

Part One: Chapter 3 - Citizens and the Council

Citizen's rights

- 3.1 The rights of local citizens to have access to information and to participate are explained in more detail in the Access to Information Procedure Rules in Part Three of this Constitution.

Voting and Petitions

- 3.2 Citizens on the electoral roll for the Borough Council's area have the right to vote and sign a petition to request a referendum for an elected mayor form of Constitution. There can be no more than one referendum in any one period of five years. The Local Authorities' (Referendums) (Petitions and Directions) (England) Regulations 2011 state that where a local authority receives a petition for a referendum for an elected mayor, signed by at least five per cent of the local electorate, the Council must hold such a referendum.

Rights to information

- 3.3 Local citizens have the right to:
- a) attend all meetings of the Council, the Executive, the Scrutiny Panels, Committees and Sub-Committees, except during items where confidential or exempt information is likely to be disclosed (in which case the meeting is held in private);
 - b) find out from the Notice of Key Decisions what key decisions the Executive will take and when. A key decision is defined as one that is likely:
 - to result in the Council incurring expenditure or making savings which are significant in terms of budget for the service or function to which it relates; or
 - to be significant in terms of its effects on two or more of the Borough's electoral wards.
- (Subject to exceptions in cases of urgency, the notice of key decisions must contain details of all matters likely to be the subject of key decisions for 28 days);
- c) see reports and background papers and any records of decisions made by the Council, the Executive, the Scrutiny Panels, Committees and Sub-Committees; and
 - d) inspect the Council's accounts and make their views known to the Council's External Auditors.

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Participation and Consultation

- 3.4 Citizens have the right to participate in meetings of the Council, the Executive, the Scrutiny Panels and Committees by submitting a deputation. Details of the arrangements that apply to the submission of deputations are set out in Part Three of this Constitution. Citizens can expect to be consulted on significant issues on either a local or Borough-wide basis, depending on the nature of the matter and its relative effect on the community. The Council has well-developed arrangements for consultation on key areas of its activities and has established Community Action Teams across the Borough in partnership with other public authorities such as the police and county council.

Complaints

- 3.5 Citizens have the right to complain to:
- a) the Council under its complaints scheme;
 - b) the Local Government Ombudsman if, after using the Council's own complaints scheme, he or she still remains dissatisfied at the Council's response; and
 - c) the Monitoring Officer, concerning any alleged breach of the Council's Code of Conduct for Members.

Citizens' Responsibilities

- 3.6 Citizens are expected to conduct themselves in a reasonable manner, in line with normally-accepted standards in a civilised society, when they deal with councillors or officers and attend any meetings of the Council, the Executive, the Scrutiny Panels and Committees. In particular, citizens must not be violent, abusing or threatening to councillors or Council employees and must not wilfully harm items owned by the Council, councillors or employees.

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