

# Citizens and The Council

## 1. Citizens' Rights

Citizens have the following general rights:

### (a) Voting and Petitions

Citizens on the electoral roll for the County have the right to vote in council elections and sign a petition to request a referendum for an elected mayor form of Constitution.

### (b) Information

Citizens have the right to:

- (i) attend meetings of the Council and its committees except where confidential or exempt information is likely to be disclosed, and the meeting is therefore held in private;
- (ii) attend meetings of the Cabinet when key decisions are being considered;
- (iii) find out from the forward plan what key decisions will be taken by the Cabinet and when;
- (iv) report on the proceedings of formal, public meetings of the Council using social media and other technology, provided that this is not disruptive to the meeting;<sup>1</sup>
- (v) see reports and background papers, and any records of decisions made by the Council and the Cabinet;
- (vi) inspect the Council's accounts and make their views known to the external auditor;
- (vii) information held by the Council, using the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004; and
- (viii) any personal information held about them by the Council, in accordance with the relevant data protection legislation;
- (ix) submit petitions under the relevant Council, Cabinet and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

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<sup>1</sup> The rights, scope and limitations cited here are those given under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014.

**(c) Participation**

Citizens have the right to participate in Council matters by addressing in person or submitting a petition to the Council, a Committee, or the Cabinet, by participating in the Council's public question time and by contributing to investigations by scrutiny committees, including suggesting areas for review by scrutiny committees and issues raised through the Councillor Call for Action.

**(d) Complaints**

Citizens have the right to complain to:

- (i) the Council itself under the appropriate complaints procedure;
- (ii) the Ombudsman after using the Council's own complaints procedure;
- (iii) the Monitoring Officer about a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct.

The rights of citizens to information and to participate are explained in more detail in the Council Procedure Rules and the Access to Information Rules in this Constitution.

**2. Citizens' Responsibilities**

Citizens have a responsibility to act appropriately and with due respect; they must not use violent, abusive or threatening behaviour to councillors or officers and must not wilfully harm things owned by the Council, councillors or officers. The responsibilities of citizens when attending meetings are set out in the Council, Cabinet and Scrutiny Procedure Rules in this Constitution.