

Agenda



Democratic Services Committee

Date: Tuesday, 18 January 2022

Time: 10.00 am

To: Councillors C Ferris (Chair), M Whitcutt, P Hourahine, J Clarke, T Watkins, K Thomas, G Giles, M Evans, C Evans and C Townsend

Item	Wards Affected
1	<u>Apologies</u>
2	<u>Declarations of Interest</u>
3	<u>Minutes of Meeting held on 13 December 2021</u> (Pages 3 - 10)
4	<u>Participation Strategy Draft</u> (Pages 11 - 38)
5	<u>Guide to the Constitution</u> (Pages 39 - 82)
6	<u>Date of next Meeting</u> To be agreed for March.
7	<u>Live Event</u> Click on the link below to view the Live Event: Join live event

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Date of Issue: Tuesday, 11 January 2022

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Minutes



Democratic Services Committee

Date: 13 December 2021

Time: 10.00 am

Present: Councillors C Ferris (Chair), M Whitcutt, P Hourahine, J Clarke, T Watkins, K Thomas, G Giles, M Evans, C Evans and C Townsend, Gareth Price (Head of Law and Regulation), Leanne Rowlands (Democratic Services Manager), Felicity Collins (Governance Officer), Samantha Schanzer (Governance Officer)

1 Apologies

Councillor Townsend.

2 Declarations of Interest

None.

3 Minutes of Meeting held on 11 October 2021

The Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 11 October 2021 were **approved** and accepted as an accurate record.

4 Participation Strategy (Presentation Update)

Invitees:

Leanne Rowlands – Democratic Services Manager
Gareth Price – Head of Law and Regulation

The Democratic Services Manager provided the Committee with a presentation update on where the Council is with the draft participation strategy to encourage citizens in being more involved with Local Authority decision making processes.

Key points:

There are two key requirements in order to promote the council's functions; the first is to reach the public by promoting awareness and providing ways to get members of the public to access the information easily. The Council are looking to draw the constitution into one accessible guide and to improve the Council website's search facility to make it more user friendly to build public engagement.

The second requirement is to promote how to become a Member of the Council in order to represent the residents of their community. The Council are looking to build on the website page on how to become a councillor, the Lead Officer discussed the points in the presentation in detail to the Committee.

Members were advised that this would come back to Committee at the end of January with a full draft document in advance of the consultation period. After the consultation, the full strategy will be presented to the council in March prior to the deadline publication in May.

The Lead Officer mentioned the further actions that the council will take under the act, such as putting a petition scheme in place so residents know the process and Members know

what the council can do when in receipt of the same. The next steps include future members training and to base it around member seminar training including the importance of social media platforms.

Committee raised the following points:

- The Committee agreed they were happy with the return of the documents to come to the Committee in January and noted that the presentation was easy to follow.
- Councillor Giles assured that promotion is good but the language and wording that the council will use needs to be easily understood. The Member mentioned it would be good to learn what has been contributed from the public toward the work, if it includes public comments i.e. if the website suggestions are from feedback and if the officers have taken into account other Local Authorities' practices.

The Democratic Services Manager confirmed that it is embedded in the presentation of what the residents look at – not on the website at present but it usually comes up with a feedback survey asking what their visit was like that day. Customer Services regularly run surveys and also request feedback from residents on the digital provision.

The other local authorities are in the same position in developing a strategy for May 2022. They are also working towards meeting the first publication date but they are in the first stage of publishing the strategy, then after that they look to improve and develop as Newport will be doing also.

The Head of Service informed the Committee that the strategy is intended as live document - as a starter, when the Democratic Services Manager brings the final document to the Members, it will formalise what the council are doing currently. The plan is to keep it constantly under review with actions for improvement over time as once the council has a strategy in place, they can work with the community on how to improve communication on that. It was reiterated that this is the start in terms of codifying a document of what the council currently does now and the first step is to consult with the public in February on what they think of the strategy. When it will be adopted in May, they will use it as a document moving forward to see how to improve things and review with a set of improvement targets.

- A comment was made by Councillor Watkins that as a Councillor he receives continual complaints about the council website being too complicated to operate so will be interested in how the feedback goes out to see if residents mention that.
- Councillor Whitcutt noted that it can be often simpler to google what they need rather than search the council website itself. It was mentioned that the Cabinet Member for Assets and Resources has been raising the issue for a long period of time. The Member echoed Councillor Giles' point about the type of language concerned to encourage the public as the constitution needs to be user friendly yet dealt with a great deal of care.
- Councillor M. Evans agreed with the prior point that the website is not user friendly. The Member mentioned they receive questions from residents about parking permits and that it should be about simplicity. An example was mentioned, if someone wanted to watch the council committee, they would have to go on YouTube and type it in as there is no direct link on the website. With regard to the petition schemes mentioned, the Member recalled a previous mechanism in place to deal with petitions. It was requested to see more information in January such as research on what other councils are doing on engaging with the public on petitions. The Member referred to the concerns that Scrutiny Committee had expressed about the public consultation

public space protection order and that they would be interested to hear about other petition schemes in the United Kingdom.

In response, the Head of Service explained that the policy mentioned is about how the petitions are presented, the council never had a strategy on how they were dealt with and responded to. The petitions used to be physically presented to the Mayor. A procedure on how petitions should be dealt with and reported is something the council wish to develop. For instance, a policy on how they are responded to and how the council keeps a record to show that they are dealt with properly. Petitions and the website have improvements going forward, and the consultation document is codifying what the council currently does but on the final document the committee can decide what they wish to action and flag up.

- Councillor M. Evans asked to clarify what happens to petitions when they are received by the council.

The Head of Service confirmed that they are dealt with at an operational level and are submitted to the relevant Head of Service, including the relevant Cabinet Member if necessary. However, the outcome and the response is not routinely reported back to any Committee.

- Councillor M. Evans queried if Members could be informed of petitions from the public through a simple system reported to a committee. That way they can promote awareness of the council as the Members would know the process.

The Head of Service confirmed if the Committee would like to make the recommendation then the council can take that on board.

- The Chair added that clarity and better knowledge on how the council receives petitions would be good.

The Head of Service responded that receiving petitions is not the current issue. They are directed to the relevant Head of Service and submitted online as with the Senedd/Houses of Parliament. However the officer recognised that more information on the council website could be put on about how petitions can be submitted. It was acknowledged that what needs to be clearer is what happens to the petitions when they are in the system and to make members aware of how many have been received and how many responded to.

- Councillor K. Thomas commented that she has also received complaints from residents about the website, many of those in relation to parking permits. It was mentioned that officers have not accepted that there is an issue. The Member will be interested to find out should the data show there is an issue such as people going off the website after becoming distressed from the experience. With regard to the petition schemes; the Member went on to advise that with online petitions, they are unaware of how the Senedd conducts them online but mentioned the checks needed and balances available in physical form. The Member used a recent example where a resident mentioned a petition with random individuals signing it but might not understand the necessary qualifications needed for residents to sign i.e. the council would need to know how to check the validity and the address details when received.
- Councillor Hourahine touched on Councillor Whitcutt's comments about the constitution. It was acknowledged as complex and a streamlined constitution is a

major piece of work, it should be reviewed and requested for it to be a possible area of work that the council should consider.

With regard to a committee being informed about petitions, the Member noted that the council should not consider adding another layer of bureaucracy on petitions going ahead as it could take even longer. It was argued that the council does not need a petition monitoring system; but a robust determining strategy of what happens to these petitions.

In response, the Head of Service informed the Members that it is a short term action and not a long term action to re-draft the constitution before May 2022. Members were informed that there is one being done at an all Wales level and when the council receives that, they will re-draft their constitution in the current format to make it more accessible in relevant sections; not to re-write the constitution. Schemes of delegation and terms of reference will be in different sections.

As it is a legal document that the council decision making functions are listed within, there is not much the council can do about its simplicity under new legislation but the council will bring in a 10 page summary of it with links to specific parts.

The Head of Service confirmed they are not suggesting that it goes to a committee beforehand, but more of reporting back to a committee about the numbers received and how many responded to.

- Councillor M. Evans queried with regard to petitions; if a report could be submitted on how many petitions come in and if they have been responded to. The Committee agreed that Members should be aware of how these are logged with Newport City Council.

The Head of Law and Regulation advised Members that instead of an instant decision; the officers can bring more options to them on how that could work in January. The annual reports could be for the Democratic Services Committee or another way of doing it could be service areas to pick up petitions as part of their service plan. An operational reporting plan is also another alternative.

Agreed:

The Committee confirmed they would be happy to make an informed decision in January.

5 **Amendment to the Constitution and Staffing Arrangement (Presentation Update)**

Invitees:

Leanne Rowlands – Democratic Services Manager

Gareth Price – Head of Law and Regulation

The Democratic Services Manager covered the first section of the requirement to update the constitution as part of the Local Government and Elections Act and explained that it is in preparation for a full review.

Key Points:

The Head of Law and Regulation advised the Committee that Members previously considered the option of appointing a Presiding Member 2-3 years, but recommended to Council that the current mayoral role should continue. The officers put it forward to the Members today to reconsider their previous decision about having a presiding member model for the future, in the light of the review of the democratic arrangements, the change to remote/hybrid meetings and the modernisation agenda.

The Head of Service summarised the points in presentation of having a separate member to chair council meetings. It has been introduced through the Local Government & Democracy Wales Act from the Welsh Government as chairing council meetings involves a different skill set from the role of Mayor.

It was also noted that the council has put in a formal bid for the Mayor to be upgraded to Lord Mayor as part of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee honours to be considered next June. If Mayoralty were to be upgraded, there may be more demands on that individual's time as well.

The Officers advised that any changes would take effect as from next May as the move to hybrid meetings requires a different skill set and noted that many other authorities have done this as that Member can hold office to build up that level of expertise.

Committee raised the following points:

- The Chair asked if the Presiding Member post would be a paid post and if there would be two posts; one being the deputy.

The Head of Service confirmed that the Presiding Member could carry an additional salary but the deputy member would not carry the senior salary. The Presiding Member salary would be £25,000.00 per annum. The Council was able to pay an additional senior salary as it was below the maximum number of 18 senior salaries, prescribed by the IRP.

It was highlighted that it would separate the role of Council from the Mayoralty. A Cabinet Member currently has to step down if they wish to become the Mayor as the law states a Cabinet Member cannot chair full council. However, with a separate Presiding Member chairing council, then this would free up a Cabinet Member to become Mayor under the seniority role and to fulfil the civic role, although they would only be eligible to receive one senior salary.

- Councillor Watkins stated that they are happy with the system in place at the moment and noted that if the Mayor's position got upgraded to Lord Mayor; they have a Deputy Mayor who could step into the role as a Presiding Member and therefore does not see the point in making a £25,000.00 salary position.
- Councillor Whitcutt disputed the prior point and stated that it is a skillset to chair a meeting such as full council and stressed that the council needs to modernise the process. It was argued that politics should be set to one side as the Mayor's role is ceremonial. Chairing council is political as they are making decisions and can be a highly contentious role at times. It was mentioned that some Members who have become Mayors, were daunted by chairing large meetings as some can be experienced and others not. Councillor Whitcutt also referred to the salary concern; in comparison to the £270 million budget and stressed it is important for them that the chamber operates efficiently and that the Members have the expertise.
- Councillor Clarke stated that chairing a full council meeting could put Members off wanting to be Mayor as everyone has different skillsets. Especially with the hybrid meetings as the skills required are different from years ago as the role has now changed. It could also free up the Mayor's time.
It was mentioned that other Councils could be looking at this as well, considering there are 18 senior salaries available; there is money available in the budget for the role.
- Councillor Giles agreed with Councillor Whitcutt's point and stated that it is time to develop expertise to ensure efficiency in the decision making process. The Member clarified that this is not a criticism of specific individuals as they are thrown into the position and trying to chair a complicated public meeting can be stressful. Councillor Giles also stated that the application to Lord Mayor status would be a great boost for the City.

- Councillor M. Evans asked the officers to confirm who took the decision to apply for the Lord Mayor status as they had no knowledge of that. The Member argued that just because they allocate a Presiding Member; does not mean they will get someone who is fantastic and agreeing to pay an individual £25,000.00 per annum to chair only seven meetings a year is not something they wish to support. If it were an annual appointment, the group might not like the member's approach and may not be able to remove them. The biggest concern expressed was that a Cabinet Member could also become the Mayor; and anyone who had been the Mayor, knows that is full time occupation.
- Discussion ensued amongst the Members and Councillor Whitcutt disputed the prior point by stating the comment about the salary undervalues the democratic process to put jobs into pounds and pence. The Member reiterated the earlier point that the salary is a comparatively small amount in the budget. It was noted it is a stressful role with a lot of preparation needed. The Mayor takes highly political decisions in full council and argued that they should be divorced from that and passed to a person who should be able to do it. Councillor Whitcutt also mentioned that Mayors could be attacked for things they decide in full council via social media which can lead to personal attacks, which has happened in the past. It could insulate the Mayor from that.
- Councillor Clarke referred to Councillor M. Evans' mention of the Mayor's role being a full time occupation; it will be even more so if the Lord Mayor's Status is granted. Despite only chairing seven meetings, those meetings are the most important meetings that the council and Members have. Therefore they would want the professionalism to come through as everyone has seen examples of videos from other authorities on the internet. As other local authorities have already done this or are moving toward this, the Members should embrace it if they want to keep Newport moving with the times.
- The Chair noted they have observed the diminution of the role of Mayor's office and the role of events they can hold/attend. The council used to have a full office of staff now they do not have the depth of resources that there used to be.

