building may be erected for that purpose which could be used in winter as a gymnasium.

The Parish Council also takes over all the powers at present exercised by the vestry and the churchwardens, except those relating to the church and those which go to the Parish Meeting.

* In the same manner as allotments (see page 7, par. 4).

† The cost will be paid out of the poor-rate, but the Council will have power to borrow for capital outlay. For the library, reading-room, &c., a special vote must be taken and a special rate made under the Public Libraries Act.

It will have, again, the important power of appointing the overseers and the assistant-overseers where there is one. And as churchwardens will cease to be overseers, the number of the latter may be increased in proportion.

The Parish Council will have the care and the legal ownership of all parish property. It must appoint a clerk. If one of the members is willing to serve without pay, he may be appointed. Perhaps the village schoolmaster will consent to be clerk. If no one is appointed without pay, the vestry clerk (where there is one) must be clerk to the Council, and, failing him, the assistant-overseer (if there is one) will take the post. Failing any of these, the Parish Council may appoint such other person as it may think fit. It is important to choose a man whom the electors trust, and who is on the side of the working folk. A treasurer should also be appointed; but he cannot be paid.

Use of Rooms.

The Act gives the people the right to use certain rooms for the sittings of the Parish Meeting and Council. And not for them alone, but also for meetings in support of candidates for the Parish and District Councils or for the discussion of questions of allotment land. If there is a room belonging to the parish which can be had free of charge, these sittings and meetings will be held there. But if not, then a room in an elementary school which receives public money, or in a police station or workhouse or other building maintained out of the rates, may be used free of charge, provided that the ordinary employment of the room is not interfered with. If none of these be available, a room may be hired. The Parish Meeting or Council may only assemble in a room in a public-house when no other room can be obtained free of charge or at a reasonable cost.

Expenses.

The expenses of the Parish Council, or Parish Meeting where there is no Council, will be paid out of the poor-rate, but a separate heading must be made to show how much of the rate is for these expenses. The Parish Council may not spend beyond the amount of a threepenny rate without the consent of the Parish Meeting, but with its consent the limit is sixpence in the £. But the cost of lighting the roads, maintaining a library or baths, and one or two other things are not included in this limit. (See Appendix B. 40.) For important undertakings the Parish Council may borrow money with the consent of the Parish Meeting, the County Council, and the Local Government Board, but not any sum exceeding half the rateable value of the parish.

Miscellaneous.

Women, whether married or unmarried, who possess the qualifications which would give a man a vote, are entitled to be put on the register of electors and to vote for Parish Councillors, or District Councillors, or for Guardians; and they may be elected to those offices. Women, like men, may also be elected if they have merely lived for a year in the parish or within three miles of its boundary.

A woman may also be elected overseer if there is no man suitable. But if a woman is chosen chairwoman of a District Council, she will not be a Justice of the Peace, as a man in the same office would be.

No one may be elected a Parish Councillor who is under twenty-one, or who is not a British subject, or who has, within the last year, received union or parish relief (but medical relief alone does not disqualify), or who has within the last five years been imprisoned with hard labor for any crime (mere imprisonment for non-payment of a fine or of rates, or of contribution to the Poor Law Guardians, does not disqualify), or made a bankrupt, or who is concerned in any contract with the Council, or who holds any paid office under it.

The first election of Parish Councillors will be in December, 1894, and the second in April, 1896; after that, annually in April.

Parishes which are partly within and partly outside a borough or Local Board District will be divided into two.

Large parishes may be divided into wards, and small ones be united into groups; but each ward or each small parish will have its own Parish Meeting and elect its own Councillors to sit on the common Parish Council.

These and all such matters of detail that arise in starting all this new machinery will be arranged by the County Council. But it will as a rule be guided to a great extent by the desires of the places affected, and the electors should in every case express their wishes without delay, by means of petitions to the County Council.

Those who live in a small town governed by a Local Board will not be excluded from any of the benefits of this Act; for their District Council will almost certainly be able to obtain any of the powers of a Parish Council by applying to the Local Government Board.

It is a fact little known that of the 13,000 rural parishes affected by this Act, 6,000 have a population of less than 300. Many of these will be without a Parish Council. The Parish Meeting will in those cases assemble at least twice a year instead of once, and will have the powers given in Appendix C. (p. 18).

