

Forest Heath District Council

Article 2 – Members of the Council

2.1 Composition and eligibility

The Council comprises 27 councillors who are elected by the voters in the district. There are 14 wards in the district and one or more councillors will be elected to each ward in line with a scheme which was drawn up by the Electoral Commission and approved by the Secretary of State.

To be eligible to stand for election as a councillor, a person must be registered to vote in the district, or live or work there.

2.2 Elections and term of office

The regular election of councillors is held on the first Thursday in May, every four years. The term of office of councillors will start on the fourth day after being elected and finish on the fourth day after the date of the next regular election, with the exception of the Leader who will hold office until the Annual Meeting which follows the election. (Provisions for the resignation or removal of the Leader at other times are set out in Article 6).

2.3 Roles and functions of councillors

These are set out in the ward councillor job description which forms the Appendix to this Article 2 of the Constitution.

2.4 Rights and duties

- 2.4.1 Councillors have rights of access to Council documents, information, land and buildings as are necessary for them to be able to carry out their role properly and in accordance with the law.
- 2.4.2 Councillors will not make any information public if it is confidential or exempt without the consent of the Council, or divulge information given in confidence to anyone other than a councillor or officer entitled to know it.
- 2.4.3 For these purposes, 'confidential' and 'exempt' information are defined in the Access to Information Rules contained in Part 4 of the Constitution.

2.5 Conduct

Councillors will at all times observe the members' code of conduct and the protocol on member/officer relations set out in Part 7 of the Constitution.

2.6 Allowances

Councillors will be entitled to receive allowances in accordance with the members' allowances scheme set out in Part 6 of the Constitution.

Appendix

Ward Councillor Job Description

1. Overview

As a councillor, you will be expected to balance the needs and interests of your local area, your residents and voters, community groups, local businesses, your political party (if applicable) and the council.

First and foremost, you will represent your ward, engaging with residents and groups on a wide range of different issues and taking on an important community leadership role. At the council, you will contribute to the development of policies and strategies, including budget-setting. You may also be involved in taking decisions on planning or licensing applications.

2. Representing the local area

- 2.1 Represent effectively the interests of the Ward for which you were elected and deal with constituents' enquiries and representations, fairly and without prejudice.
- 2.2 Champion the causes which best relate to the interests and sustainability of the community and campaign for improvements in the quality of life of the community in terms of diversity, safety, well-being, economy and environment.
- 2.3 Use local knowledge in the development of council policies, including listening to the needs of local people and taking their views into account when considering policy proposals and decision-making.
- 2.4 Ensure that local people are informed about:
 - Services in their area
 - Decisions that affect them
 - The reasons why decisions were taken by the council
 - The rights of your constituents.
- 2.5 Represent the authority to the community and the community to the authority, through the various forums available.
- 2.6 Respond promptly and fully to any consultation regarding matters within your ward.
- 2.7 Know your Ward, and be aware of its particular qualities, advantages and problems.

- 2.8 Know and work with representatives of local organisations, interest groups and businesses.
- 2.9 Encourage people in your ward to participate in the democratic decision-making process by engaging with consultations etc.

3. Participating in the work of the council

- 3.1 Participate effectively as a member of full Council and any committee, group or other forum to which you are appointed.
- 3.2 Contribute actively to the formation and scrutiny of the council's priorities, budget, strategies and service delivery.
- 3.3 Develop and maintain a working knowledge of the council's services, management arrangements, powers/duties and constraints and develop good working relationships with the council's officers.
- 3.4 Fulfil the statutory and locally determined requirements of an elected member, including compliance with all relevant codes of conduct and protocols.
- 3.5 Represent the council on outside bodies to which it appoints you.
- 3.6 As you are able, assist the Mayor or Chairman in promoting the civic life of the council.
- 3.7 Participate in the scrutiny of the services and policies of the council and their effectiveness in meeting the strategic objectives of the council and the needs of its residents
- 3.8 Maintain and develop your skills by participating in the Member Development Programme and attending the training offered. Ensure you have relevant IT skills to enable you to make use of the council's systems.