

Article 3 – Citizens and the Council

3.01 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 Part 4 of this Constitution:

- (a) **Voting and petitions:** Citizens on the electoral roll for the area have the right:
 - (i) to vote at Council elections;
 - (ii) to submit a petition to the Council regarding issues of concern. Details of the Council's Petitions' Scheme are published on the Council's website; and
 - (iii) to sign a petition to request a referendum for a different form of Constitution.

- (b) **Information:** Citizens have the right to:
 - (i) attend meetings of the Council and its committees and of the Executive, except where confidential or exempt information (as defined in the Access to Information Procedure Rules contained in Part 4 of this Constitution) is likely to be disclosed, and the meeting is therefore held in private;
 - (ii) find out from the Forward Plan what key decisions will be taken by the Executive and other decision takers and when. Also, subject to urgency procedures, to have at least 28 days' prior notice of a private meeting of an executive decision making body;
 - (iii) see reports and background papers (except where these contain confidential or exempt information), and any records of decisions made by the Council and the Executive;
 - (iv) make representations about why a proposed private meeting/part of a meeting of an executive decision making body should be held in public; and
 - (v) inspect the Council's accounts and make their views known to the external auditor.

- (c) **Participation:** Citizens have the right to participate by making statements or asking questions at meetings of the Council and its committees (including Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Area Committees) and the Executive. Citizens may also respond to consultation exercises organised by the Council, or make their views known by speaking, writing or e-mailing to a Councillor or member of staff.

- (d) **Comments and Complaints:** Citizens have the right to comment on the Council's services and/or its performance. Good performance can be

praised; constructive suggestions for improvement are always welcome. Where citizens feel something has gone wrong they may complain to:

- (i) the Council itself under its complaints scheme;
- (ii) the Local Government Ombudsman after using the Council's own complaints scheme;
- (iv) the Council's Monitoring Officer about a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct.

Any citizen who is unsure how to go about making a comment, suggestion or complaint should write to the Chief Executive Officer's office at County Hall, Northallerton.

Citizens may raise any comments or suggestions in relation to this Constitution by contacting the Council's Monitoring Officer (the Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Democratic Services, based at County Hall) or with any Councillor.

3.02 Citizens' responsibilities

Citizens must not be violent, abusive or threatening to Councillors or staff and must not wilfully harm things owned by the Council, Councillors, or the Council's contractors or agents.