

Constitutional Rights of Residents

4.1 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 Chapter 8 of this Constitution:

- (a) **Voting and petitions.** Citizens on the electoral roll for the area have the right to vote and sign a petition to request a referendum for an elected mayor form of Governance. Petitions to the Council can also be submitted on any issues within the Council's responsibilities in accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme (Chapter 9).
- (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 executive subject to the same exceptions;
 - (iii) find out what decisions will be taken by the executive and when;
 - (iv) see reports and background papers, and any records of decisions made by the Council and the executive; and
 - (v) inspect the Council's accounts and make their views known to the external auditor.
- (c) **Participation.** Citizens have the right under the Standing Orders relating to Council meetings to:
 - (i) request that a deputation address the Council on a matter which the Chairman considers is a matter of urgency and relates to an item of business on the agenda for that meeting (whether the request is acceded to is a matter for the Council to decide);
 - (ii) Submit and e-petition via the Council's website or request a Councillor to present a petition to the Council raising a matter of concern or calling upon the Council to take certain action or refrain from doing so in relation to the matter in question (whether the petition is presented to the Council will be a matter for the Councillor concerned. The decision on what action to take, if any, will be a matter for the Council or the Executive); and
 - (iii) to request any member of the relevant Policy and Scrutiny Committee to raise an issue of concern for review by the Committee (whether the request is acceded to is a matter for the member concerned).

(d) **Complaints.** Citizens have the right to complain to:

(i) the Council itself under its complaints scheme:

Stage 1 – When a complaint is initially received it is referred to the local office or service manager to investigate, as they are the staff with the in depth knowledge of the service.

Stage 2 – If the complainant is still not satisfied, they have the right to request a Chief Executive's review. This is undertaken by the Complaints and Customer Manager on behalf of the Chief Executive.

(ii) the Ombudsman after using the Council's own complaints scheme;

(iii) the Monitoring Officer about a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct.

4.2 Citizens' responsibilities

Citizens must not be violent, abusing or threatening to councillors or officers and must not wilfully harm things owned by the council, councillors or officers.