In response, the Head of Service pointed out that there has been no diminution in the role of the Mayor. Due to budget cuts and austerity measures, the amount of the Mayoral budget they spent on hosting Council events has been reduced, but the Mayor continues to be fully supported in attending external events. Although there was no longer a dedicated mayoralty officer, the support work was being picked up by all of the Governance Team, so there was no reduction in support. There was no restriction previous to that and the council does not wish to diminish the role of the Mayor due to less resources. Torfaen Borough Council has abolished the Mayoralty all together – Newport has never countenanced this.

The Head of Service clarified there would be no reduction in the role over the years. In terms of costs, the £25,000.00 is not an additional sum as it includes the Members' basic salary. It would be an extra £9-10,000.00 on top of the basic member salary is paid.

In response to Councillor M. Evans' point on Cabinet Members doubling up as Mayors, the Head of Service clarified they did not suggest they could double up but the legal impediment would be removed as the Cabinet Member's chairing full council meant they could not run as Mayor.

It was mentioned to the Members that they can recommend that the Mayoral procedure continues and they were not suggesting that it could happen however the

Cabinet Member is a full time commitments as is the role of the Mayor and the Lord Mayor could elevate that status.

- The Chair queried if the office for Mayoralty would be upgraded with more resources should Newport City Council get awarded with the Lord Mayor status.

The Head of Service responded that they have not removed support for the Mayor but the budget for the Mayor and hospitality has been reduced due to the need to make budget savings. It was highlighted that there is not a single mayoral officer, but a number of Governance Officers to support the Mayor and chauffeurs. If the Mayor were to get the Lord Mayor status, the council should be able to accommodate that with the current resources.

- Councillor M. Evans thanked the officers for the clarification on the Cabinet Members. And enquired about how the council agreed on the application for Lord Mayor status as other Members will raise questions that there will be additional work as the Mayor. And with the title change; how that could create additional work.

In response, the Head of Law and Regulation confirmed it was through a re-application as the council applied for Lord Mayor status back in 2011. This application was prepared by a team of officer led by the Democratic Services Manager and the events team. The Leader of Newport City Council supported it and the council was encouraged by the office of the Lord Lieutenant to apply. An expression of interest was submitted.

On the second point in terms of the workload; there would be more because of the status and different types of events. There would be no increase in volume of workload as the council works with all the Mayors to agree a work programme that fits in with what they can/want to do as Mayors. It is important that Mayors enjoy their role in office and that the council does not burden them with workloads.

- Councillor C. Evans used an example of the public speaker role in parliament to see how they are elected to ensure impartiality. It was suggested that on the election of the speaker, they would need at least three nominations from different parties. In order to show transparency and lack of bias, the Presiding Officer could write in line with the constitution if someone wants the position, they would have to canvas support and get a significant amount of the opposition party to also agree. In terms of pay, it cannot be about political convenience as has been regarded as a pittance in earlier discussion. The appointment should be done on talent and the Newport City Council could copy the mechanism of the House of Commons. It was suggested they could embed it into the constitution where a Member must self-nominate and be transparent in line with Welsh Government to ensure the role is not just handed out.
- The Chair of the Committee asked if the bid for Lord Mayor Status fails, would the appointment for the Presiding Member fail also.

The Head of Service confirmed that the appointment for the Presiding Officer would not fail. As the justification for the role is the skill set for the arrangements for the hybrid meetings going forward so the question would still remain.

The Head of Law and Regulation responded by stating if the council went down that route; the council would appoint the position. It was confirmed there has been no suggestion for it to be a political position and when they appoint a Presiding Member; the way they dispose that role must be apolitical. This would be for council to agree if Committee took the recommendation to council.

- Councillor C. Evans added that the Welsh Government model differs from the Houses of Parliament model so it would have to be transparent on the appointment and it could be recommended that Members look at the model to elect a potential Presiding Member with using reference from the mechanisms used to elect the public speaker of the House of Commons.
- The Chair of the Committee expressed their approval of the current system for the Mayoralty carrying out civic duties as the swearing of impartiality stands well with presiding over council meetings and noted that the natural turnover of that position yearly is healthy for council meetings.

Recommendations:

The Committee voted on the recommendation of the new model. The vote result was a tied vote with 4 in favour of appointing a Presiding member and 4 against (Councillor Hourahine had left the meeting by this time and did not cast a vote). The Chair did not wish to exercise a second and casting vote as the recommendation would need to be considered by full Council.

Agreed:

The Committee agreed for the decision to be taken to Council.

6 **Date of Next Meeting**

Tuesday 18 January 10am – 12pm

7 **Live Event**

[Democratic Services Committee, 13 December 21 - YouTube](#)

The meeting terminated at 11:52am



Participation Strategy

2022-2026



FOREWORD

I am very pleased to present this first Participation Strategy in accordance with the Local Government and Elections Act (Wales) 2021.

Newport City Council is committed to the principle of participative decision-making, and supporting residents to be actively involved in democratic processes.

This commitment to engaging with communities is captured in the strategy, and reflected in the actions taken to be open and responsive to the needs of citizens.

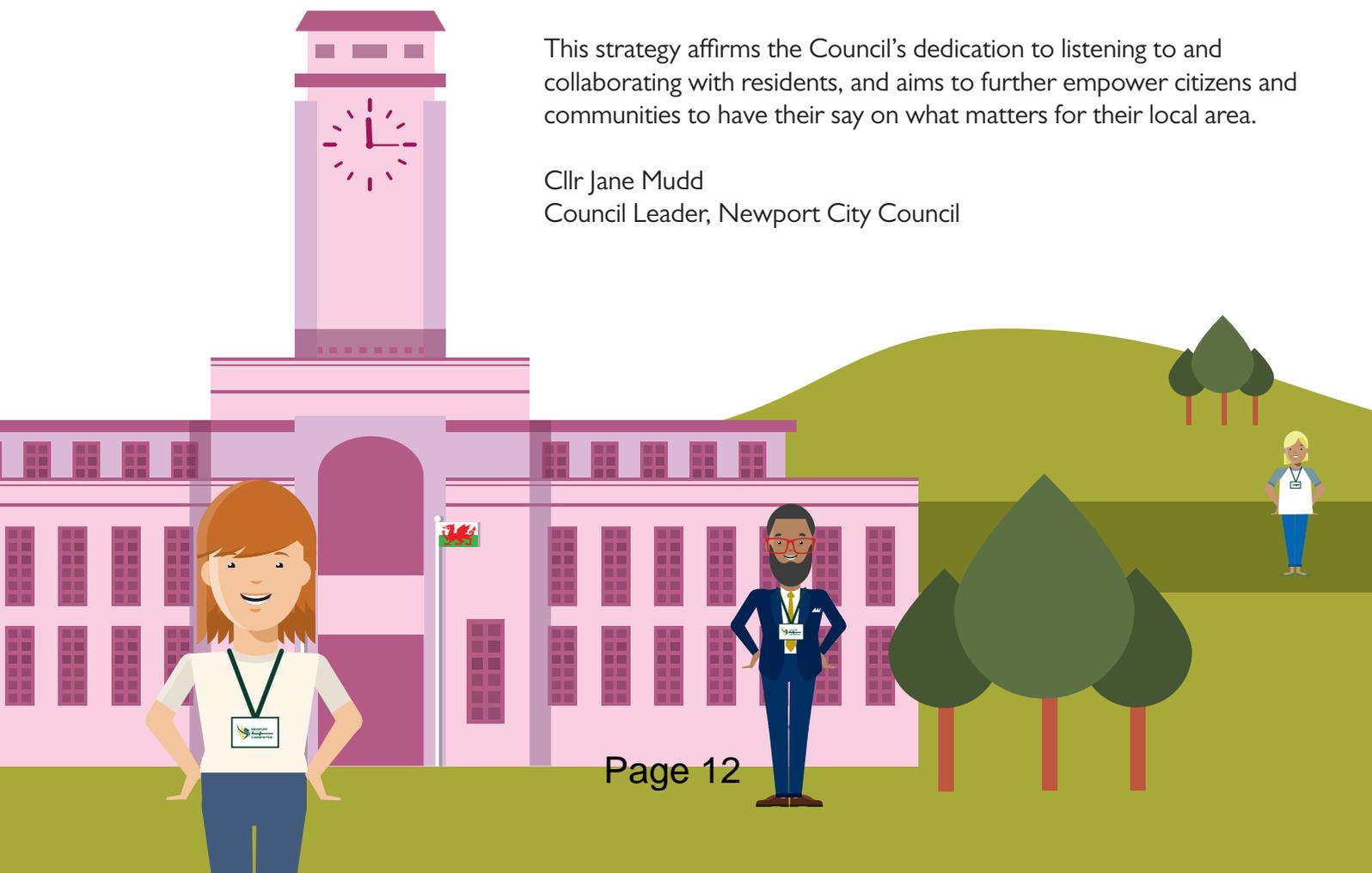
We have recently made major investments in participatory approaches through a commitment to participatory budgeting, which will empower citizens and community organisations to support projects that will address the impacts of Covid-19. In recent years we have been at the forefront of using Wi-Fi technology on local buses to widen our engagement reach and have now introduced a similar system in our public buildings.

We have a strong record of working in partnership, often in challenging circumstances, demonstrating the benefits of close collaboration, and focus on achieving long-term improvements in the well-being of our communities.

We are making our democratic processes more transparent and accessible. This includes publishing a guide to the constitution and implementing the facilities needed for Councillors to access Council meetings from any location. This will create greater flexibility in democratic participation and encourage residents to consider representing their communities as elected councillors.

This strategy affirms the Council's dedication to listening to and collaborating with residents, and aims to further empower citizens and communities to have their say on what matters for their local area.

CLlr Jane Mudd
Council Leader, Newport City Council



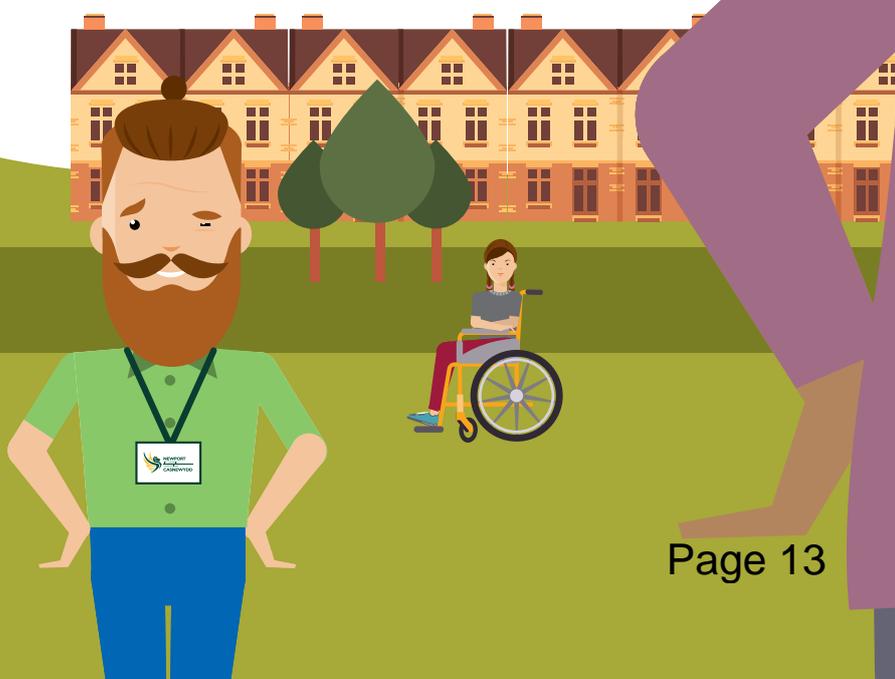
INTRODUCTION

Under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, local authorities in Wales must publish a Participation Strategy that sets out the ways in which local people are encouraged to participate in decision-making by the council.

This Strategy complements the Public Engagement Strategy that was approved and adopted by the Scrutiny Improvement Group in 2015 and updated in 2017. As public participation is a challenging aspect of council business, it is expected that this strategy will evolve and improve over time as the benefit of experience and good practice becomes evident, and new technologies become available.

This strategic plan outlines Newport City Council's priorities for encouraging participation in decision making. The strategy runs for four years, beginning in 2022 and finishing in 2026. In this strategy we have tried to clarify how our participation objectives will make a real difference to how we engage with people in Newport. Within each objective, we have identified clear outcomes we are working towards, and a number of actions that will contribute to us achieving those outcomes. You can also see how we will engage with different groups.

The objectives of the strategy will underpin the service plans in each area of the Council. Performance against service plans will be reviewed as part of the existing governance arrangements, via Scrutiny Committees and Cabinet. Scrutiny of performance takes place at mid-year and end of year.



OUR PARTICIPATION DUTIES AND RELATED POLICIES

We aim to be open and responsive to the needs of citizens and communities. This includes engaging local people in participative processes, by which residents can influence and shape policy and services.

Participation is about sharing decisions with those affected by them, and must be an integral part of our work. It is not about giving groups or individuals whatever they ask for and generally happens within constraints, including welfare and money. Residents should, however, always have a degree of decision-making power so that they feel listened to and understood. We aim to always say what we plan to do as a result of hearing residents views, and why.