II. HOW TO WORK IT.

1. The people have now full power to elect whom they choose to sit on local Councils. Everything depends upon the men and women who are chosen. The Parish Councils Act may do a great deal of good in the villages, but unless the right people are chosen to administer it, it might as well never have been passed. *It is of the utmost importance that in every case the voters should elect whom-ever they think is the best person for the place, and no one else.* Not the wealthiest man in the parish, not the parson, unless he is a specially good man, not the man who talks most nor the man who employs most labor, but let them elect the man who will do most work of the right kind in the right spirit. The Parish Council is not meant to be a village House of Lords, to be entered for the sake of the honor it may be supposed to give. It is to be a body of thoughtful men and women, working actively and honestly for the welfare of their neighbors.

2. Where there is a trade-union branch in a village or district it should take action to secure the election of some of its members on the Councils. Where there is not, the sooner one is started the better. But in the meantime it would be advisable for those who are interested in making the best use of the Act, to form themselves into a committee to choose the candidates, to decide upon a program, to study the provisions of the Act, and to organize the voters. Above all, the Progressives should act in union or they will certainly be defeated, and any disagreement as to who should be the candidates, &c., should be decided by taking a private vote upon it amongst themselves before going to nomination.

3. Every elector will have one vote for as many candidates as there are to be elected. For instance, if the Parish Council is to consist of eight members, each voter will be able to give one vote each for any eight men whom he pleases, but never more than one vote for any one of them. It is therefore to the interest of the Progressives to run as many candidates as there are seats. If they vote solid and have strength enough to elect one man, they have enough to carry the whole number. There is no advantage whatever in concentrating their strength on one man. But they should be very careful not to split their votes by running more candidates than there are seats, and if there is any danger of that, some of the candidates should retire.

4. It is of absolute importance that every elector should attend the Parish Meeting. It must be arranged beforehand to demand a poll, unless all the laborers' candidates are elected on the show of hands. Any five parochial electors may demand a poll, or, if the chairman consents, even one only. Sometimes, perhaps, the laborers will be asked to withdraw some of their candidates in order to avoid the expense of holding a poll. But they must be firm in their determination not to be content with less than a clear majority of members on the Council.

5. They should go with their minds clearly made up as to what they want done and whom they want to be elected, and they should always act fearlessly when there is need for action. The chief reason why the conditions of life are so bad in very many of the agricultural villages is that the laborers are afraid to lift a finger or give a vote in their own interest. If this miserable timidity continues, things are not likely to improve.

If it is really dangerous for any working man in the parish to stand for election, it should be borne in mind that **any person over twenty-one years of age who has for a year before the nomination lived within three miles of the village boundary, may be nominated and elected.** In this way a working man may perhaps be found who is not under the thumb of the farmer or the squire. A blacksmith or a shoemaker from the neighboring village may sometimes be able to stand up for the laborers better than they can stand up for themselves.

Only those men and women whose names are printed in the registers of electors may attend and vote at a Parish Meeting, or give their ballot paper for the Councillors. It therefore becomes of great import-

ance that every man [and every woman who lives in a separate cottage] over twenty-one years of age, who has lived for twelve months in the parish, should look at the list put on the church-door in August each year, and see that his or her name is printed there as an elector. If it is not there, a written claim should be made to the overseers, on a form which may be obtained of any Liberal or Conservative Association, or which will be sent free of charge to any laborer who sends a post-card for it to the Secretary of the Fabian Society, 276 Strand, London, W.C. The committees and officers of Laborers' Unions should make it part of their business to see, when August comes round, that every one of their members is properly on the Electors' Lists then published, and should get the forms filled up by those who are left off, and send them to the proper officer.

6. The overseers have the duty of summoning the first Parish Meeting, and at least seven days' notice must be given. But if questions are to arise with regard to a library, recreation ground, lighting, new walks, baths or burial ground, or if in a small parish there will be a proposal to apply for a Parish Council, or to apply to be grouped with another parish, then fourteen clear days' notice must be given, naming the matters to be considered, or those questions cannot legally be discussed. So, in order to be on the safe side, the electors should insist in all cases on the overseers giving fourteen days' notice of the first Parish Meeting, to be held in December 1894.

7. It is usually advisable that large parishes should be divided into wards. The laborers very often live in one part of the parish and the well-to-do people in another part; and, unless the parish be divided into wards, it may be very difficult for the laborers to secure the election of their candidates. Besides, every ward can have its own Parish Meeting for elections. The County Council can divide a parish in this way if one-tenth of the electors who live in it send up a petition asking for it to be done. Where this course is to be adopted, the voters should take immediate steps to send up the petition.

