

Article 3 - Citizens and the Council

3.01 Citizens' Rights

Citizens have the following rights:-

(a) **Voting and petitions.** Citizens on the electoral roll for the area have the right to:

- (i) vote; and
- (ii) sign a petition to request a referendum for an elected mayor form of Constitution.

All citizens of the Borough have the right to sign a petition to request the Council to consider or take action on any matter.

(b) **Information.** Citizens have the right to:

- (i) attend meetings of the Council and its Committees except where confidential or exempt information is likely to be disclosed, and the meeting is therefore held in private;
- (ii) attend meetings of the Cabinet when key decisions are being considered;
- (iii) find out from the Public Notice of Key Decisions 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; and
- (v) inspect the Council's accounts and make their views known to the external auditor.

(c) **Participation.** Citizens have the right to participate in the Council's question time and contribute to investigations by the overview and scrutiny commission or any of its committees.

(d) **Complaints.** Citizens have the right to complain to:

- (i) the Council itself under its complaints scheme;

- (ii) the Ombudsman after using the Council's own complaints scheme;
 - (iii) the Monitoring Officer about a breach of the Councillors' Code of Conduct.
- (e) Such other rights as may be prescribed by law.

3.02 Citizens' Responsibilities

- (a) Citizens must not be violent, abusive or threatening to Councillors or officers and must not wilfully harm things owned by the Council, Councillors or officers.
- (b) Citizens are legally required to register to vote and actively encouraged to exercise their vote, as part of their commitment to citizenship and local democracy.

3.03 Reporting of Meetings by the Public and Press

Any member of the public or press attending a public meeting of the Council may record the proceedings and report them to others.

The Council has an approved Protocol for Webcasting, Filming & Recording of Council meetings, which is available from Democratic Services.

'Reporting' means filming, photographing, making an audio recording or some other such method of recording proceedings and then reporting or providing a commentary on those proceedings, orally or in writing. A person attending the meeting may use any appropriate communication method, including the internet, to publish or share the recorded material. This would include the use of social media.

Any person wishing to record a public meeting is not required to give the Council prior notice although they are encouraged to do so in order that reasonable facilities can be provided.

No one is entitled to record or report the proceedings of a meeting if the meeting has moved into Part 2 to consider confidential or exempt business. In such circumstances, the public and press would be required to leave the

meeting and to deactivate and/or remove any recording or communications equipment.

Any person recording or reporting a meeting may not use flash photography or intrusive lighting, or move around the room, or ask any of the participants at the meeting to repeat something they have said. They may not cause excessive noise when installing or moving equipment. They may not give an oral commentary during the meeting. All of these activities would serve to disrupt proceedings and anyone acting in a disruptive manner may be excluded from the meeting.

Any person recording or reporting a meeting may not film any children or vulnerable adults present at the meeting, or any member of the public who objects to being filmed.

Anyone wishing to record or report on meetings should be warned at the outset that the law of defamation will apply, as well as the law relating to public order offences.

They should also be reminded that freedom of speech should be exercised with personal and social responsibility, showing respect and tolerance towards the views of others. The chairman is expected to give this advice to all present