

## **Part 2 - Articles of the Constitution**

### **Article 2: Members of the Council**

# Article 2 – Members of the Council

## DEVELOPING ROLES FOR MEMBERS

*The role of the Member is enhanced by the political structures introduced by the Local Government Act 2000. Members' representational roles should become stronger through the development of policy formulation processes feeding into the full Council, Scrutiny and the Executive. Individual Members may also have a policy and scrutiny role, offering important opportunities both to assist the policy development process and also to conduct in-depth inquiries into specific issues of concern. Finally, the role of the council meeting itself will develop, giving additional scope for Members to adopt community leadership roles. Some elements of these roles are covered here. Others appear in later articles.*

## CONTENTS OF THE ARTICLE

This Article sets out the composition of the Council, eligibility to stand for election as a Member of the Council (councillor) and the form of election to be used.

The Article also contains a statement of the roles and functions of Members of the Council. This reinforces the fact that all Members, whatever their formal position in the Council and party political system, share common roles and responsibilities.

The Article also deals with the rights and duties of Members, especially as they affect access to land, buildings, documents and information and any confidentiality requirements surrounding the latter.

### 2.1 Composition and eligibility

- (a) **Composition:** The Council will comprise 40 Members, otherwise called Members. All Members will be elected by the voters of each ward in accordance with a scheme drawn up by the Local Government Commission and approved by the Secretary of State.
- (b) **Eligibility:** Only registered voters of the District, or those living or working there, will be eligible to hold the office of Member.

### 2.2 Election and terms of Members

**Election and terms:** The regular election of Members will be held on the first Thursday in May in a four yearly cycle. The terms of office of Members will start on the fourth day after being elected and will finish on the fourth day after the date of the next regular election.

## 2.3 Roles and functions of all Members

- (a) **Key roles.** All Members will:
- (i) collectively be the ultimate policy-makers and carry out a number of strategic and corporate management functions;
  - (ii) represent their communities and bring their views into the Council's decision-making process, ie become the advocate of and for their communities;
  - (iii) deal with individual casework and act as an advocate for constituents in resolving particular concerns or grievances;
  - (iv) balance different interests within their ward and represent the ward as a whole; and balance the interests of other wards against their own to represent the interests of the District as a whole;
  - (v) contribute to the good governance of the area and actively encourage community participation and citizen involvement in decision making;
  - (vi) be involved in decision-making;
  - (vii) be available to represent the Council on other bodies; and
  - (viii) maintain the highest standards of conduct and ethics.
- (b) **Rights and duties**
- (i) Members will have such rights of access to such documents, information, land and buildings and resources of the Council as are necessary for the proper discharge of their functions and in accordance with the law.
  - (ii) Members will not make public information which is confidential or exempt without the consent of the Council or divulge information given in confidence to anyone other than a Member or officer entitled to know it.
  - (iii) For these purposes, "confidential" and "exempt" information are defined in the Access to Information Rules in Part 4 of this Constitution.
  - (iv) Members will develop and maintain a working knowledge of the authority's services and policies and take advantage of appropriate training and development opportunities to enable them to fulfil their role.

#### 2.4 **Conduct**

Members will at all times observe the Members' Code of Conduct and the Protocol on Member / Officer Relations set out in Part 5 of this Constitution.

#### 2.5 **Allowances**

Members will be entitled to receive allowances in accordance with the Scheme of Members' Allowances set out in Part 6 of this Constitution.