Participation supports residents to be 'actively involved with policy makers and service planners from an early stage of policy and service planning and review'.

Participation can include a wide range of different methods and techniques, and may be prompted by the Council, or by residents.

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 places a number of duties on local authorities regarding participation. These are to;

-  **Promote awareness of the functions the Council carries out to local residents, businesses and visitors.**
-  **Share information about how to go about becoming an elected Member, or Councillor, and what the role of Councillor involves.**
-  **Provide greater access to information about decisions that have been made, or that will be made by the Council.**
-  **Provide and promote opportunities for residents to provide feedback to the Council, including comments, complaints and other types of representations.**
-  **Promote awareness of the benefits of using social media to communicate with residents to Councillors.**

Relevant legislation and policy

- o Corporate Plan
- o One Newport Engagement and Participation Strategy
Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 (newport.gov.uk)
Have your say (newport.gov.uk)
- o Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021
Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021
- o WG Equalities and Inclusion Programme
Welsh Government – Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024
Welsh Government (note, Assembly as of report) Diversity in Local Government Survey, Nov 2018
Action Plan: Year 1 - 2020-2021 - Diversity and Inclusion Strategy for Public Appointments in Wales (2020-2023) (gov.wales)
- o UN Rights of the Child Convention (Article 12, respect for the views of the child)
UNCRC_summary-1_1.pdf (unicef.org.uk)
- o Participation Cymru – National Principles for Public Engagement
- o Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 - (sets duties to involve children and young people in decisions which affect them)
- o National Participation Standards in Wales – (with respect to the participation of children and young people)
Engagement - WCVA
- o Involve – Public Participation Research
What is the impact of participation? | involve.org.uk

OUR OBJECTIVES

1. Promote awareness of the functions the Council carries out to local residents, businesses and visitors.

Aim	What we already have in place to build on;	Actions	Measures
<p>This objective is aimed at sharing information about the Council's functions and services so that residents are informed. Sharing information about the Council's functions supports the public to digest and explore information before they may be asked to give their opinion or recommendations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Plan and associated strategies that are publicly available • Council website • Modern.Gov - democracy section of website where residents can access the agendas and minutes of meetings, or look up decisions • Newport Matters newsletter which is sent to all households in Newport and available online • Live streaming of Council meetings that can be viewed by the public. Agendas and minutes can be accessed online. • Council Meetings • Cabinet Meetings • Budget Consultations • Social Media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publishing a Guide to the Democratic Process • Improving the Council website so that it is easier to access information • Ensuring that the council's forward plan supports public engagement by being accessible, timely and user friendly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. of views of meetings inc. live and You Tube • Website traffic data • Satisfaction survey on the website



2.



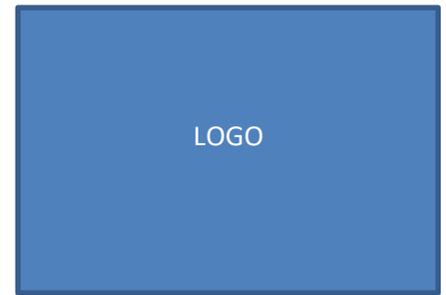
Share information about how to go about becoming an elected Member, or Councillor, and what the role of Councillor involves.

Aim	What we already have in place to build on;	Actions	Measures
<p>This objective is focussed on encouraging people to become Councillors, representing the people in their own community and making decisions on their behalf. It is important that Councillors are like the people who elect them, so that they can represent all the different views in the community and take decisions that benefit everyone.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website; Council and Democracy pages • Become a Councillor page www.newport.gov.uk/en/Council-Democracy/Become-a-councillor/Become-a-councillor.aspx • Full training curriculum to support Members are induction and throughout term • Regular Members Seminars to ensure Members are updated and engaged on developments • Allowances for Members posted on Council website • Strategic Equality Plan and objectives; Leadership, Governance and Involvement 'Newport City Council has strong leadership and clear governance around equality, ensuring robust monitoring processes and regular meaningful stakeholder engagement • Role Descriptions for Members as part of the Constitution • The Council's website includes information about being a Councillor, including links to further information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing hybrid meetings that allow Councillors to attend and participate in Council meetings from any location with an internet connection • Ensuring that information for potential councillors is available and fit for purpose; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equalities and diversity data for elected Members

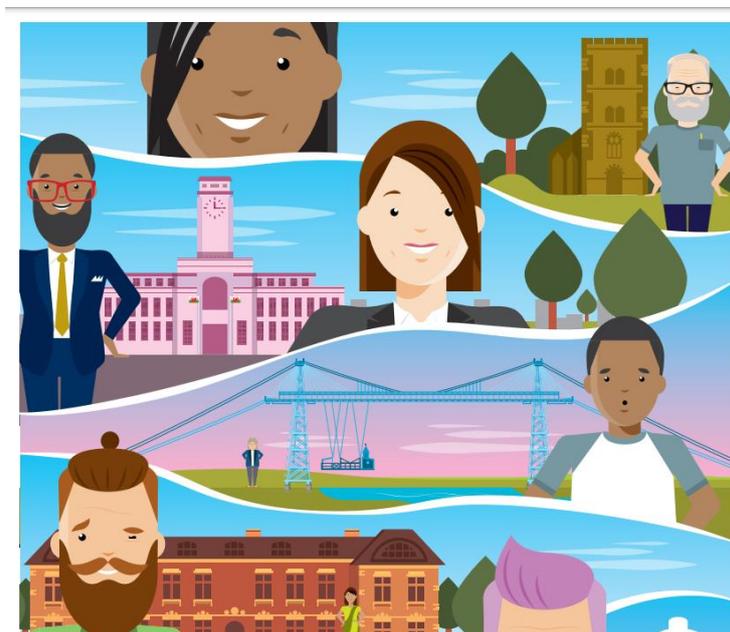


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Newport City Council Participation Strategy 2022-2026



GRAPHICS



Foreword

I am very pleased to present this first Participation Strategy in accordance with the Local Government and Elections Act (Wales) 2021. Newport City Council is committed to the principle of participative decision-making, and supporting residents to be actively involved in democratic processes.

This commitment to engaging with communities is captured in the strategy, and reflected in the actions taken to be open and responsive to the needs of citizens.

We have recently made major investments in participatory approaches through a commitment to participatory budgeting, which will empower citizens and community organisations to support projects that will address the impacts of Covid-19. In recent years we have been at the forefront of using Wi-Fi technology on local buses to widen our engagement reach and have now introduced a similar system in our public buildings.

We have a strong record of working in partnership, often in challenging circumstances, demonstrating the benefits of close collaboration, and focus on achieving long-term improvements in the well-being of our communities.

We are making our democratic processes more transparent and accessible. This includes publishing a guide to the constitution and implementing the facilities needed for Councillors to access Council meetings from any location. This will create greater flexibility in democratic participation and encourage residents to consider representing their communities as elected councillors.

This strategy affirms the Council's dedication to listening to and collaborating with residents, and aims to further empower citizens and communities to have their say on what matters for their local area.

Cllr Jane Mudd Council Leader, Newport City Council

Introduction

Under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, local authorities in Wales must publish a Participation Strategy that sets out the ways in which local people are encouraged to participate in decision-making by the council. This Strategy complements the Public Engagement

Strategy that was approved and adopted by the Scrutiny Improvement Group in 2015 and updated in 2017 . As public participation is a challenging aspect of council business, it is expected that this strategy will evolve and improve over time as the benefit of experience and good practice becomes evident, and new technologies become available.

This strategic plan outlines Newport City Council’s priorities for encouraging participation in decision making. The strategy runs for four years, beginning in 2022 and finishing in 2026. In this strategy we have tried to clarify how our participation objectives will make a real difference to how we engage with people in Newport. Within each objective, we have identified clear outcomes we are working towards, and a number of actions that will contribute to us achieving those outcomes. You can also see how we will engage with different groups.

The objectives of the strategy will underpin the service plans in each area of the Council. Performance against service plans will be reviewed as part of the existing governance arrangements, via Scrutiny Committees and Cabinet. Scrutiny of performance takes place at mid-year and end of year.

Our Participation Duties and Related Policies

We aim to be open and responsive to the needs of citizens and communities. This includes engaging local people in participative processes, by which residents can influence and shape policy and services. Participation is about sharing decisions with those affected by them, and must be an integral part of our work. It is not about giving groups or individuals whatever they ask for and generally happens within constraints, including welfare and money. Residents should, however, always have a degree of decision-making power so that they feel listened to and understood. We aim to always say what we plan to do as a result of hearing residents views, and why.

Participation supports residents to be ‘actively involved with policy makers and service planners from an early stage of policy and service planning and review’. Participation can include a wide range of different methods and techniques, and may be prompted by the Council, or by residents.

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 places a number of duties on local authorities regarding participation. These are to;

-
1. Promote awareness of the functions the Council carries out to local residents, businesses and visitors.
 2. Share information about how to go about becoming an elected Member, or Councillor, and what the role of Councillor involves.
 3. Provide greater access to information about decisions that have been made, or that will be made by the Council.
 4. Provide and promote opportunities for residents to provide feedback to the Council, including comments, complaints and other types of representations.
 5. Promote awareness of the benefits of using social media to communicate with residents to Councillors.

Relevant legislation and policy

- **Corporate Plan**
- **One Newport Engagement and Participation Strategy**
 - [Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 \(newport.gov.uk\)](https://www.newport.gov.uk)
 - [Have your say \(newport.gov.uk\)](https://www.newport.gov.uk)
- **Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021**
 - [Local Government and Elections \(Wales\) Act 2021](https://www.newport.gov.uk)
- **WG Equalities and Inclusion Programme**
 - [Welsh Government – Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024](https://www.welsh.gov.uk)
 - [Welsh Government \(note, Assembly as of report\) Diversity in Local Government Survey, Nov 2018](https://www.welsh.gov.uk)
 - [Action Plan: Year 1 - 2020-2021 - Diversity and Inclusion Strategy for Public Appointments in Wales \(2020-2023\) \(gov.wales\)](https://www.gov.wales)
- **UN Rights of the Child Convention (Article 12, respect for the views of the child)**
 - [UNCRC_summary-1_1.pdf \(unicef.org.uk\)](https://www.unicef.org)
- **Participation Cymru – National Principles for Public Engagement**
- **Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 - (sets duties to involve children and young people in decisions which affect them)**
- National [Participation](https://www.gov.wales) Standards in Wales – (with respect to the participation of children and young people)

- [Engagement - WCVA](#)
- **Involve – Public Participation Research**
 - [What is the impact of participation? | involve.org.uk](#)

Our objectives

No.	Legislative Duty	Aim	What we already have in place to build on;	Actions	Measures
1	Promote awareness of the functions the Council carries out to local residents, businesses and visitors.	This objective is aimed at sharing information about the Council's functions and services so that residents are informed. Sharing information about the Council's functions supports the public to digest and explore information before they may be asked to give their opinion or recommendations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Plan and associated strategies that are publicly available • Council website • Modern.Gov - democracy section of website where residents can access the agendas and minutes of meetings, or look up decisions • Newport Matters newsletter which is sent to all households in Newport and available online • Live streaming of Council meetings that can be viewed by the public. Agendas and minutes can be accessed online. • Council Meetings • Cabinet Meetings • Budget Consultations • Social Media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publishing a Guide to the Democratic Process • Improving the Council website so that it is easier to access information • Ensuring that the council's forward plan supports public engagement by being accessible, timely and user friendly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. of views of meetings inc. live and You Tube • Website traffic data • Satisfaction survey on the website
No.	Legislative Duty	Aim	What we already have in place to build on;	Actions	Measures
2	Share information	This objective is focussed on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website; Council and Democracy pages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing hybrid meetings that allow 	Equalities and diversity data for elected Members

	<p>about how to go about becoming an elected Member, or Councillor, and what the role of Councillor involves.</p>	<p>encouraging people to become Councillors, representing the people in their own community and making decisions on their behalf. It is important that Councillors are like the people who elect them, so that they can represent all the different views in the community and take decisions that benefit everyone.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become a Councillor page https://www.newport.gov.uk/en/Council-Democracy/Become-a-councillor/Become-a-councillor.aspx • Full training curriculum to support Members are induction and throughout term • Regular Members Seminars to ensure Members are updated and engaged on developments • Allowances for Members posted on Council website • Strategic Equality Plan and objectives; Leadership, Governance and Involvement ‘Newport City Council has strong leadership and clear governance around equality, ensuring robust monitoring processes and regular meaningful stakeholder engagement • Role Descriptions for Members as part of the Constitution • The Council’s website includes information about being a Councillor, including links to further information • 	<p>Councillors to attend and participate in Council meetings from any location with an internet connection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that information for potential councillors is available and fit for purpose; 	
No.	Legislative Duty	Aim	What we already have in place to build on;	Actions	Measures

