

# PART ONE

## SUMMARY AND EXPLANATION

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### **1.1 The Council's Constitution**

The Corby Borough Council has agreed a new constitution which sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. Some of these processes are required by the law, while others are a matter for the Council to choose.

The Constitution is divided into 16 articles which set out the basic rules governing the Council's business. More detailed procedures and codes of practice are provided in separate rules and protocols within this document (Part 5).

The Council intends that all citizens should have access to this document for inspection, both by visiting the Council's main reception points and via the Council's Website. Suggestions for improvement to the contents and/or presentation of this document will be considered by the Council.

### **1.2 How the Council Operates**

The Council is composed of 29 Elected Members elected every four years. Elected Members are democratically accountable to residents in their Ward. The overriding duty of Elected Members is to the whole community, but they have a special duty to their constituents, including those who did not vote for them.

Elected Members have agreed to follow a Code of Conduct to ensure high standards in the way they undertake their duties. The Standards Committee trains and advises them on the Code of Conduct.

All Elected Members meet together as the Council. Meetings of the Council are normally open to the public. Here Elected Members decide the Council's overall policies and set the budget each year.

### **1.3 How Decisions Are Made**

Most day-to-day decisions are made by Officers working within the rules and policies set by the Council. The Council has one main policy committee, which deals with the functions listed in Part 3 of this Constitution. Committees also carry out a number of regulatory functions, including dealing with planning applications and licensing.

Meetings of the Council's committees are open to the public except where personal or confidential matters is being discussed. Agenda and minutes of Council meetings are available for public inspection, both by visiting the Council's main reception points or via the Council's Website.

### **1.4 Overview and Scrutiny**

There is an overview and scrutiny panel which supports the work of the policy committees and the Council as a whole. They allow citizens to have a greater say in Council matters by holding public inquiries into matters of local concern. These can lead to reports and recommendations, which advise the policy committees and the Council as a whole on its policies, budget and service delivery. Overview and scrutiny panels also monitor the decisions of the policy committees. They can 'call in' a decision which has been made by a policy committee but not yet implemented.

This enables them to consider whether the decision is appropriate. They may recommend that the policy committee or full Council reconsider the decision. They may also be consulted by policy committees on forthcoming decisions and the development of policy.

## 1.5 Area Committees or Forums

Article 9 of this Constitution details the advisory forums established by the Council. These include the Rural Area Forum and the Housing Needs Forum. Whilst advisory in nature, these forums have the opportunity to influence policy development. A wide range of stakeholders are involved in these meetings, representing community, voluntary and other interested bodies.

## 1.6 The Council's Staff

The Council has people working for it (called 'officers') to give advice, implement decisions and manage the day-to-day delivery of its services. Some Officers have a specific duty to ensure that the Council acts within the law and uses its resources wisely. A Protocol document governs the relationships between Officers and members of the Council. A copy of this Protocol is included within 'Part 5' of this Constitution.

## 1.7 Citizen's Rights

Citizens have a number of rights in their dealings with the Council. These are set out in more detail in Article 3. Some of these are legal rights, whilst others depend on the Council's own processes.

Where members of the public use specific council services, e.g. as a Council tenant, they have additional rights. These are not covered in this Constitution.

Citizens have the right to:

- vote at local elections if they are registered;
- contact their local Elected Member about any matters of concern to them;
- obtain a copy of the Constitution on payment of a reasonable fee;
- attend meetings of the Council and its Committees, except where, for example, personal or confidential matters are being discussed;
- petition to request a referendum on a Mayoral form of executive;
- participate in the Council's question time and contribute to investigations by the overview and scrutiny panels as detailed in the Constitution;
- complain to the Council (details of how to complain are on the Council's website or available from the One Stop Shop Reception, The Cube, George Street, Corby);
- complain to the Local Government Ombudsman or the Housing Ombudsman if they think the Council has not followed its procedures properly. Details relating to the Ombudsman can be obtained from the Council. However, they should only do this after using the Council's own complaints process;
- complain to the Council's Monitoring Officer if they have evidence which they think shows that an Elected Member has not followed the Council's Code of Conduct. ; and
- inspect the Council's accounts and make their views known to the external auditor.

The Council welcomes participation by its citizens in its work. For further information on your rights as citizens, please contact the Democratic Services Section, or access the Council's website [www.corby.gov.uk](http://www.corby.gov.uk).