8. Parishes with a population of less than 300 ought to decide at their first Meeting to have a Parish Council, if five honest men can be found to serve who have the interests of the people at heart. A Parish Council will have more powers than a Parish Meeting, and, if it consists of the right men, is likely to be more active. It should be remembered that a parish with a population between 100 and 300 can demand a Council as a right. If it has less than 100 it can still apply, but the matter rests with the County Council to decide.

9. No one should be elected to any office who does not publish a definite program of what he intends to do and answer satisfactorily the questions put to him at the Parish Meeting.*

10. No candidate for any Council should be supported unless he pledges himself to see that all workmen employed by that Council are paid a good wage and work reasonable hours; and he should be asked to state what sum and what hours he considers reasonable. Workers, whether likely to be employed by a local authority or not,

* A leaflet of Questions to be put to Candidates for Parish Councils (Tract No. 56) is published by the Fabian Society, 276 Strand, London, and a copy will be sent free of charge to anyone sending a post-card asking for it. (See page 20.)

should press this point home, for the interest of their class is closely bound up with it.

11. Candidates for the Parish Council should be asked to pledge themselves to have a meeting of the Council held at least once a month.

12. The provisions of the Act with regard to the building of village halls and libraries, the supply of recreation grounds, new rights of way, lighting, etc., are meant to be put in force. It will be for the people to see that, wherever there is need of any of these things, the proper steps are taken to get them. Big ratepayers who consider their own interests more than the happiness of the people, will often try to secure a do-nothing policy. But so long as the workers only get a semi-starvation wage in return for their labor they have a right to make use of their vote to put things a little straighter.

13. In case the voters have been so foolish as to elect the wrong sort of men on to the Parish Council, they may fall back on certain powers of control to prevent that body misusing its office :

- (a) A Parish Meeting may be summoned at any time by the Chairman of the Parish Council, by two Parish Councillors, *or by any six electors*, and it may discuss parish affairs and pass resolutions to express its opinion about them.
- (b) All meetings of the Parish Council are to be open to the public unless the Council passes a special resolution to exclude them.
- (c) Minutes of the proceedings of every Parish Council and all the votes given by the Councillors are to be recorded. Every elector has the right to inspect and take copies of these records, and of any books and documents under the control of the Parish Council, without any payment.
- (d) If the Parish Council's rate rises above threepence in the $\underline{\text{£}}$, the consent of the Meeting must be obtained, and the reasons for the increased rate can of course be demanded.
- (e) If the Parish Council has given its consent to the closing of any right of way or to the abandonment of any highway on the ground that it is not needed, a Parish Meeting held within two months may reverse the decision of the Council.
- (f) The Parish Meeting is entitled to have the accounts of all parochial charities (except those belonging to the Church) laid before it, no matter who are the trustees ; and the names of all who receive doles from the charities must be published.
- (g) At the end of his year of office, a Parish Councillor can be called to account for his acts to the electors if he wishes to be elected again.

14. It has been seen that great powers are given to the Charity Commissioners, particularly in regard to the number of trustees of charities who may be appointed in certain cases. The voters should keep a close watch on the way these powers are used, and any wrong use of them should be at once petitioned against, published in the local newspapers, and appealed against to Parliament through any Member willing to take up the case and likely to do justice to it.

15. It is of great importance that District Councillors should be thoroughly Progressive in their views. Any candidate for this office in cases where he will also be a Poor-law Guardian (that is, every-

where except in towns or Local Board or Improvement Act Districts), should be asked to state his views clearly on such matters as :

The sum to be given to old people in out-door relief.

The boarding-out of pauper children.

The separation of old men and women in the workhouse in unions where it still exists.

The demanding of contributions for the support of parents who may be on the parish from married laborers earning less than 15s. a week.

The provision of allotments, where it is required that the District Council should take action.

The need of new roads and the repair of the old ones.

The drainage of the parish.

The erection by the Council, wherever wanted, of cottages with gardens, or of lodging houses, under the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890.

Whom he would vote for as chairman of the District Council (for the holder of that office will be a Justice of the Peace, and cases might arise when his character would be of importance) ;

and other matters of the sort.*

It will be remembered that Local Boards will also become District Councils and will be elected by secret ballot and by equal voting. Candidates for these Councils, and the Guardians of the Poor in these places and in boroughs, should also be asked to publish definite programs before the election.

