

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY TO THE CONSTITUTION

The Constitution sets out the parameters within which the Council should operate, how decisions are to be made and the procedures which are to be followed; this is to ensure that the Council is efficient, transparent and accountable to residents. Some of these processes are required by law, while others are a matter for the Council to choose.

The Constitution is divided into the following sections:

Part 1 – The Articles

These set out the basic rules governing the Council's business.

- The Constitution (Article 1)
- Members of the Council (Councillors) (Article 2)
- Residents and Public Participation (Article 3)
- The Full Council (Article 4)
- The Mayor and Chairing the Council (Article 5)
- The Leader (Article 6)
- Committees, Forums, Working Groups, and Partnerships (Article 7)
- Joint arrangements (Article 8)
- Chief Officers (Article 9)
- Decision making (Article 10)
- Finance, contracts and legal matters (Article 11)
- Review and revision of the Constitution (Article 12)

Part 2 – Supporting Documents

Code of Corporate Governance

Full Council Procedure Rules

Access to Information Rules

Financial Regulations

Contract Procedure Rules / Code of Procurement Practice

Members' Code of Conduct and procedure for investigations

Members' Licensing Code

Members' Planning Code

Protocol for Member/Officer Relations

Members' Allowances Scheme

How the Council operates

The Council is composed of 63 Councillors (Members) elected every four years. Councillors are democratically accountable to all residents in the Borough and in particular to those living in their Ward. The overriding duty of Councillors is to the whole community, but they have a special duty to their constituents, including those who did not vote for them.

Councillors have agreed to follow a local Code of Conduct for Members to ensure high standards in the way they undertake their duties.

Decision Making Structure

The Council has a Committee System of governance. Decisions are made by Full Council, or are delegated to Committees, Theme Committee Chairmen and Chief Officers as set out in Article 10.

All Councillors meet together as the Full Council. Council delegates functions to the committees as set out Article 7. Meetings of the Council and committees are open to the public.

The Council's Staff

The Council's staff (called 'Officers') give advice to Committees and Members, implement decisions and manage the day-to-day delivery of its services. Some officers have a specific duty to ensure that the Council acts within the law and uses its resources wisely. A code of practice governs the relationships between officers and Members of the Council.

Residents' Rights

Residents have a number of rights in their dealings with the Council. These are set out in more detail in Article 3. Some of these are legal rights, whilst others depend on the Council's own processes.