

Citizens and the Council

1.1 Barnsley Council consists of 63 councillors. These councillors are elected by the citizens of the Borough. There are three Councillors for each of the 'wards' or local electoral areas.

1.2 There are currently about 170,000 people in the Borough who can vote in our Council elections. Voting is very important. It provides all our citizens the chance to govern themselves. It is the way in which a free people in a free society can help decide what they want to happen for themselves, their families and their communities.

1.3 Barnsley's citizens can:

- (a) Decide the membership of the Council by voting at the local government elections for councillors to represent their 'Wards' or electoral areas;
- (b) Raise any concerns that they have with their elected member or suggest to them issues which should be scrutinised by the Council's Scrutiny Commissions;
- (c) Submit their views as 'evidence' to the Scrutiny Commissions;
- (d) Ask questions at the Area Forum meetings;
- (e) Submit questions to the Council;
- (f) Submit petitions to the Council on issues to do with the Council. (These petitions should be submitted to the Chief Executive at the Town Hall Barnsley in line with the Council's Standing Orders. (NB citizens also have the right to periodically call for a referendum on whether or not we should have an Elected Mayor, in line with the provisions contained in the Local Government Act 2000);
- (g) Attend meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Regulatory Boards, Scrutiny Commissions and Area Forums, except where confidential or exempt information is likely to be disclosed, and the respective meeting is therefore held in private;
- (h) Have access to the Forward Plan to find out what key decisions will be taken by the Cabinet and when;
- (i) Take part in consultation exercises, such as the 'Citizens Panel' and the 'Area Conferences' to help determine the priorities for local areas;
- (j) Look at reports, background papers and any other records of decisions made by the Council, Cabinet and other formal meetings of the Authority, where these are available for public inspection;
- (k) Make representations on specific planning applications that are going to be considered by our 'Planning Regulatory Board';

- (l) Complain about the Council services which they receive. They can do this either by (i) Complaining to the Council itself under our own internal complaints procedure, (ii) The Local Government Ombudsman after using the Council's own complaints procedure, or (iii) The Standards Board for England after an alleged breach of the Councillors code of conduct.

1.4 But as a citizen you also have responsibilities. At the very minimum it is reasonable to expect people to behave in a civil manner when dealing with Councillors or Council staff. In particular, violent, abusive or threatening behaviour to Councillors or Council staff is simply not acceptable – and neither is willing damage any Council property, or the property of Councillors or Council staff.

1.5 But the Council believes that citizenship should go way beyond this. Barnsley Council believes that Barnsley's citizens should be actively concerned about the future of their communities. As a Council, we can only go so far by ourselves. We need to work with Barnsley's people to help build a Borough we can all be proud of.