16. The powers of the County Council are much increased by this Act. It has been seen that it will have in its hands the grouping or division of parishes ; the decision as to the establishment of a Parish Council in parishes of less than 100 inhabitants ; the power of refusing consent to the borrowing of money by a Parish Council ; large powers with regard to allotments ; the right of performing the duties of the District Council in the matters of road repair, water supply (in some cases), sewerage, etc., when appealed to do so by a Parish Council ; and in addition, the management of most of the details of the working of the new machinery. *It is therefore quite indispensable that the voters should elect men of the right stamp as County Councillors.* The inaction of the majority of our County Councils at present is doing an incalculable amount of harm. Their new powers will render the loss greater if the inaction continues. Let the electors see above all that men are elected to serve on the County Councils who will put life and energy into those bodies and use their powers to the fullest extent for the highest benefit of the people.

* A leaflet of Questions to be put to Candidates for the District Councils (Tract No. 57) is published by the Fabian Society, 276 Strand, London, and a copy will be posted free of charge to anyone sending a post-card asking for it. (See page 20.)

APPENDIX A.

(The figures in these appendices refer to the clauses of the Act.)

Powers of the Parish Meeting in parishes where there is a Council:

1. To choose a Chairman for any meeting at which the Chairman of the Parish Council is a candidate for any office, or is absent. 2 (4); sched. I. 1. (10).
2. To have the use of certain rooms, 4 (1); 61. See page 10.
3. To nominate the Parish Council and elect it when there is no contest. 3 (5), 6.
4. To decide by a two-thirds majority that the parish shall be lighted by oil, gas or electricity, or that baths or washhouses should be provided. 7 (1). *a. b.*
5. In parishes of over 500 population, to decide by a two-thirds majority that recreation grounds, public walks, &c., should be provided, partly by gifts, partly out of the rates. 7 (1). *d.*
6. To vote for the provision of a new burial ground, of a library, museum, schools of science and art, or an art gallery. 7 (1). *r. e.*
7. Certain powers now exercised by ratepayers with regard to sites for schools. 52 (1).
8. The powers now possessed by electors to apply for the formation or dissolution of a school board. 52 (2).
9. To refuse to consent to the stopping of a right of way although allowed by the Parish Council. 13 (1). *b.*
10. To have presented to it accounts of all the non-ecclesiastical charities of the parish. 14 (6).
11. To give or withhold its consent to the sale of certain parish property. 8 (2); 52 (1).
12. To consent to a rate between 3d. and 6d. in the £, or to a loan. 11 (1). (3).
13. Where the parish is one of a group, the County Council may give the Meeting a veto on certain acts of the Parish Council. 38 (1).
14. To apply to the County Council to be grouped with another parish, or for a grouping order to be repealed. 38 (4) (5).
15. If the population falls below 200, to petition the County Council to dissolve the Parish Council. 39 (2).
16. "To discuss parish affairs and pass resolutions thereon." Schedule I., 1 (4).

APPENDIX B.

Powers and Duties of the Parish Council:

1. To elect a Chairman. 3 (8).
2. To have the use of certain rooms. 4 (1); 61. See page 10.
3. To hold not less than four meetings a year. Schedule I, 2 (13).
4. To appoint a clerk and treasurer. 17; 81 (2).
5. Such powers of the vestry as do not relate to the Church or Church Charities, or are not transferred to the Parish Meeting or District Council. 6 (1) *a.*
6. Such powers of churchwardens as do not relate to the Church. 6 (1) *b.*
7. To appoint the overseers and to appoint or remove the assistant-overseer. 5 (1).
8. To obtain land for allotments by various methods. 6 (3); 9; 10.
9. To manage allotments acquired under any Act of Parliament. 6 (4).
10. To complain to the District Council about unhealthy houses and obstructive buildings. 6 (2).
11. To utilize a water supply from any source within the parish. 8 (1), *e.*
12. To drain or clean any pond, ditch, etc., dangerous to health. 8 (1), *f.*
13. To perform certain sanitary duties which may be delegated to it by the District Council. 15.
14. To receive notice from the District Council of any scheme for water supply or sewerage which will affect the parish. 16 (3).

