

SECTION 4

CITIZENS AND THE COUNTY COUNCIL

1. Citizens' rights

- 1.1 Citizens have a number of rights under this Constitution. These rights set out the ways in which Citizens can participate in the County Council's decision making arrangements.
- 1.2 A Summary of Citizens rights is given below and they are covered in more detail in the relevant parts of Procedural Standing Orders in Section 10 and the Access to Information Rules in Section 12.

2. Voting and petitions

- 2.1 Citizens on the electoral roll for the County area have the right to vote in any election or referendum organised by the County Council. They may also sign a petition to request a referendum for an elected mayor form of Constitution. If the number of signatures on the petition reaches the prescribed number (currently 5% of the Electoral Roll), the County Council will hold a referendum.
- 2.2 Citizens also have a right to submit or sign petitions to the County Council including electronic petitions which can be submitted via <http://moderngov.staffordshire.gov.uk/mgEPetitionListDisplay.aspx?bcr=1>. Petitions submitted to the County Council will be dealt with under the petition scheme appended to this section.
- 2.3 Further details on how petitions are dealt with can also be found in Section 10 Procedural Standing Orders.

3. Information

- 3.1 Full details of Citizen's rights of access to information and the County Council's decision making arrangements are given in Section 12 of the Constitution – Access to Information Procedure rules.
- 3.2 In Summary, Citizens have the right to:
 - Attend meetings of the County Council and its Committees and Panels except where it is likely that confidential or exempt information will be disclosed during the meeting. Where this is the case, the meeting will be held in private and any reports containing confidential or exempt information will not be published;
 - Attend meetings of the Cabinet when key decisions are being considered;
 - Find out from the Forward Plan what key decisions will be taken by the Cabinet and when;
 - See reports and background papers, and any records of decisions made by the Council and the Cabinet; and
 - Inspect the Council's accounts and make their views known to the external auditor.

4. Complaints

- 4.1 Citizens have the right to complain to the Council under its complaints scheme which can be found on the Council's website at <http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/yourcouncil/consultationandfeedback/complimentscommentscomplaints>.
- 4.2 If Citizens are not satisfied by the response from the Council after using the Council's own complaints scheme they can then complain to the Local Government Ombudsman, details of how to complain to the Ombudsman are given as part of Council's complaints scheme.
- 4.3 Citizens can also complain about the conduct of elected Members of the County Council to the County Council's Standards Committee which will investigate and determine if a breach of the Councillors' Code of Conduct has occurred. Further details about the Councillors' Code of Conduct can be found in Section 3 – Members of the County Council.

5. Overview and Scrutiny

- 5.1 Citizens have the right to participate in the Council's Overview and Scrutiny arrangements by suggesting topics for the Overview and Scrutiny Committees to review. More details can be found at <http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/yourcouncil/decisionmakingcouncil/scrutinygetinvolved/>.
- 5.2 Citizens also have the right to attend meetings of the Council's overview and Scrutiny Committees and members of the public may be invited to participate in scrutiny activity at appropriate points.

6. Citizens' responsibilities

- 6.1 Citizens must not be violent, abusing or threatening to councillors or officers and must not wilfully harm things owned by the County Council, councillors or officers.