

## Section 1

### The Council's Constitution

Wyre Forest District Council has agreed a 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 20 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 at the end of the document or available on our website [www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk](http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk)

Wyre Forest District Council is here to provide local services to the local community and to promote the sustainable economic, social and environmental well-being of our area. By providing a range of balanced customer-focused and cost-effective services and facilities, we aim to meet the needs of local people. We also aim to promote and develop our district to ensure the quality of life and expectations of our community are achieved.

We are committed to meeting the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. With your help and working in partnership with the community we plan to move ahead in a positive way for the benefit of all those who live, work and visit our district.

### Corporate Plan

#### Our Corporate Priorities

The Council's Corporate Plan sets out our strategic direction and priorities for 2014 – 2019.

The Plan sets out the Council's Vision and Values, together with our agreed priorities for improvement, what action we will be taking and how we will measure our success. A copy of the plan can be found on our website <http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/cms/your-council-and-elections/performance.aspx>

We have agreed Priorities which represent what we want to achieve for the District. They are:

- Support you to contribute to a successful local economy.
- Support you to live in clean, green and safe communities.

#### Our Vision

Our Vision is: Wyre Forest – Where people have the opportunity to enjoy a good quality of life and want to live, work, visit and invest.



## **Our Values: We will**

- Be confident and honest in expressing our views
- Work as one team and support each other
- Put our customers first
- Be innovative and flexible in the ways we work
- Invest in giving people the skills to do the job
- Celebrate good performance

## **What's in the Constitution?**

The purpose of this Constitution is to:

1. Enable the Council to provide clear leadership to the community in partnership with citizens, businesses and other organisations.
2. Support the active involvement of citizens in the process of local authority decision making.
3. Help Councillors represent their constituents more effectively.
4. Enable decisions to be taken efficiently and effectively.
5. Create a powerful and effective means of holding decision-makers to public account.
6. Ensure that no one will review or scrutinise a decision in which they were directly involved.
7. Ensure that those responsible for decision making are clearly identifiable to local people and that they explain the reasons for decisions; and provide a means of improving the delivery of services to the community.

## **How the Council Operates**

The Council is composed of 33 Councillors with one-third elected three years out of four. Councillors are democratically accountable to residents of their ward. The overriding duty of Councillors is to the whole community, but they have a special duty to their constituents, including those who did not vote for them.

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



All Councillors meet together as the Council. Meetings of the Council are normally open to the public and are filmed\* for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's website [www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk](http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk). Here Councillors decide the Council's overall policies and set the budget each year. The Council appoints and holds to account the Cabinet and committees and sets the overall budget and policy. It is a focus for debate about the performance of the Administration.

## **How Decisions are made**

### **The Cabinet**

A Cabinet of six Members make collective decisions unless otherwise agreed. The Cabinet usually meets monthly. The meetings are filmed\* for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's website [www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk](http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk).

\*Unless there are no reports in the open session

### **The Role of Cabinet Members**

To assume responsibility for a range of services and functions of the Council specified by The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000.

Through the Cabinet, to contribute to the development and implementation of the Council's policies, budget, strategies and service delivery and to take the lead, as necessary, at Cabinet meetings on items within their area of responsibility.

In working within their areas of responsibility, the Cabinet Member will:

- Act as spokesperson inside and outside the Council and liaise with Directors.
- Ensure that he/she has a clear understanding and knowledge of their areas of responsibility.
- Ensure that appropriate methods of consultation and communication methods are in place.
- Participate in reviews of the services as agreed with the appropriate Scrutiny Committee / Review Panel.
- Attend Scrutiny Committee meetings as and when required.

### **Accountability**

Cabinet Members are accountable to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Council and the local community for their areas of responsibility.

### **The Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is politically balanced and consists of 10 non-Cabinet Members. Committee Members advise on and influence



policy development. Items to be considered include: policy papers, plans, programmes, specific issues, routine performance monitoring (i.e. matters which are necessary to develop policies and plans and secure cost-effective services).

### **Advisory Only**

Recommendations are made to the Cabinet or Council as appropriate. The Committees have no decision-making powers and meet in public subject to the Access to Information rules.

### **The Council's Employees**

The Council has people working for it to give advice, implement decisions and manage the day-to-day delivery of its services. Some employees have a specific duty to ensure that the Council acts within the law and uses its resources wisely. A Code of Practice governs the relationships between employees and members of the Council. (See Section 16 of the Constitution – A Protocol for Member / Officer Relations).

### **Citizens' Rights**

Citizens have a number of rights in their dealings with the Council. These are set out in more detail in Article 3 of Section 2 of the constitution. Some of these are legal rights, whilst others depend on the Council's own processes. The local Citizens' Advice Bureau can advise on individuals' legal rights.

#### **Citizens have the Right To:**

- Vote at local elections if they are registered.
- Contact their local Councillor about any matters of concern to them.
- Obtain a copy of the Constitution.
- 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.
- Find out, from the Cabinet's Forward Plan, what major decisions are to be discussed by the Cabinet or decided by the Cabinet or officers.
- Attend meetings of the Cabinet where key decisions are being discussed or decided.
- See reports and background papers, and any record of decisions made by the Council and Cabinet unless the papers are exempt.
- Complain to the Council about poor service or facilities.
- Complain to the Local Government Ombudsman if they think the Council has not followed its procedures properly. However, they should only do this after using the Council's own complaints process.
- Complain to the Monitoring Officer if they have evidence which they think shows that a Councillor has not followed the Council's Code of Conduct; and



- Inspect the Council's accounts and make their views known to the external auditor.
- Participate at Cabinet/Council meetings where applicable.

The Council welcomes participation by its citizens in its work. For further information on your rights as a citizen, or if you wish to use the Council's Complaints Procedure please contact Customer Services on 01562 732928, or visit the website [www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk](http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk).

The following meetings are are filmed\* for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's website [www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk](http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk):

- Council
- Cabinet
- Planning Committee
- Licensing & Environmental Committee

\* Unless there are no reports in the open session.

Housing services are now run by a separate company. Please contact:

The Community Housing Group  
3 Foley Grove  
Foley Business Park  
Kidderminster  
DY11 7PT

[www.communityhg.com](http://www.communityhg.com)

Telephone: 01562 733000  
Fax: 01562 733072  
Email: [information@communityhg.com](mailto:information@communityhg.com)

