

# 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 the Access to Information Rules in Appendix 6 of this Constitution:

- (a) **Voting and petitions.** Citizens on the electoral roll for the County area have the right to vote. Citizens may also sign a petition to request a referendum for an elected mayor form of Constitution. The Council's Petition Scheme is set out at Appendix 2 to the Constitution.
- (b) **Information.** Citizens have the right in accordance with the Access to Information Rules and the law to:
  - (i) attend, record and report on meetings of the County Council and Committees except where confidential or exempt information is likely to be disclosed and the meeting is therefore closed to the press and public;
  - (ii) attend, record and report on meetings of the Cabinet, except where confidential or exempt information is likely to be disclosed and the meeting is therefore held in private;
  - (iii) find out from the Forward Plan what key decisions will be taken by the Cabinet and when;
  - (iv) see reports and background papers and any records of decisions made by the Council and the Cabinet which are open to the public; and
  - (v) inspect and object to the Council's accounts and make their views known to the External Auditor.
- (c) **Participation.** Citizens have the right to participate at meetings of the Council and Committees of the Council (unless different arrangements are made in particular cases) by the presentation of a petition in line with the provisions of the Council's Petition Scheme (Appendix 2), or submission of a question or the making of comments in accordance with the procedure set out in the Council's Procedure Rules (Appendix 3). Separate arrangements exist for addressing the Regulatory Planning-Committee in respect of planning applications.

The Council encourages Citizens and any other non-Councillors with relevant expertise and knowledge to be involved and participate as part of its overview and scrutiny arrangements.

- (d) **Complaints.** Citizens have the right to complain to:
- (i) the Council itself under its complaints scheme
  - (ii) the Local Government Ombudsman after using the Council's own complaints scheme;
  - (iii) the Monitoring Officer/Governance, Ethics and Standards Committee 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 willfully harm things owned by the Council, Councillors or officers.

### 3.3 **Equal Opportunities**

The County Council values the rich diversity of Derbyshire's local community and is committed, through effective dialogue with key interest groups, to promoting equal opportunities for all, regardless of social, ethnic or economic background and to ensure effective compliance with equal opportunity employment practices within the Council.