

## **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 part 3 of this constitution.

#### **(a) Voting and Petitions**

Citizens on the electoral roll for the area have the right to vote. They may also sign a petition to request a referendum for an elected mayor form of constitution.

Citizens may also present petitions to certain member bodies. The arrangements for receipt of petitions are set out in Part 3 Section 1: Standing Orders.

#### **(b) Information**

Citizens have the right to:

- i. attend meetings of the council, the cabinet, and any committees and leader and portfolio holder decision-making sessions except where confidential or exempt information is likely to be disclosed, and the meeting or part of the meeting is therefore held in private;
- ii. find out from the forward plan what key decisions will be taken by the executive or officers and when;
- iii. see reports and background papers as defined in statute, and any records of decisions made by the council, its committees and the executive which are open to the public; and
- iv. inspect the council's accounts during the audit process and make their views known to the external auditor.

#### **(c) Participation**

Citizens have the right to participate in public interest debates, public question time where provided for in standing orders and, where appropriate and requested by the committee, in the investigations by overview and scrutiny committees.

#### **(d) Complaints**

Citizens have the right to complain to:

- i. the council itself under its complaints procedure which can be found [here](#);
- ii. the Ombudsman after using the council's own complaints procedure; and
- iii. the Monitoring Officer of the council about a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct.

### **3.2 Citizens' Responsibilities**

Citizens must not be violent, abusive or threatening to councillors or officers and must not damage property owned by the council, councillors or officers.

Citizens should ensure that statements made at meetings or in correspondence are true, accurate and not frivolous or defamatory about any individual or organisation.