<p>3</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 25</p>	<p>Provide greater access to information about decisions that have been made, or that will be made by the Council.</p>	<p>This objective is about encouraging and enabling everyone affected to be involved, if they so choose.</p> <p>People affected by an issue or change are included in opportunities to engage as an individual or as part of a group or community, with their views both respected and valued.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Modern.Gov - democracy section of website where residents can access the agendas and minutes of meetings, or look up decisions • Consultation and surveys • Newport Matters newsletter which is sent to all households in Newport and available online • One Newport partnership Bulletin provides regular updates to enable transparency, engagement and involvement • The Council uses data to inform proposals, including data from external sources and partners where appropriate. • The Council works closely with partners to share information about decisions and engage with residents more effectively. • The Council works with community groups to ensure that information about decisions is shared, and a range of viewpoints are heard. • The Council uses mechanisms to engage with disadvantaged groups and equalities interests e.g. 50+ Forum, Newport Youth Council, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic forums, disability groups etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to move towards participative approaches to engagement which empower citizens and place decision making in the hands of communities and individuals e.g. participatory budgeting exercises. • Build on the use of technology to increase the reach of engagement activity e.g. using public wi-fi to promote surveys. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. of views of meetings inc. live and You Tube • Participation rates in consultations and surveys • Percentage of people who feel able to influence decisions affecting their local area (National Survey for Wales and local data)
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No.	Legislative Duty	Aim	What we already have in place to build on;	Actions	Measures
4	Provide and promote opportunities for residents to provide feedback to the Council, including petitions, comments, complaints and other types of representations. Confirm arrangements made, or to be made, for the purpose of the council's duty in section 62 of the 2011 Measure	This objective focusses on participation, which is much more than getting people's views on a specific issue. Participation is about encouraging people to take part in community and political activities using different approaches and methods of engagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council routinely engages with citizens on key corporate decisions e.g. the budget and medium term financial plan • The Council has regular mechanisms to engage with the public including: the citizens panel, bus wi-fi survey technology and public building wifi technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Digital forms • Comments, Compliments and Complaints policy • Consultation and surveys • Newport Matters newsletter which is sent to all households in Newport and available online. This includes information about consultations, surveys and how to get in touch with the Council to give feedback. • Modern.Gov - democracy section of website where residents can access the agendas and minutes of meetings, or look up decisions • One Newport partnership facilitates feedback and input from the Citizen's panel, with children and young people and the general public. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Petition scheme; <i>needs to be developed</i> • Regularly reporting on comments received from residents • Developing a better understanding of the demographics of residents who regularly provide feedback, so that any gaps in representation can be identified. • Review and update the Scrutiny Public Engagement Strategy particularly with respect to hybrid meetings. • Progress against the Strategy will be reported through the Council's 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. of comments, compliments and complaints received • Participation rates in consultations and surveys • No. of viewers of online meetings • Monitor equalities and diversity data concerning residents who have provided feedback • Level of participation and engagement in the scrutiny process; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ levels of responses to consultation ○ no. of views of meetings including live and YouTube

	(bringing views of the public to attention of overview and scrutiny committees).		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council works with community groups to ensure that information about decisions is shared, and a range of viewpoints are heard. • Petition Scheme (<i>to be developed</i>) • Scrutiny Public Engagement Strategy 	Annual Self Assessment Report	
No.	Legislative Duty	Aim	What we already have in place to build on;	Actions	Measures
5	Promote awareness of the benefits of using social media to communicate with residents to Councillors.	This objective recognises that Social media has become an important public space, a place where councillors share political information and engage with other councillors, support officers and residents. Social media has the potential to improve democracy by facilitating bigger, freer and more	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Media channels • Welsh Local Government Association - Guidance for New Councillors - 'Improving Digital Citizenship – Research and Best Practice' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member Induction and Training • Member Seminars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % completion of training modules • % attendance at Members Seminars

		<p>open conversations and by allowing representatives to communicate directly with citizens. While social media can be a helpful tool for engagement, alternative methods of communication including are also valid.</p>			
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Partnership Arrangements

One Newport is the city's Public Services Board (PSB) where local public, private and third sector organisations work together to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of the city.

PSBs were established by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 ([Shared Purpose: Shared Future](#)) and work with the sustainable development principle and achievement of the seven well-being goals,

The sustainable development principle takes into account the five ways of working that public bodies need to show that they applied the principle.

Membership includes representatives of private, public and voluntary sector organisations in Newport and the wider region.

One Newport PSB is committed to actively seeking the views and opinions of residents about all policies and decisions made, and about how we can make improvements in the future.

To support the PSB and its partners to take a joined-up approach to engagement and to encourage local communities to take part, a One Newport Engagement and Participation Strategy had been produced.

Involve Newport is the name for a panel of Newport residents who receive regular surveys with the aim to represent the views and opinions of the people within the city. The panel was established by Newport City Council in 2002 and is now used jointly with the council's partners through One Newport.

The aim of the panel is to provide a platform through which residents' views on local services can be accurately gauged.

It also gives us the opportunity to understand why people's views are changing and provide opportunities for more focussed research about specific services.

The panel currently has around 700 members and anyone living in Newport has the opportunity to join, including young people.

Members are sent around four questions during the year and are asked for their opinions and suggestions on current services affecting the city and its residents.

Further information about the PSB Board and how the information collected from surveys is used to support and develop policy and improve services can be found [here](#).

Outcome of Consultation (related to policy)

TO BE ADDED POST-CONSULTATION

Definitions:

These working definitions are informed by **'Practitioners' Manual for Public Engagement' (Participation Cymru, 2012)**.

Engagement: An active and participative process by which people can influence and shape policy and services that includes a wide range of different methods and techniques.

Consultation: A formal process by which policy makers and service providers ask for the views of interested groups and individuals.

Participation: People being actively involved with policy makers and service planners from an early stage of policy and service planning and review.

Further Information

Petition Scheme (to be developed)

Guide to the Democratic Process (to be developed)

Scrutiny Public Engagement Strategy

[Newport City Council – Have Your Say Consultation Page](#)

[Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy](#)

[Contact your Local Councillor](#)

Report



Democratic Services Committee

Part 1

Date: 18th January 2022

Subject Participation Strategy 2022-26

Purpose To consider the key aims of the Participation Strategy and make any comments prior to public consultation.

Author Democratic Services Manager

Ward City wide

Summary Under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 Local Authorities are required to develop and consult on a Participation Strategy that supports residents to become more involved in decision-making and to encourage more diversity in decision-makers.

Democratic Services Committee have supported the development of the Strategy, which is now presented to the Committee as a final draft version, for a decision on moving forward to the consultation stage.

Proposal To note the report, consider the draft Strategy and make a decision concerning the commencement of consultation

Action by Democratic Services Manager

Timetable In line with legislative requirements

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Head of Law and Regulation

Background

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 aims to enable a local democracy which reflects Wales' diversity as a nation, provide local government with new ways to support and serve their communities and reinvigorate local democracy in Wales.

The Act requires that principal councils in Wales encourage local people to participate in local government through the preparation of a public participation strategy.

Local Authorities are required to publish a Participation Strategy by May 2022.

The Act encourages Local Authorities to adopt strategies with arrangements that suit their own circumstances and are designed around the needs of those who use their services. Welsh Government guidance states that Democratic Services Committees should have a central role in developing, implementing and monitoring the different elements of this guidance. The final draft of the strategy presented to Democratic Services Committee incorporates the feedback and input captured during discussion at Committee throughout the preceding year.

Public Participation

For the purpose of the strategy and accompanying report, the following working definition taken from the 'Practitioners' Manual for Public Engagement' (Participation Cymru, 2012) is used;

Participation: People being actively involved with policy makers and service planners from an early stage of policy and service planning and review.

Two linked, but separate, concepts are:

Engagement: An active and participative process by which people can influence and shape policy and services that includes a wide range of different methods and techniques.

Consultation: A formal process by which policy makers and service providers ask for the views of interested groups and individuals.

Different approaches are required for different functions. Participation and engagement are particularly important for democratic arrangements and co-production might become more of a feature in future. Councils already have some experience in participation, engagement, consultation and co-production across their organisations. The expectation is that councils will build on this experience and move towards greater participation.

The Public Participation Strategy

The Act places a duty on principal councils to encourage local citizens to participate in the making of decisions by the council and to prepare and publish a strategy specifying how it proposes to do this.

In consultation with the public and key stakeholders, councils must publish their first public participation strategy as soon as reasonably practicable after 5 May 2022. Councils must also review their strategy, in consultation with the public and key stakeholders, after each ordinary election of Councillors and more often if required. Following a review, Councils may either revise or replace their existing strategy and must consult the public and key stakeholders when they do so.

The Act states that a public participation strategy must, in particular, address:

- (a) ways of promoting awareness among local people of the principal council's functions;
- (b) ways of promoting awareness among local people of how to become a member of the principal council, and what membership entails;

- (c) ways of facilitating access for local people to information about decisions made, or to be made, by the principal council;
- (d) ways of promoting and facilitating processes by which local people may make representations to the principal council about a decision before, and after, it is made;
- (e) arrangements made, or to be made, for the purpose of the council's duty in section 62 of the 2011 Measure (bringing views of the public to attention of overview and scrutiny committees);
- (f) ways of promoting awareness among members of the principal council of the benefits of using social media to communicate with local people.

The benefit of a public participation strategy is that it allows the council, in partnership with local citizens, to take a consistent and holistic approach to public participation while making the best use of limited resources.

The proposed Strategy reflects the existing functions in place that support Participation, whilst also including actions that support further progression and development.

Consultation

Statutory consultation concerning the proposed strategy will be open for 30 days commencing in February 2022. This will include an online consultation, with promotional materials posted in Newport Matters, at the temporary face-to-face service in the Riverfront and on public wi-fi across Newport. Due to risk mitigation concerning coronavirus it is not appropriate to conduct workshops or face-to-face surveys during this time.

Particular focus on engagement with potentially harder to reach groups will be achieved through links to existing groups supported by the Partnerships team.

Financial Summary

There are no direct financial implications associated with the strategy.

Risks

Risk	Impact of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L)	Probability of Risk occurring	What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce it's effect	Who is responsible for dealing with the Risk?
Failure to publish a Participation Strategy by May 2022	H	L	Plan in place to develop and publish strategy Regular updates on progress to Democratic Services Committee	Democratic Services Manager

*Taking account of proposed mitigation measures.

Links to Council Policies and Priorities

Under the Corporate Plan, the Participation Strategy focusses on the principles of the Citizen Role and Tailored Approach across the themes of Thriving Cities and Resilient Communities. In addition, the Strategy also promotes the principles of Enabling and Capacity Building, and Evidence Based under Aspirational People and Modernised Council.



Other Council strategies and plans that link closely to this work are The Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24 and the Newport Well-being Plan 2017-22. The commonality with the Equality Plan is involving local people in the decisions that affect them, considering diverse needs when developing services and helping people to feel connected to the place that they live.

The goals that the Strategy shares with the Newport Well-being Plan relate to Sustainable Development principles under the Wellbeing and Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Specifically, Involving People and developing solutions in partnership with local people and communities, and ensuring they are involved in decisions that affect them. The aim under the Well-being Plan is that people and communities are friendly, confident and empowered to improve their well-being.

Options Available and Considered

1. Approve the draft strategy for public consultation. A summary of the feedback received through consultation will be collated and presented back to Democratic Services in March 2022.
2. Do not approve the draft strategy and make further amendments at this stage. This would mean a delay in the timeline of delivery of the strategy, including consultation, approval and publication dates. This would increase the risk of failing to publish the Strategy by May 2022, particularly due to the pre-election period that will commence in March 2022.

Preferred Option and Why

Option 1. The Committee is asked to note the report, consider the draft policy and approve for consultation. A further report including results of consultation will be presented to the Democratic Services Committee in late March.

Comments of Chief Financial Officer

There are no budgetary implications as a result of these proposals, any costs associated with the consultation process and implementation of the strategy will be met from existing budgets.

Comments of Monitoring Officer

The Council has a statutory duty under section 39 of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 Duty to encourage local people to participate in local government decision making. As part of this overriding duty, there is a specific requirement under sections 40 and 41 of the Act to prepare and publish a Public Engagement and Participation Strategy on or before 5th May 2022, setting out how the Council intends to comply with this duty and to review the strategy at least once during every Council term of office. There is also a further specific requirement for the Council to make and publish a petition scheme and review the scheme from time to time. The legislation and Guidance provides that the Strategy must, in particular address ways of promoting public awareness about the Council's functions, ways of promoting awareness of how to become an elected member and what this entails, ways of facilitating access to information about decision-making, promoting and facilitating public consultation and engagement in decision-making and in the Scrutiny process and ways of promoting awareness among elected members of the benefits of using social media to communicate with their constituents. In accordance with section 41, the Strategy must be subject to public consultation before it can be adopted and published by the Council. The draft Strategy has been prepared to meet the requirements of the legislation and sets out the measures that the Council already has in place to engage with the public and to publish details of decisions and information about the role of elected members. A Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment is also attached to this report, which assesses the impact of these current measures in relation to the Council's equalities and socio-economic duties. The draft Strategy also includes suggested measures for assessing the effectiveness of the public engagement and participation processes and suggested actions for review and improvement. The strategy will need to be a dynamic documents which will need to be reviewed and updated regularly to reflect changes and improvements to the Council's governance arrangements. However, this first strategy will need to be adopted and published prior to May 2022. Democratic Services Committee are therefore, requested to approve the draft Strategy for the purposes of public consultation, with a view to recommending the final strategy to full Council for approval prior to May 2022.

Comments of Head of People and Business Change

This strategy meets the requirement under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 for Local Authorities to develop and consult on an approach to public participation that promotes the involvement of a range of citizens and stakeholders in decision-making and increases the diversity and representativeness of Elected Members. In addition, the strategy seeks to better inform citizens about key decisions and the democratic processes of the Council with a view to strengthening participation and engagement in public life, and providing for more evidence based ways of working.

