

ARTICLE 3 - CITIZENS AND THE COUNCIL

3.1 CITIZENS' RIGHTS

Citizens have the following rights. Their rights to information and to participate are explained in more detail in the Access to Information Rules in Part 4B of this constitution.

Voting and petitions

Citizens on the electoral roll for the area have the right to demand a referendum on a directly elected mayor form of executive arrangement under the Local Government Act 2000 by raising a petition comprising 5% of the electorate. Citizens on the electoral roll may request referenda on other matters by petitioning the Council. Citizens may petition the Council on any other matters relating to the Council's activities or within its general powers of wellbeing.

Information

Citizens have the right to:

- attend meetings of the Council, the Cabinet and Council committees except where confidential or exempt information (as defined in the Local Government Act, 1972 as amended and in accordance with Part 4B) is likely to be disclosed, and the meeting or part of it is therefore held in private;
- find out from the published forward plan of executive business what key and other decisions will be taken by the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members and when;
- see reports and background papers, and any records of decisions made by the Council and the Cabinet;
- inspect the Council's accounts and make their views known to the external auditor; and
- inspect a copy of this Constitution at the Council's offices and in public libraries
- purchase a copy of the Constitution on payment of a reasonable fee

Participation

Citizens (defined more specifically in the context of the various Procedure Rules in Part 4 of this Constitution) have the right to: -

- Ask questions, present petitions, make statements or present deputations to the Council, the Cabinet or any of the Council's committees (Note: some of these Committees have special speaking arrangements – the Democratic Services team will offer advice).
- Contribute to investigations by Overview and Scrutiny panels by making direct submissions when invited to do so or by attendance at meetings of those bodies,

subject to rules of procedure set down in Part 4E of this constitution.

- Present a petition seeking some action from the Council or registering a local concern. Petitions with signatures of more than 1% of the electorate may be referred to full Council for debate. [Further information is contained within the Council's Petitions scheme.]

Complaints

Citizens have the right to complain to:

- the Council itself under its complaints scheme;
- the Local Government Ombudsman if they feel the Council has not followed its procedures properly, but only after first exhausting the Council's own complaints scheme (this is a normal requirement of the Ombudsman);
- the Standards Committee via the Council's Monitoring Officer about a breach of the Council's Local Code of Conduct by an elected member or a co-opted member.

3.2 CITIZENS' RESPONSIBILITIES

Citizens must not be violent, abusive or threatening to councillors or officers and must not wilfully or recklessly harm things owned by the Council, councillors or officers.