

Article 3 – Members of the Public

3.01 Member of the Public Rights – Contacting Councillors and Council Officers

The term member of the public refers to all the people of Winchester District who we serve.

Councillors and Council officers welcome contact from the public and encourage positive engagement. Details of how to contact Councillors and particular Council officers or services can be found on our website. members of the public have a right to expect responses within agreed timescales and respectful behaviour from Councillors and Council officers.

In return members of the public are expected to treat Councillors and Council officers with politeness and courtesy. If members of the public act in an abusive, intimidating or threatening manner Councillors are entitled to stop any conversation or interaction in person or online and report them to the local authority, the relevant social media provider or the police.

Members of the Public have the following rights:

- a) Voting and Petitions – **members of the public** on the electoral roll, any member of the Council, any local government elector of the Winchester District, any resident of the Winchester District, any person who works or studies within the Winchester District for the area have the right to vote and sign a petition to request a referendum for an elected mayoral form of Constitution;
- b) Information – **members of the public** have the right to :
 - (i) Attend meetings of Full Council, Cabinet and Committees except where confidential or exempt information is likely to be considered and where the meeting, or part of the meeting, is therefore held in private;
 - (ii) Establish from the Forward Plan what key executive decisions will be taken, by whom and when;
 - (iii) See reports and background papers, and any record of decisions made by the Council and the Cabinet (except in relation to confidential or exempt business);
 - (iv) Inspect the Council's accounts and make representations to the Council's external auditors.
 - (v) Access information in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act and Data Protection Law.
 - (vi) Obtain a copy of the Constitution.

- c) Participation – **members of the public** have the right to participate in a number of public meetings of the Council which includes:
- (i) to present petitions and ask questions at Full Council meetings in accordance with the relevant schemes;
 - (ii) Cabinet and Committee meetings where public participation is held immediately after the start of meeting;
 - (iii) at the invitation of the Chairperson to address that meeting; and
 - (iv) the statutory procedures for public representations that apply at Planning and Licensing Committee meetings.
- d) Complaints – **members of the public** have the right to complain to:
- (i) The Council itself under its complaints scheme;
 - (ii) The Ombudsman after exhausting the Council's own complaints scheme; and
 - (iii) The Monitoring Officer about a breach of the Councillors Code of Conduct.

3.02 Obligations of Members of the Public

Members of the public must not be violent, abusive, or threatening to Councillors or Officers and must not wilfully harm things owned by the Council, Councillors or Officers. In addition, when attending meetings members of the public will be expected to comply with the procedures of that meeting and accept the decision of the Chairperson of that meeting or they may be asked to leave the meeting.

3.03 Reporting on meetings

Subject to the Council's requirements, **members of the public** have the right to report on any meetings of the Council that are open to the public. This can be by filming, audio-recording, taking photographs and using social media or any other appropriate method of reporting subject to it being conducted in a manner which does not disrupt the meeting.

3.04 Members of the public rights to information and to participate and report are explained in more detail in the Access to Information Procedure Rules in this Constitution