The strategy notes the recent progress made in empowering citizens in decision making as demonstrated through the Council's major investment in participatory budgeting and innovative use of technology to broaden public engagement.

There are no direct human resources implications in this report, however workforce development will need to support the development of public engagement skillsets.

Local Issues

Not applicable.

Equalities Impact Assessment and the Equalities Act 2010

A fairness and equalities impact assessment has been drafted and will be updated following further consultation.

Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Strategy will have support the development of A More Equal Wales; achieving more diversity in decision-makers and the voices that are heard in decision-making will help to reduce inequalities. The Strategy does not adversely affect any of the other Well-being Goals for Wales.

The Strategy supports The Well-being Plan 2018-23 objective;

3) People and communities are friendly, confident and empowered to improve their well-being

This will be supported through working with residents and communities to develop solutions and empowering the community as part of the decision making process.

The Strategy supports the Equality Plan 2020-2024 objectives;

1. Leadership, Governance and Involvement.
2. Community Cohesion

By supporting residents to be involved in making the decisions that affect them, considering diverse needs when developing services and helping people to feel connected to the place that they live.

The Strategy will also evolve over time, meeting the short-term needs required to support Participation now, but also looking towards the long-term development of better engagement and involvement of residents over time so that it continues to meet the changing needs of local people.

Consultation

Full details of public consultation are outlined in an earlier section of this report. Statutory consultation concerning the proposed strategy will be open for 30 days commencing in February 2022.

Background Papers

- [Corporate Plan 2017-2022](#)
- [The Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024](#)
- [Well-being Plan 2018-2023](#)

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Guide to the model Welsh Local Authority constitution

Produced pursuant to section 45 of the
Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

Draft : 30.12.2021

Browne Jacobson LLP

Introduction

The constitution

The Council is made up of different individuals and bodies, who work together to deliver the Council's functions. The Council's constitution describes the different people and bodies that make up the Council, their functions, and the procedure rules that govern how those bodies work together to deliver services.

It is intended to: -

- enable the Council to make decisions efficiently and effectively;
- support you to participate in decisions that affect you;
- help Councillors to represent their constituents more effectively; and
- enable you to hold the Council to account.

One of the main aims of the constitution is to set out clearly what you can expect from the Council, and what you can do if your expectations are not met.

This guide

This guide is designed to help you to understand how the Council works to deliver services in your area. It provides an overview of the Council's constitution and explains key sections of the constitution in clear and simple language.

It may also be of use to those organisations that work with the Council to deliver services in the Council's area.

The first part of this guide explains why the constitution is important and how it is reviewed and updated.

It aims to answer questions such as: -

- *Why does the Council have a constitution?* p.5
- *How can I get a copy of the constitution?* p.5
- *Who is responsible for keeping the constitution up to date?* p.5

The second part of this guide explains how the Council is structured. It describes the Council's democratic bodies as well as how decisions are made and by whom.

It explains the functions of the Council, its [Executive] [Cabinet] and its committees, and which body of the Council is responsible for particular policies and decisions.

It aims to answer questions such as: -

- *What does my local Councillor do?* p.8
- *What does the Council do?* p.10
- *What happens at Council meetings?* p.11
- *How does the Council make decisions?* p.11
- *How can I find out what the Council decided about an issue that affects me?* p.12
- *What does the [Cabinet] [Executive] do?* p.14
- *How does the [Cabinet] [Executive] make decisions?* p.14
- *What do the Council's committees do?* p.16
- *Who is responsible for governance, audit and risk management?* p.16
- *Who is responsible for upholding local democracy?* p.16
- *What does the licensing committee do?* p.17
- *What does the planning committee do?* p.17
- *How are decisions scrutinised?* p.18
- *Who is responsible for upholding standards and holding Councillors to account for their conduct?* p.18

The third part of this guide explains the roles and responsibilities of elected members and paid officers of the Council. It describes the jobs they do, and how they work together to deliver the Council's functions and priorities. It also explains the codes of conduct that govern councillors' and officers' conduct and the standards of behaviour that you can expect from them.

It aims to answer questions such as: -

- *What does the [Mayor] [Chair] [Presiding Member] do?* p.23
- *[What does the Civic Chair do?]* p.24

- *What does the Leader do?* p.25
- *What happens if the Leader is unable to perform their duties?* p.25
- *My Councillor is a member of the [Cabinet] [Executive], what does this mean?* p.26
- *How are members of the [Cabinet] [Executive] supported?* p.26
- *What does the Chief Executive do?* p.27
- *What responsibilities does the Monitoring Officer have?* p.27
- *Who is responsible for ensuring that the Council's democratic policies and procedures are complied with?* p.27
- *How should Councillors behave?* p.29
- *How should Officers behave?* p.31
- *Are there any special requirements when Councillors or Officers decide planning applications?* p.31
- *How can I complain about the behaviour of a Councillor?* p.32
- *How do I report concerns about the conduct of a paid Officer of the Council?* p.33

The fourth part of this guide provides a summary of the key policies and procedures that govern how the Council carries out certain functions.

It aims to answer questions such as: -

- *Where can I find the Council's key plans and strategies?* p.34
- *How is the Council's policy framework decided?* p.34
- *How does the Council set its budget?* p.35
- *Can decisions be taken that do not comply with the budget or policy framework?* p.35
- *Can money be moved from one budget head to another once the budget has been adopted?* p.36
- *What other policies and procedures govern how the Council manages its budget?* p.36

- *Are there any restrictions on how the Council buys in goods and services?* p.36
- *How does the Council enter into contracts and agreements?* p.37

The final part of this guide explains how you can engage with, and get involved in, your Council and local democracy. It explains how your councillors are elected, how you can contact your councillor, raise questions and speak at meetings, and how you can use petitions to raise issues that are important to you with the Council.

It aims to answer questions such as: -

- *How can I find out when meetings of the Council and its committees and bodies are taking place?* p.38
- *How can I find out what will be discussed at a particular meeting?* p.38
- *How can I find out when an issue I am concerned about will be decided?* p.38
- *Can I ask a committee or body of the Council to look into a particular issue?* p.39
- *Can I attend meetings of the Full Council?* p.39
- *Can I attend other meetings?* p.40
- *Can I speak at a meeting?* p.40
- *Can I ask a question at a meeting?* p.40
- *How can I find out what the Council decided?* p.41
- *Can I view the Council's accounts to understand how my council tax is spent?* p.41

Signposts to the most relevant sections of the constitution and to additional resources available on the Council's website are provided throughout this guide to enable you to read more on a particular topic if you wish.

There is also a detailed index on the last page of this guide to allow you to quickly look up specific topics and issues of interest to you.

If there is anything in this guide which is unclear, or anything is missing, please let us know so we can improve it.

You can get in touch by [DN: insert contact details].

Part 1 The constitution

The constitution governs the way in which the Council, Councillors and officers working at the Council work together to deliver the Council's functions. It ensures that everyone at the Council acts lawfully, fairly and appropriately and that the Council's functions are performed properly and effectively.

 Section 2.1 of the constitution explains the purpose of the constitution.

You can obtain a copy of the constitution from the Council's offices and view it on the Council's website. A copy of the constitution must also be provided to each Councillor when they are elected to the Council.

 You can access the Council's constitution on the Council's website <insert hyperlink>.

 Section 2.8 of the constitution explains where, when and how the constitution must be published.

The Monitoring Officer is responsible for maintaining and reviewing the constitution. The Monitoring Officer is also responsible for deciding how the constitution should be understood and applied. You can read more about the Monitoring Officer's role in Part 4 of this guide.

The Full Council is responsible for agreeing the constitution. Once the constitution has been agreed, it can only be changed by the Full Council. Usually, changes to the constitution are recommended to the Full Council by the Monitoring Officer.

In some circumstances, the Monitoring Officer may make changes to the constitution. For example, where there is a change in the law that affects the constitution, or where a minor change is needed to clarify a provision in the constitution that is unclear.

 Sections 2.4 to 2.6 of the constitution explain how the constitution is agreed and how it can be changed.

The constitution also governs how meetings of the Council and its committees should be conducted. The person chairing a meeting will be responsible for ensuring that the constitution is followed during that meeting.

 Key words and phrases are defined and explained in section 2.2 of the constitution.

Part 2 The Council's democratic structures

The Council is made up of Councillors who are elected every four years to represent people living in different parts of the Council's area (referred to in the constitution as 'electoral divisions', but commonly known as 'wards').

Councillors are responsible for everyone living in the Council's area, but they have a special duty to people living in their ward.



Section 1.2 of the constitution provides an overview of how individual Councillors work together as the Council.

All Councillors meet together regularly as the Full Council. The Full Council is responsible for setting the Council's budget, policy priorities and overall policy framework.

At the start of every year, the Full Council will elect one Councillor as its [Mayor] [Chair] [Presiding Member]. The [Mayor] [Chair] [Presiding Member] is responsible for chairing meetings of the Full Council and ensuring that decisions are taken properly and in accordance with the rules. [The Full Council may also elect a Civic Chair, who is responsible for carrying out certain ceremonial functions.]

You can read more about these roles in Part 3 of this guide.

Individual councillors may also be appointed to the [Cabinet] [Executive] by the Leader. Members of the [Cabinet] [Executive] are responsible for specific policy areas, commonly referred to as portfolios. Where responsibility for a particular work area or function is given to a member of the [Cabinet] [Executive], it is described in the constitution as being delegated to that person.

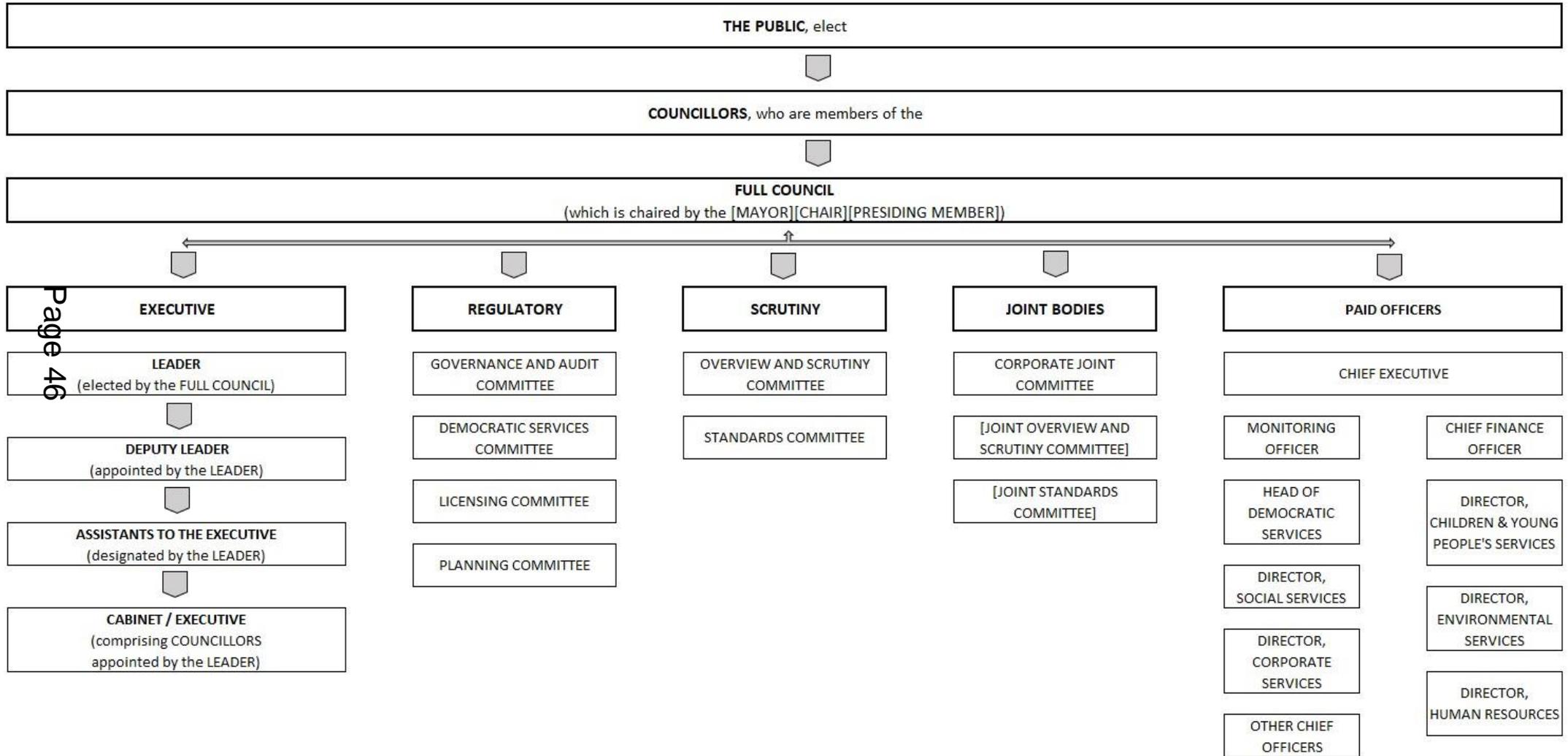
The [Cabinet] [Executive] meets regularly to take collective decisions on those aspects of the Council's work which the [Cabinet] [Executive] is responsible for.

Some of the Council's functions are carried out by committees. Committees are small groups of Councillors that meet together to carry out certain of the Council's regulatory and scrutiny functions.

