

PART 1

SUMMARY AND EXPLANATION

THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council is required, under Section 2 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, to prepare and keep up to date a Constitution. The Act places a statutory duty on all councils to include within the Constitution the following:

- A copy of the council's Standing Orders
- A copy of the Northern Ireland Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors
- Such information as the Department may direct
- Such other information (if any) as the council considers appropriate

This Constitution sets out how the council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures the council follows to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people.

The Constitution is divided into 13 Articles and these set out the basic rules governing the council's business. More detailed procedures and codes of practice are set out at Parts 3-7 of the Constitution.

In the event of a conflict in any respect between the articles and the annexes to the Constitution, a council shall have regard to the provisions set out in the articles.

What's in the Constitution?

Article 1 sets out the powers of the Council and the purpose of the Constitution. Articles 2 to 13 explain how the key parts of the Council operate and the rights of our citizens.

These Articles are:

Members of the Council (Article 2) Citizens and
the Council (Article 3) The Council (Article 4)
Chairing the Council (Article 5) Decision-making
Structures (Article 6)
Regulatory and other Committees (Article 7) Joint
Arrangements (Article 8)
Officers (Article 9)
Procedures for Decision-Making (Article 10) Finance, Contracts
and Legal Matters (Article 11) Review and Revision of the
Constitution (Article 12)
Suspension, Interpretation and Publication of the Constitution (Article 13)

Our Mission, Vision and Values

Our council has a population of over 200,000 and it is the second largest council area in Northern Ireland covering an area of 554 square miles. It is strategically positioned on the axis of the main East West and North South economic corridors and is supported by high quality road and rail links to both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Following Local Government Reform in Northern Ireland, our council formally assumed its full powers and statutory responsibilities on 1 April 2015. Our new council is made up of the former council areas of Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon.

As a council our aim is to:

- Prosper the Place
- Serve the People
- Strengthen our Position

We have published our second Corporate Plan 2018-2023 with the focus on 'creating a healthy, happy and connected community, a vibrant and sustainable economy and appealing places for living, working and learning'.

How the Council Operates

The council is made up of 41 members who are elected every four years, representing seven electoral districts and the current members will serve until May 2023. The council is led by the Lord Mayor. The duty of members is to the whole community with specific responsibility for constituents from their ward.

Council meetings are open to the public and press and full council will be audio recorded. In cases where confidential matters are being discussed, members of the public and the press can be excluded. Full council is chaired by the Lord Mayor and it is here that decisions are taken on the council's overall strategies and policies.

All members have to agree to follow the Northern Ireland Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors. The Code of Conduct is set out in Part 5 of the Constitution.

How Decisions are Made

The full council, which is a meeting of the 41 members, is held every month. The council operates a traditional committee system and has six Standing Committees which meet on a monthly basis (with the exception of the Performance and Audit Committee which meets quarterly). The Standing Committees are:

Governance, Resources and Strategy
Planning and Regulatory Services
Economic Development and Regeneration
Environmental Services
Community and Wellbeing
Performance and Audit

Normally these committees make recommendations which must be approved by full council before any actions they are recommending can be put in place; however the Planning and Regulatory Services Committee has delegated authority in matters relating to planning applications.

Council Employees

Council employees, "Officers", give advice to members, implement decisions and manage the day to day delivery of its services. All officers must ensure that they act within the law when carrying out the council's work. The Local Government Employee and Councillor Working Relationship Protocol is set out at Part 5 of this Constitution and governs the relationships between employees and members.

Citizens' Rights

Citizens have a number of rights in their dealings with the council and in particular in terms of participation, rights to information and complaints. These are set out in more detail in Article 3 and include the right to:

- Vote at local elections if they are registered.
- Contact their local members about matters of concern to them.
- Obtain a copy of the Constitution or view the Constitution which is available on the council's website.
- Attend all meetings of the council and its committees subject to confidential restrictions on business.
- See reports, background papers and records of decisions made by the council and its committees.
- Complain to the council about service delivery under the council's own complaint procedures.
- Complain to the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Complaints if they think the council has not followed its procedures properly and the internal complaints procedure has been exhausted. However, they should do this only after exhausting the council's own complaints process.
- Exercise their rights under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 to obtain information held by the Council.
- Inspect the council's accounts and make their views known to the external auditor during a statutory period.

The Council always welcomes participation by citizens in our work.