

West Suffolk Council

Article 3 – The Public and the Council

3.1 The public's rights

The Council is elected to serve its community. The public are at the heart of what we do as a Council, and their rights are set out in this article. Their rights to information and to attend meetings are explained in more detail in the Access to Information Procedure Rules in Part 4 of the Constitution.

- a) **Petitions** – residents who are on the electoral register for the area may sign a petition to request a referendum for an elected mayor form of constitution. They may then vote in that referendum, which will take place if at least 5% of the electorate sign that petition. This constitution also includes a petition scheme, which sets out the right of communities to petition the Council on matters that are important to them

- b) **Information** – the public has the right to:
 - (i) Obtain a copy of the Council's Constitution.
 - (ii) Attend meetings of the Council, Cabinet and Committees except where confidential or exempt information is likely to be discussed and the meeting is, for that reason, held in private.
 - (iii) See the Decisions Plan to find out what key decisions will be taken by the Cabinet, its Committees, or Officers, and when.
 - (iv) Find out from the Decisions Plan when the Cabinet, its Committees or Officers will consider any matters in private.
 - (v) See reports and background papers, and any records of decisions made by the Council, Cabinet or Officers subject to the usual rules regarding confidential or exempt information.
 - (vi) Inspect the Council's accounts and make their views on them known to the external auditor.

- c) **Participation** – the public has the right to address the Development Control and Licensing and Regulatory Committees on specific applications and contribute, by invitation, to investigations and public inquiries undertaken by the scrutiny committees. People who live or work in the Council's area have the right to participate in Public Question Time at other meetings in accordance with the protocol set out in the Council and Committee Procedure Rules in Part 4 of the Constitution.

- d) **Consultation** - the public has the right to respond to consultations initiated by the Council, and the right for their views to be taken into account when decisions are made based on the consultation.
- e) **Complaints** – the public has the right to complain to:
 - (i) The Council itself under its complaints scheme [[Comments, Compliments and Complaints](#)]
 - (ii) The Local Government Ombudsman, if the complaint has not been resolved by the Council’s own complaints scheme.
 - (iii) The Monitoring Officer about a breach of the Members’ Code of Conduct set out in Part 5 of the Constitution.
- f) **Whistleblowing** – the public has the right to bring to the Council’s attention any concerns about corruption or bad practice. Details are available in the Whistleblowing Policy [[Whistleblowing Policy](#)]

3.2 The public’s responsibilities

West Suffolk Council encourages the public to exercise their democratic rights, whether voting in elections, responding to consultations or speaking at Committees. This input to the work of the Council is vital to enable us to discharge our functions effectively.

We welcome that the vast majority of people exercise their rights in the manner that would be expected in a civil society – respecting the norms of public debate, and seeking to input their views in a constructive way.