The Full Council may engage such paid staff (referred to as officers) as it considers necessary. The [Cabinet] [Executive], Full Council and committees may delegate functions to officers. Further information on delegations can be found in the officers' scheme of delegations [[insert hyperlink](#)].

You can read more about all of these structures in the following sections of this Part of the guide.

Structure chart



Councillors

Councillors are elected by the people living in a particular ward to represent them on the Council. However, Councillors are also accountable to the wider community and must act in the best interests of everyone living in the Council's area.

If you want to raise an issue with the Council and are not sure who to contact, you may wish to contact your Councillor to ask for help.

 You can find out who your local Councillor is and their contact details on the Council's website <insert hyperlink>.

All Councillors are members of the Full Council, and they may also be members of one or more of the Council's members bodies (such as the [Cabinet] [Executive] or a committee). Where Councillors act as a member of a particular Council body, they are referred to in the constitution as 'Members'.

 This is explained more fully in the list of definitions in section 2.2.2 of the constitution.

Councillors have certain rights that are set out in the constitution, which enable them to raise issues and make representations on your behalf.

For example, Councillors may: -

- see any information which they need in order to fulfil their role as a member of the Council;
- attend any meeting of the Council, its committees or the [Cabinet] [Executive];
- speak at any meeting of any Council body which they are a member of;
- with the permission of the chair, speak at any meeting of any Council body (even if they are not a member of that body);
- talk to the Leader, or members of the [Cabinet] [Executive] or Council officers about any aspect of Council business; and
- raise complaints.

 Councillors' rights to information are set out in section 3.1.2 of the constitution.

 Councillors' rights to participate in Council proceedings are set out in section 3.3 of the constitution.

Councillors may also raise questions at meetings of the Full Council and the Council's committees and sub-committees, submit motions to the Full Council and call-in decisions.

 The rules surrounding how these rights are exercised are set out in sections 4.19 to 4.21 and 7.29 of the constitution.

 You can read more about the role of elected Councillors and the qualities that make a good Councillor in the role description (in section 24.1 of the constitution) and the person specification (in section 24.21 of the constitution).

Full Council



Section 4 of the constitution governs the Full Council.

What does the Full Council do?

The law requires that certain important decisions are taken by all Councillors meeting together as the Full Council. These are referred to in the constitution as functions of the Full Council. The Council may decide that other non-executive functions should be carried out by the Full Council too. These are referred to in the constitution as local choice functions because the Council has a choice about which person or body should carry them out.



Section 14 of the constitution explains the different types of functions that are carried out by the Council and which part of the Council is responsible for carrying them out.

The Full Council is responsible for, amongst other things: -

- agreeing the constitution, and any changes to the constitution;
- setting the Council's budget;
- developing the Council's single integrated plan (which explains how the Council will deliver its legal duties in areas such as health and social care, children and young people and community safety);
- agreeing key plans and strategies (referred to in the constitution as the 'policy framework');
- reviewing and reporting on the Council's performance;
- electing the Leader and the [Mayor][Chair][Presiding Member] [and the Civic Chair]; and
- appointing the Chief Executive and other Chief Officers.



All of the functions of the Full Council are listed in section 4.6 of the constitution.

Meetings of the Full Council are chaired by the [Mayor][Chair][Presiding Member]. They are responsible for ensuring that meetings are conducted in accordance with the constitution and that decisions are made properly, fairly and lawfully.

You can read more about the role of the [Mayor][Chair][Presiding Member] in Part 3 of this guide.

What happens at meetings of the Full Council?

The Full Council will meet at the start of each financial year to elect Councillors to particular positions on the Council, to appoint Councillors to outside bodies and to establish committees and working groups to carry out the Council's business during the year. This is known as the annual meeting.

 The timing of the annual meeting and the issues to be decided at that meeting are described in the council procedure rules in section 4.10 of the constitution.

At the annual meeting, the Council will also decide how often all Councillors should meet together as the Full Council. These regular meetings of the Full Meetings are known as ordinary meetings.

 Ordinary meetings are carried out in accordance with the council procedure rules in section 4.11 of the constitution.

In some circumstances, it may be necessary for the Full Council to meet before its next scheduled meeting to discuss an issue that is particularly urgent or important. This is known as an extraordinary meeting of the Council.

 The process by which an extraordinary meeting may be called and the issues that may be discussed there are set out in section 4.12 of the constitution.

The Head of Democratic Services is responsible for deciding when and where meetings of the Full Council will be held. They must notify Councillors of this by issuing them with a summons.

The Head of Democratic Services is also responsible for ensuring that the public are told about meetings of the Full Council, by publishing a notice in advance of each meeting. The notice must include certain information such as the date and time of the meeting, where it will be held and how you can access the meeting remotely using video conferencing.

You can read more about participating in meetings of the Council in part 4 of this guide.

 Section 4.13 and 4.14 of the constitution govern meeting arrangements and notice requirements.

How does the Full Council make decisions?

Meetings of the Full Council are carried out in accordance with an agreed set of rules that are designed to ensure that debates are conducted fairly and efficiently, and

that every Councillor has the ability to raise questions and to make comments on the public's behalf.

 The rules of debate are set out in section 4.22 of the constitution.

Decisions are made by Councillors casting votes for or against a particular decision (referred to in the constitution as a motion). Councillors may also propose amendments (changes) to a particular motion, which must then be voted on.

Usually, votes will be conducted by a show of hands, with Councillors asked to raise their hand to indicate whether they vote for or against a particular motion, or whether they wish to abstain (i.e. to vote neither for nor against the motion). [The Council also uses voting software that allows Councillors to cast their votes electronically.]

Decisions will usually require a simple majority of those present voting for a particular motion. In other words, more Councillors must vote for a motion than against it. Where a vote is tied once all Councillors have voted, the [Chair] [Mayor] [Presiding Member] will have a second, casting vote.

Councillors may request a recorded vote on a particular issue. In a recorded vote, the Councillors voting for and against a particular motion, and those abstaining, will be written down and recorded in the minutes of the meeting. Councillors may also request that their individual vote on a particular motion is recorded in the minutes.

 The Council's voting arrangements are set out in section 4.25 of the constitution.

Does every Councillor need to be present before a decision can be taken?

Not every Councillor needs to vote on every decision. In fact, in some circumstances it may not be appropriate for a Councillor to vote on a particular issue (for example, where they have a personal interest in a decision). You can read more about this in part three of this guide.

However, in order for the Council to make a lawful decision a minimum number of Councillors must be present at a meeting. The minimum number of Councillors that must be present at a meeting is referred to in the constitution as the quorum for that meeting.

 Section 4.16 of the constitution sets out the minimum number of Councillors that must be present so the Full Council can make a decision.

Are meetings recorded?

A record of each meeting will be kept in the form of minutes. The minutes will contain a record of the motions that were put to the meeting, and the decisions that were taken. They will also record who was present at the meeting.

The minutes of a meeting of the Full Council will be agreed by the next meeting of the Council and published on the Council's website in accordance with the Council's access to information procedure rules.

If you want to find out what the Council decided about an issue that affects you, you can read the minutes of the meeting where that issue was discussed.



Information on minutes can be found in section 4.26 of the constitution.



The access to information procedure rules can be found in section 15 of the constitution.



Minutes of meetings are available on the Council's website <insert hyperlink>.

The [Cabinet] [Executive]

The [Cabinet] [Executive] is made up of the Leader and individual Councillors appointed to the [Cabinet] [Executive] by the Leader.

 Sections 5.2 and 5.5 of the constitution explain the composition of the [Cabinet] [Executive] and how Councillors are appointed to the [Cabinet] [Executive].

The role of Leader and any role on the [Cabinet] [Executive] may be carried out by two or more Councillors on a job-share basis.

 Section 5.13 of the constitution explains the job sharing arrangements for members of the [Cabinet] [Executive].

What does the [Cabinet] [Executive] do?

The Leader is responsible for carrying out the Council's executive functions. However, in practice the Leader cannot personally carry out every one of these functions, so the Leader delegates responsibility for certain functions to the [Cabinet] [Executive], to members of the [Cabinet] [Executive], to officers of the Council or to another bodies.

Each year, [the Leader decides which functions to delegate to whom] [the Cabinet agrees which functions the Leader will delegate to whom]. This is known as the Council's scheme of delegation.

 Sections 5.6 and 5.10.1 to 5.10.3 of the constitution explain how functions are delegated by the Leader.

 The Council's scheme of delegation can be found in section 14 of the constitution.

Meetings of the [Cabinet] [Executive]

The Leader will decide when the [Cabinet] [Executive] will meet, and for how long. They will also chair meetings of the [Cabinet] [Executive].

The constitution prescribes certain matters that must be considered at every meeting of the [Cabinet] [Executive]. Additionally, the Leader, members of the [Cabinet] [Executive] and certain Chief Officers may require that an item of business is added to the meeting agenda.

Meetings of the [Cabinet] [Executive] are carried out in accordance with the rules of procedure and debate set down in the constitution.

 The rules of procedure and debate of the [Cabinet] [Executive] are set out in sections 5.8 to 5.10 of the constitution.

 Section 5.11 of the constitution governs how meetings of the [Cabinet] [Executive] are conducted.

How does the [Cabinet] [Executive] make decisions?

The [Cabinet] [Executive] is obliged to consult with individual Councillors and with certain committees before it makes a decision on matters that are not urgent.

 These consultation requirements are explained in section 15.14 of the constitution.

The [Cabinet] [Executive] must keep a record of every decision it makes, including every decision made by an individual member of the [Cabinet] [Executive] and the [Cabinet] [Executive]'s committees.

 Section 15.15 of the constitution sets down the requirements for the [Cabinet] [Executive]'s record of decisions.

 You can read the minutes of meetings of the [Cabinet] [Executive] on the Council's website <insert hyperlink>.

Why does the Council have committees and what do they do?

The law requires the Council to establish committees for the purpose of carrying out certain legal functions of the Council.

The Council may also decide to establish other committees and working groups for the purpose of assisting the Council to conduct its business efficiently and effectively.

What do the Council's regulatory committees do?

Governance and Audit Committee

The Governance and Audit Committee advises the Full Council, the [Cabinet] [Executive] and their respective committees and members on matters relating to good governance, financial oversight, risk management and complaints.

The Governance and Audit Committee monitors the effectiveness of the Council's rules and procedures for ensuring that the Council acts lawfully, responsibly and that it is accountable to the public (referred to in the constitution as the Council's governance systems and internal controls). The committee is also responsible for ensuring that the Council's decisions and finances are audited in accordance with agreed procedures.

The Governance and Audit Committee comprises a mixture of Councillors and lay members (who are not members of the Council). Councillors are appointed to the Committee in accordance with the political balance rules (which ensure that the political make-up of the committee reflects the political make-up of the Council).



Section 9.2 of the constitution explains the Council's arrangements for the Governance and Audit Committee.



The scheme of delegation in section 14 of the constitution explains the functions of the Governance and Audit Committee.

Democratic Services Committee

The Democratic Services Committee is responsible for appointing the Head of Democratic Services, keeping under review the provision of resources to the Head of Democratic Services and supporting non-executive members of the Council.

The Democratic Services Committee is made up of Councillors, though there are limits to the number of [Cabinet] [Executive] members who can sit on the Democratic Services Committee. Councillors are appointed to the Committee in accordance with the political balance rules (which ensure that the political make-up of the committee reflects the political make-up of the Council).

 Section 9.3 of the constitution explains the Council's arrangements for the Democratic Services Committee.

 The scheme of delegation in section 14 of the constitution explains the functions of the Democratic Services Committee.

Licensing Committee

The Council is responsible for deciding whether to grant licences for a wide range of different businesses, services and activities in its area. The Council's licensing functions are delegated to the Council's Licensing Committee.

The Council will appoint individual Councillors to the Licensing Committee and agree terms of reference for, and the delegation of powers to, the Licensing Committee to enable it to discharge those functions.

 You can read more about the Council's Licensing Committee in section 9.4 of the constitution.

 You can also read more about the Council's licensing functions on the Council's website <insert hyperlink>.

Planning Committee

The Council is responsible for operating the planning system in its area. This involves preparing local development plans and local planning policies (which govern development in the Council's area) and managing development (by granting or refusing permission for new development).

The Council will appoint individual Councillors to the Planning Committee and agree terms of reference for, and the delegation of powers to, the Planning Committee to enable it to discharge those functions.

 You can read more about the Council's Planning Committee in section 9.4 of the constitution.

 You can also read more about the Council's planning functions on the Council's website <insert hyperlink>.

What do the Council's scrutiny committees do?

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for holding the [Cabinet] [Executive] and other bodies of the Council to account.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee can: -

- review and scrutinise decisions made by the [Cabinet] [Executive] and other parts of the Council;
- make reports and recommendations to the Council or to the [Cabinet] [Executive]; and
- make proposals regarding changes to the Council's policies and procedures.

 The functions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are set out in sections 7.2, 7.4, 7.10 and 7.19 of the constitution.

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee must be told about meetings of other Council bodies. They have special rights to see Council documents.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee may also require any member of the [Cabinet] [Executive] or any senior paid officer of the Council to attend a meeting of the committee to explain a decision that they have taken or their performance.

 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee's rights and powers are described in sections 7.22 to 7.25 of the constitution.

 The rules around membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the conduct of committee meetings and the carrying out of the functions of the committee are set out in section 7 of the constitution.