15. To apply to the County Council to remedy the neglect of the District Council in matters of water supply, sewers, unhealthy houses, highway repair, stoppage of right of way, enclosure of roadside waste, etc. 16 (1); 26 (4).
16. To apply to the Local Government Board to grant an extension of sanitary powers to the parish. 25 (7).
17. To acquire by agreement any right of way in its own or in a neighboring parish, and to combine with other parishes for this purpose. 8 (1), *g*.
18. To give or withhold its consent to the stopping or diversion of a public right of way, or to the abandonment of a highway. 13 (1).
19. To oppose any enclosure of common. 8 (1) *c*.
20. To repair such foot-paths as are not by the road-side. 13 (2).
21. To maintain highways for not more than three years from December, 1894, in cases where the parish maintained them before the passing of this Act, and where the County Council decides that it should continue to do so. 25 (1); 82 (2).
22. To manage any existing public lights, baths, wash-houses, library, or burial or recreation ground obtained under any Act of Parliament. 7 (5); 53.
23. To provide and manage any such which the Parish Meeting have voted should be provided. 7 (7).
24. To provide, on a warrant from the Home Secretary, a new burial ground without the consent of the Parish Meeting, but after the adoption by it of the Burial Acts. 7 (1) *c*.
25. To acquire land for a recreation ground and public walks apart from any action of the Parish Meeting under the Public Improvement Act. 8 (1) *b*.
26. To provide buildings for public offices. 8 (1) *a*.
27. To make bye-laws, &c., for the management of a recreation ground, village-green, open space, or public walk under its control. 8 (1) *d*.
28. To hold land in perpetual succession. 3 (9).
29. To own non-ecclesiastical property now vested in the overseers and churchwardens. 5 (2) *c*.
30. Generally to administer parish property. 6 (1) *c*.
31. To accept and hold any gifts of property for the benefit of the parish. 8 (1) *b*.
32. Under certain limitations, to let or sell parish property. 8 (2).
33. To accept from the trustees managing them the care of a recreation ground or allotments. 14 (1).
34. To provide parish books, vestry room, parish chest, fire engine, or fire escape. 6 (1) *c*.
35. To have the custody of parish books and documents not relating to church matters or church charities. (Parish registers excluded by this Clause). 17 (8).
36. To appoint trustees of charities in certain cases. 14.
37. To support or oppose any new scheme affecting a parochial charity. 14 (5).
38. To publish the names of recipients of doles from charities. 14 (6).
39. To appeal in cases where the parish is unfairly treated in the matter of the valuation list, poor rate, or county rate. 6 (1) *c*.
40. To levy a rate of 3d., or, with the consent of the Parish Meeting, of 6d., not including expenses incurred under the Lighting and Watching, Baths and Wash-houses, Burial, Public Improvements and Libraries Acts. 11 (1) (3).
41. To raise a loan with the consent of the Parish Meeting, the County Council, and the Local Government Board. 11 (1) (2); 12 (1).
42. To make up accounts and present them for audit. 58.
43. To apply to the County Council to divide the parish into wards. 18 (1).
44. The Council of a group of parishes may apply to the County Council for the dissolution of the group. 38 (5).
45. To take action before the County Council and to petition the Local Government Board with regard to any proposal to divide the parish, alter its boundaries, or unite it with another parish. 36 (7).
46. To appoint committees for any purpose. 56 (1).
47. To take joint action with any other Parish Council in various matters, and to appoint joint committees with any other Parish Council. 8 (1), *k*; 57 (1).
48. To fill any casual vacancy in the Parish Council. 47 (4); Schedule I. 2 (2).
49. To fix the time (after 6 p.m.) and place of the Parish Meeting, and to make standing orders for its proceedings. 45 (1); Schedule I. 3 (5).
50. To apply for a decision of the High Court in any dispute as to powers, liabilities or property. 70 (1).

APPENDIX C.

Powers of the Parish Meeting in parishes where there is no Parish Council:

1. To demand a Parish Council. 1 (1) a.
 2. To apply to the County Council for any of the powers of a Parish Council which the Meeting does not already possess. 19 (10).
 3. To appoint a committee for any purpose. 19 (3).
 4. To appoint the overseers and appoint or remove the assistant-overseer. 19 (5).
 5. To appoint trustees of a non-ecclesiastical parochial charity in place of overseers and churchwardens. 19 (5).
 6. To levy a rate of not more than 6d. in the £ to cover all expenses. 19 (9).
 7. To give or withhold consent to, or to make application for, an order grouping the parish with another. 1 (1) b.; 38 (4).
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