Standards Committee

The Standards Committee is responsible for promoting high standards of conduct by Councillors, including by advising and training Councillors on the councillor code of conduct and advising the Council on changes to that code.

 The functions of the Standards Committee are set out in sections 8.6 to 8.8 of the constitution.

The Standards Committee is also responsible for investigating alleged breaches of the councillor code of conduct and censuring members who are found to have failed to comply with that code.



The procedure for dealing with allegations made against Councillors is set out in Appendix 3 to Section 19 of the constitution.

The Standards Committee comprises a mixture of Councillors and independent members (who cannot be members or paid officers of the Council or related to members or paid officers of the Council).

Councillors are appointed to the Committee in accordance with the political balance rules (which ensure that the political make-up of the committee reflects the political make-up of the Council).



You can read more about the Standards Committee in section 8 of the constitution.

What are joint committees?

The Council may carry out some of its functions jointly with one or more other local authorities in Wales, and with other public bodies. The Council may decide to do this where, for example, the Council considers that it could better promote the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of people living in its area by coordinating its activities with other local authorities, bodies or people.

The Council can establish a joint committee with other local authorities, bodies or people and delegate decisions and functions to that joint committee. By allowing decisions to be taken by a joint committee, the Council can ensure that decisions can be coordinated between all authorities and bodies represented on the committee.

The [Cabinet] [Executive] may also establish joint arrangements with one or more local authorities in Wales for the purpose of jointly exercising executive functions together with those authorities.



Section 10.3 of the constitution governs the circumstances in which the Council or [Cabinet] [Executive] may enter into joint arrangements with other authorities and bodies.

The Council and the [Cabinet] [Executive] may also delegate or contract out particular functions to another local authority or to another body or organisation.



Sections 10.5 to 10.6 of the constitution explain the Council's delegations and contracting out arrangements.

The [DN: insert name] Corporate Joint Committee

The [DN: insert name] Corporate Joint Committee is a type of joint committee.

However, unlike other joint committees (which are created by Councils deciding to work together), the [DN: insert name] Corporate Joint Committee was created by the Welsh Ministers.

The [DN: insert name] Corporate Joint Committee is responsible for the following functions: -

- [transport;]
- [strategic planning;]
- [economic development;]
- [improving education; and]
- [DN: insert other functions as appropriate.]

The Council must work together with other members of the [DN: insert name] Corporate Joint Committee when it performs these functions.

Corporate joint committees are established through regulations made by the Welsh Ministers. Consequently, many of the rules and standards that apply to corporate joint committees are set down in regulations, rather than in the constitution.

-  You can read more about the [DN: insert name] Corporate Joint Committee arrangements in section 11 of the constitution.
-  You can read the regulations that govern the [DN: insert name] Corporate Joint Committee online <insert hyperlink to legislation.gov.uk>
-  You can read more about statutory joint committees generally in guidance published by the Welsh Government <insert hyperlink>.

Part 3 Roles and responsibilities

What roles do Councillors perform?

In section 24 of the constitution you can find information about the roles that Councillors may perform on the Council.

These include: -

- Leader and Deputy Leader;
- [Mayor] [Chair] [Presiding Member] and [Deputy Mayor] [Vice Chair] [Deputy Presiding Member];
- [Civic Chair and Civic Vice Chair;]
- Member of the [Cabinet] [Executive];
- [Assistant to the Executive];
- Elected Member (Councillor);
- Chair and / or member of the Democratic Services Committee;
- Chair and / or member of the Governance and Audit Committee;
- Chair and / or member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- Chair and / or member of the Standards Committee;
- Chair and / or member of a regulatory committee;
- Leader of the Opposition and Deputy Leader of the Opposition; and
- Member Champion.

In section 12 of the constitution you will find information about the roles played by senior paid officials of the Council, including the Chief Executive, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Finance Officer and the Head of Democratic Services.

This part of the guide provides more information about these important roles.

[Mayor] [Chair] [Presiding Member] and [Deputy Mayor] [Vice Chair] [Deputy Presiding Member]

The [Mayor] [Chair] [Presiding Member] and [Deputy Mayor] [Vice Chair] [Deputy Presiding Member] are elected by the Full Council every year.



The procedures that govern the election of the [Mayor] [Chair] [Presiding Member] and the [Deputy Mayor] [Vice Chair] [Deputy Presiding Member] and their resignation or dismissal are set out in section 4.7.3 of the constitution.

[The [Mayor] [Chair] is responsible for: -

- promoting and upholding the constitution;
- presiding over meetings of the Full Council;
- ensuring that meetings of the Full Council are quorate and conducted in accordance with the Council's procedure rules; and
- ensuring that decisions are taken in accordance with the constitution.

[The [Mayor] [Chair] is also the civil leader of the Council. They are responsible for promoting the interests and reputation of the Council and for carrying out civic, community and ceremonial activities.]

The [Deputy Mayor] [Vice Chair] performs the [Mayor] [Chair]'s functions in their absence.



You can read more about the role and functions of the [Mayor] [Chair] and the [Deputy Mayor] [Vice Chair] in section 4.7.4 of the constitution.]



The role description for the [Mayor] [Chair] can be found in section 24.5 of the constitution.



The role description for the [Deputy Mayor] [Vice Chair] can be found in section 24.6 of the constitution.



The person specification for the [Mayor] [Chair] can be found in section 24.24 of the constitution.

[The Presiding Member is responsible for: -

- promoting and upholding the constitution;
- presiding over meetings of the Full Council;

- ensuring that meetings of the Full Council are quorate and conducted in accordance with the Council’s procedure rules; and
- ensuring that decisions are taken in accordance with the constitution.

The Deputy Presiding Member performs the Presiding Member’s functions in their absence.



You can read more about the role and functions of the Presiding Member and the Deputy Presiding Member in section 4.7.5 of the constitution.



The role description for the Presiding Member can be found in section 24.5 of the constitution.]

[Civic Chair and Civic Vice Chair

The Civic Chair is the civil leader of the Council. They are responsible for promoting the interests and reputation of the Council and for encouraging public involvement in the Council’s activities.

The Civic Chair undertakes civic, community and ceremonial activities on behalf of the Council and is responsible for fostering community identity and pride.

The Civic Vice Chair performs the Civic Chair’s functions in their absence.



You can read more about the role and functions of the Civic Chair and the Civic Vice Chair in section 4.7.6 of the constitution.]

Leader and Deputy Leader

The Leader is elected by the Full Council [every year].

The Deputy Leader is appointed by the Leader to exercise the Leader's functions in their absence.

 The arrangements governing the election of the Leader and the appointment of the Deputy Leader are set out in sections 6.1 to 6.4 of the constitution.

The Leader is responsible for appointing Councillors to the [Cabinet] [Executive] and for [allocating specific policy areas and responsibilities (portfolios) to members of the [Cabinet] [Executive]] [recommending the allocation of specific policy areas and responsibilities (portfolios) to members of the [Cabinet] [Executive] for agreement by the Full Council].

The Leader is also [responsible for preparing] [consulted over the preparation of] a scheme describing which functions are to be carried out by which members of the [Cabinet] [Executive] (this is referred to in the constitution as the [Cabinet] [Executive] scheme of delegation).

 See section 6.5 of the constitution for more information.

The Leader also chairs meetings of the [Cabinet] [Executive].

The Leader will act as the Council member of the [DN: insert name] Corporate Joint Committee and the Council's representative on the [DN: insert name] Public Services Board.

The Leader may appoint other members of the Council to sit on other outside bodies.

 See sections 6.5.6 to 6.5.8 of the constitution for more information.

 The role description for the Leader can be found in section 24.2 of the constitution.

 The role description for the Deputy Leader can be found in section 24.3 of the constitution.

 The person specification for the Leader can be found in section 24.22 of the constitution.

Member of the [Cabinet] [Executive]

Members of the [Cabinet] [Executive] are responsible for: -

- [taking decisions regarding issues that fall within their area of responsibility;]
- playing an active role in [Executive] [Cabinet] meetings and decision making;
- contributing to the development of the Council’s forward work programme and to policies and procedures in their area of responsibility;
- providing political leadership to the Council’s paid officers on matters they are responsible for;
- reporting to the Full Council, the Leader, the [Cabinet] [Executive] and others on the performance of services which they are responsible for; and
- participating in the Council’s scrutiny processes and procedures, including by explaining decisions they have made and the performance of functions within their area to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.



You can read more about members of the [Cabinet] [Executive] in section 5.5 of the constitution.



The role description for members of the [Cabinet] [Executive] can be found in section 24.4 of the constitution.



The person specification for members of the [Cabinet] [Executive] can be found in section 24.23 of the constitution.

Assistant to the Executive

Assistants to the Executive support members of the [Cabinet] [Executive] by taking on certain tasks and responsibilities on their behalf. They may attend meetings, prepare reports, review papers and draft comments for the member they support.

Assistants to the Executive are not members of the [Cabinet] [Executive] and cannot vote at [Cabinet] [Executive] Meetings or [Cabinet] [Executive] Committee Meetings. However, they are entitled to attend and to speak at meetings of the [Cabinet] [Executive] and its committees.



You can read more about Assistants to the Executive in section 5.7 of the constitution.

What roles do paid officers of the Council perform?

The elected members of the Council are supported by paid officers of the Council, who are accountable to the Council and responsible for delivering services to the public in accordance with the policies and procedures agreed by the Full Council, the [Cabinet] [Executive] and their committees and bodies.

The **Chief Executive** has overall corporate and operational responsibility for the work of the Council and for all paid officers of the Council.

 The Chief Executive's role and responsibilities are described in sections 12.1.2 and 12.2 of the constitution.

The **Monitoring Officer** is responsible for ensuring lawfulness and fairness in the Council's decision making, maintaining and upholding the constitution, receiving reports of alleged breaches of the Council's duties and obligations and conducting investigations into such allegations.

 The Monitoring Officer's role and responsibilities are described in section 12.3 of the constitution.

The **Head of Democratic Services** is responsible for advising the Council, its committees and individual Councillors, on the proper discharge of the Council's democratic functions and responsibilities.

 The Head of Democratic Services' role and responsibilities are described in section 12.5 of the constitution.

The **Chief Finance Officer** is responsible for ensuring that the Council makes lawful and financially prudent decisions. They are also responsible for the administration of the Council's financial affairs and providing advice to Councillors on the Council's budgetary and other financial procedures.

 The Chief Finance Officer's role and responsibilities are described in sections 12.4 and 17.2.3 of the constitution.

The Council also employs a number of other Chief Officers, including: -

- Lead Director for Children and Young People's Services
- Director of Social Services
- [Director of Corporate Services]
- [Director of Human Resources]
- [Director of Environmental Services]

Chief Officers are each accountable to the Council for the financial management and administration of those services and activities allocated to them in accordance with the Council's policies.

-  The roles and responsibilities of Chief Officers are described in section 17.2.4 of the constitution.
-  The processes by which officers are recruited, appointed, disciplined and dismissed are set out in section 12.9 of the constitution.

How should Councillors and Officers behave?

Councillors should comply with the Members' Code of Conduct

Councillors are expected to uphold the highest standards of personal and professional conduct. Those standards are described in the Code of Conduct for Members.

The Code of Conduct for Members is intended to help and guide Councillors in maintaining appropriate standards of conduct when serving their community. In turn, it provides reassurance to the public and helps build their trust in, and respect for, their local representatives.

The Code of Conduct for Members is based upon the 7 Principles of Public Life, which were first set out in the 1995 Nolan Report on Standards in Public Life. Three additional principles were added in the local government principles in Wales.

The Code of Conduct for Members is consistent with, and provides for the practical application of, these principles.

➤ **Selflessness**

Members must act solely in the public interest. They must never use their position as members to improperly confer an advantage on themselves or to improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on others.

➤ **Honesty**

Members must declare any private interests relevant to their public duties and take steps to resolve any conflict in a way that protects the public interest.

➤ **Integrity and propriety**

Members must not put themselves in a position where their integrity is called into question by any financial or other obligation to individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their duties. Members must on all occasions avoid the appearance of such behaviour.

➤ **Duty to uphold the law**

Members must act to uphold the law and act on all occasions in accordance with the trust that the public has placed in them.

➤ **Stewardship**

In discharging their duties and responsibilities members must ensure that their authority's resources are used both lawfully and prudently.

➤ **Objectivity in decision-making**

In carrying out their responsibilities including making appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, members must make decisions on merit. Whilst members must have regard to the professional advice of officers and may properly take account of the views of others, including their political groups, it is their responsibility to decide what view to take and, if appropriate, how to vote on any issue.

➤ **Equality and respect**

Members must carry out their duties and responsibilities with due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity for all people, regardless of their gender, race, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, age or religion, and show respect and consideration for others.

➤ **Openness**

Members must be as open as possible about all their actions and those of their authority. They must seek to ensure that disclosure of information is restricted only in accordance with the law.

➤ **Accountability**

Members are accountable to the electorate and the public generally for their actions and for the way they carry out their responsibilities as a member. They must be prepared to submit themselves to such scrutiny as is appropriate to their responsibilities.

➤ **Leadership**

Members must promote and support these principles by leadership and example so as to promote public confidence in their role and in the authority. They must respect the impartiality and integrity of the authority's statutory officers and its other employees.



You can read the Code of Conduct for Members in full in section 19 of the constitution.

Councillors are expected to ensure that they understand their obligations under the Code and act in a way which shows that they are committed to meeting the high standards of conduct that are expected of them. Councillors are provided with

training when they are first appointed, and on a regular basis, to support them to comply with the Code of Conduct for Members.

Special requirements for Councillors who are members of the Council's planning committee

Planning affects people's private and financial interests in land and property and the environment in which communities live, work and play.

The Council's planning committee is responsible for balancing the needs and interests of individuals and the community to make decisions that are open, fair and transparent and decided using sound judgment and for justifiable reasons.

For these reasons, members of the Council's planning committee are expected to abide by an additional Code of Conduct for Members and Officers Dealing with Planning Matters.

The Code of Conduct for Members and Officers Dealing with Planning Matters explains, amongst other things: -

- the role of officers in providing impartial and professional advice to members of the committee;
- the factors that should be taken into account when deciding an application for planning permission and the factors that should not be taken into account;
- the legal duties which members of the committee must have regard to, such as the duty to have regard to the need to ensure that development contributes to the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales and the duty to have regard to the impact of development on the extent to which the Welsh language is used in the Council's area
- the action members should take if they have a personal interest in a matter being determined by the committee (e.g. where an application relates to a property which they own); and
- how applications for development proposed by, or to be carried out by, the Council should be decided.



You can read the Code of Conduct for Members and Officers Dealing with Planning Matters in full in section 20 of the constitution.

Officers should comply with the Officers' Code of Conduct

Paid officers of the Council are responsible for serving the council by providing advice to Councillors, implementing the Council's policies, and delivering services to the local community. In performing their duties, they must act with integrity, honesty, impartiality and objectivity.

The public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from all those who work for the Council. The Code of Conduct for Officers outlines the rules and conditions of service which apply to the Council's employees. It is designed to provide clear guidance to assist them in their day to day work and to allow the public to understand what they can expect when they interact with a Council employee.



You can read the Code of Conduct for Officers in full in section 21 of the constitution.

Officers who support the Council's planning committee are also expected to abide by the Code of Conduct for Members and Officers Dealing with Planning Matters.



You can read the Code of Conduct for Members and Officers Dealing with Planning Matters in full in section 20 of the constitution.

How should Councillors and Officers work together?

Councillors and Officers have different roles, responsibilities and accountabilities, but it is imperative that they work effectively together to perform the Council's functions and to deliver services to residents living in the Council's area.

The Protocol on Member and Officer Relations is designed to clarify the respective roles and responsibilities of Councillors and Officers and to guide them in their dealings with one another. It explains what Councillors and Officers can reasonably expect from one another and how they should work together to achieve their common purpose.

Councillors are entitled to express political views and to support the policies of the party or group to which they belong. Conversely, officers are expected to carry out the Council's business in a politically impartial way and many are restricted from engaging in political activity. The protocol therefore explains how officers can support the policy deliberations by political groupings, while remaining politically neutral.



You can read the Protocol on Member and Officer Relations in full in section 22 of the constitution.

How can I complain about a Councillor?

Section 3.2.2.(g) of the constitution explains how you can submit comments or complaints about the Council's services.

If you wish to complain about a Councillor, then you should contact either the Council's Monitoring Officer or the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

-  The Council's complaints process provides more information about how to complain. It is available on the Council's website <insert hyperlink>.
-  You can find the Monitoring Officer's contact details on the Council's website <insert hyperlink>.
-  You can find out more about how to complain to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales on their website <<https://www.ombudsman.wales/how-to-complain/>>

How can I complain about an officer?

If you wish to complain about a paid officer of the Council, you should write to the officer concerned or their line manager.

Part 4 Policies and procedures

The Council's key plans and strategies (the policy framework)

Where can I find the Council's key plans and strategies?

The Full Council is responsible for setting the Council's key plans and strategies, which together form the Council's policy framework.

-  The plans and strategies which form the Council's policy framework are listed in section 4.2 of the constitution.
-  Individual plans and strategies are published on the Council's website. [DN: you may need to provide additional signposts depending upon how the Council's website is structured and organised]

Additionally, the Council's single integrated plan brings together the Council's plans and strategies for: communities; children and young people; health social care and wellbeing; and community safety.

-  You can read more about the single integrated plan in section 4.3 of the constitution.
-  The Council's single integrated plan is published on the Council's website <insert hyperlink>.

How is the Council's policy framework decided?

The [Cabinet] [Executive] is responsible for consulting with relevant stakeholders, considering any reports or recommendations made by the Council's scrutiny committees and working with the Council's Chief Officers to develop a draft policy framework.

Once the [Cabinet] [Executive] has developed a draft policy framework, it will be considered by a meeting of the Full Council. The Full Council may decide to adopt the policy framework, make changes to it, refer it back to the [Cabinet] [Executive] so that further work can be done on it, or substitute its own policy framework for the draft prepared by the [Cabinet] [Executive].

If the Full Council decides to adopt the policy framework then it shall take effect immediately. If the Full Council amends the policy framework then the Leader has an opportunity to object to the amendments and to reconvene the Full Council to reconsider the policy framework.

Once adopted, the [Cabinet] [Executive], their committees, individual Councillors and the Council's paid officers are bound to act in accordance with the policy framework.

 The process by which the Full Council adopts a policy framework is described in section 16.2 of the constitution.

Budget setting and financial management

How does the Council set its budget?

The Full Council is responsible for agreeing the Council's budget, and for agreeing changes to the Council's budget once it has been formally adopted.

The Council's budget is in two parts: -

- the revenue budget provides for day to day operating costs and expenditure like staff salaries, rent, and the ongoing costs of providing services.
- the capital budget provides for one-off costs like a major road improvement scheme, or the purchase or construction of a new car park.

The [Cabinet] [Executive], in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer, is responsible for developing initial proposals for the Council's budget and consulting over these.

Once this consultation has been completed, the [Cabinet] [Executive] is responsible for preparing a final budget proposal for consideration by the Full Council.

The Full Council may adopt the budget without making any changes, amend the budget, or ask the [Cabinet] [Executive] to reconsider it before adopting it.

 The process by which the Full Council adopts its budget is described in sections 16.3.1 and 17.3 of the constitution.

Decisions outside the budget or policy framework

Can decisions be taken that do not comply with the budget or policy framework?

The Full Council may decide to make changes to the policy framework.

Other bodies and individuals may only take decisions that do not comply with the policy framework in a limited number of exceptional circumstances, which are set out in the constitution. For example, where an urgent decision must be taken to

safeguard the Council's interests and it is not possible to arrange a meeting of the Full Council in time.

However, the Council's overview and scrutiny committee may decide to refer such decisions to the Full Council for further consideration (this is referred to in the constitution as calling-in the decision).

-  The Council's arrangements for urgent decisions which do not comply with the policy framework are set out in section 16.5 of the constitution.
-  Section 16.7 of the constitution describes the limited circumstances in which bodies or individuals other than the Full Council may make changes to the policy framework.
-  The overview and scrutiny committee's powers are described in section 16.8 of the constitution.

Can money be moved from one budget head to another once the budget has been adopted?

During the year the [Cabinet] [Executive] and Chief Officers may need to transfer budgets from one service area to another to reflect changed service needs or priorities in order to deliver the Council's policy framework within the financial limits set by the Council.

-  The mechanism by which the [Cabinet] [Executive] and Chief Officers may move money between budget heads is set out in section 17.3.4 of the constitution.

What other policies and procedures govern how the Council manages its budget?

The Council is bound by a number of different financial rules and procedures that govern how the Council's spending is planned, committed, reviewed and audited.

-  The Council's detailed financial procedure rules are set out in section 17 of the constitution.

Are there any restrictions on how the Council buys in goods and services?

The Council can enter into contracts to purchase goods and services in much the same way as any other person or organisation. However, the Council must comply with the contract procedure rules in the constitution when it does so.

The purpose of the contract procedure rules are to ensure that the Council complies with relevant legal requirements, and secures the most economically advantageous (best value) goods and services for taxpayers.

If you regularly sell goods or services to the Council then you may wish to familiarise with these rules and procedures.



The Council's contract procedure rules are set out in section 18 of the constitution.

How does the Council enter into contracts and agreements?

The rules and procedures that govern how agreements, contracts and deeds are authorised and executed on behalf of the Council are set out in section 13 of the constitution.

Part 5 How can I get involved?

How can I find out when meetings of the Council and its committees and bodies are taking place?

The Council publishes notices of meetings of the Full Council and its committees.

-  You can find out more about notice requirements in sections 3.11, 4.14 and 15.4 of the constitution.
-  The Council publishes notices of meetings, and a programme of upcoming meetings, on its website <insert hyperlink>.

How can I find out what will be discussed at a particular meeting?

The Council will publish agendas for meetings, together with any background papers and reports in advance of the meeting taking place.

Hard copies of agendas and background papers and reports will also be available at the meeting for those members of the public who wish to attend in person.

-  You can find out more the information that is made publicly available in advance of a Council meeting in sections 15.5 and 15.8 of the constitution.
-  The Council publishes meetings agendas and supporting documents and reports on its website <insert hyperlink>.

How can I find out when an issue I am concerned about will be decided?

The Council publishes a forward work programme, which sets out what decisions will be taken by the Full Council, the [Cabinet] [Executive] and what issues the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be considering, and when these matters will be discussed.

-  You can find out more about the Council's forward work programme in sections 3.1.1 and 15.13 of the constitution.
-  The Council publishes its forward work programme on its website <insert hyperlink>.

Can I ask a committee or body of the Council to look into a particular issue?

Yes. You can either ask the chair of a particular body to add an item to the agenda for a future meeting, or attend a meeting and ask that body to look at an issue when it is considering items of future business.

You can also submit petitions to the Council, using the Council's petition scheme. The Council is obliged by law to operate a petition scheme, which sets out: -

- how a petition can be submitted to the Council;
- how and when the Council will acknowledge receipt of a petition;
- the steps the Council will take in response to a petition; and
- how and when the Council will make available its response to a petition to the person who submitted the petition and to the public.



You can read more about submitting a petition to the Council in section 3.2.2.(c) of the constitution.



The Council publishes details of its petition scheme on its website <insert hyperlink>.

Can I attend meetings of the Full Council?

Yes, members of the public can come to meetings of the Full Council so long as they are being held in public.

Meetings of the Full Council are also broadcast live on the Council's website so you can watch them in real time remotely if you wish to do so.

The public must be excluded from meetings when confidential information would otherwise be disclosed. Confidential information means information given to the Council by a Government Department on terms which forbid its public disclosure or information which cannot be publicly disclosed by Court Order.

The Council may also exclude the public from a meeting, or part of a meeting, where exempt information would be disclosed. Exempt information includes information that relates to a particular individual or their financial or business affairs, information that is legally privileged or information relating to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of a crime, or other information specified in the constitution.

If you interrupt a meeting of the Council, then you are likely to be warned by the [Chair] [Mayor] [Presiding Member] about causing a disturbance. If you continue to disturb the meeting, then you may be removed.

-  The rules around excluding the public from meetings are set out in sections 15.10 of the constitution.
-  The Council's obligations to broadcast meetings of the Council are set out in section 4.32 of the constitution.
-  The rules around disturbance by members of the public are set out in section 4.30 of the constitution.

Can I attend other meetings?

Yes, members of the public can come to any meeting which the Council has resolved should be held in public.

-  Your right to attend meetings of the Council's [Cabinet] [Executive], the council's committees and other bodies are described in section 15.3 of the constitution.

Can I speak at a meeting?

Members of the public can speak at any meeting which the Council has resolved should include participation by members of the public.

Can I ask a question at a meeting?

You can ask formal questions of members of the [Cabinet] [Executive] at meetings of the Full Council.

However, you may only ask a question if you have given the Head of Democratic Services notice in writing (including by email) that you wish to raise a question in advance of the meeting taking place.

You may only ask one question, but if you cannot attend the meeting then you may nominate someone to attend the meeting and ask the question on your behalf.

Time for questions is limited, and questions are permitted in the order in which they were notified to the Head of Democratic Services. If time for questions runs out before you are able to ask your question, then you will be provided with a written answer to your question instead.

Representations can also be made in specific circumstances, such as objectors to planning applications at planning committee (see section 20.12 of the constitution).

 You can read more about asking a question in section 4.18 of the constitution.

 Contact information for the Head of Democratic Services are published on the Council's website <insert hyperlink>.

How can I find out what the Council decided?

The Council publishes the agenda, reports and the minutes of meetings once they have been agreed. These papers are available for inspection by the public for a minimum of six years from the date of the meeting. The background papers are available to the public for at least four years.

The Council also has arrangements in place for publishing written records of decisions taken by the [Cabinet] [Executive] and the Council's committees and other bodies.

 You can read about the Council's arrangements for publishing minutes of meetings in section 15.7 of the constitution.

 You can read about the Council's arrangements for publishing a written record of decisions taken by the [Cabinet] [Executive], the Council's committees and individual members of the [Cabinet] [Executive] in section 15.15 of the constitution.

 You can read meeting minutes, reports and agendas on the Council's website <insert hyperlink>.

Can I view the Council's accounts to understand how my council tax is spent?

Yes. The Council is required to publish its accounts and to make them available for inspection by the public. You may raise questions of concerns about the Council's accounts with the Council or with the Council's external auditor.

 You can find out more about how to view and comment on the Council's accounts in sections 3.1.1 and 15.13 of the constitution.

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