



Bristol City Council – Constitution

Summary

1) What is the Constitution

The purpose of the Constitution is to set out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures that are followed to ensure that decisions are taken efficiently and transparently, and that those who make the decisions are accountable to local people. Some of these procedures are legal requirements while others are how the Council has chosen to conduct its business.

This part of the Constitution is a guide to the basic principles of how the Council works and what decisions can be made and by whom. It is a summary and does not seek to be comprehensive. You will need to look at separate parts of the Constitution for full details of decision-making procedures.

All elected members and officers of Bristol City Council are governed by this Constitution.

2) How the Council works

From 6 May 2024, the Council operates the Committee Model of governance and is led by 70 councillors, one of whom is appointed by the Council as the Leader of the Council.

Full Council

Full Council comprises of 70 Councillors, each of whom is elected for a 4 year term and who represent the 34 wards of the City. The overriding duty of Councillors is to the whole community, but they have a special responsibility to the constituents of their ward.

All Councillors meet together as the Full Council. These meetings are open to the public and the press and are also broadcast live on the Council's [webcast facility](#)

The Full Council sets the broad Policy and Budget Framework within which the Council and its committees operates. The Full Council is chaired by the Lord Mayor of Bristol. This role is a ceremonial and civic one. The Lord Mayor is a councillor and is chosen and appointed for a one-year term by the Full Council at its annual Council meeting in May.

Conduct and Behaviour

The 70 Councillors have agreed to follow the Member Code of Conduct to ensure high standards in the way they undertake their duties. Compliance with the Code of Conduct is overseen by the Value and Ethics Sub-committee. This code of conduct is included in Part 5 of this constitution.

3) How decisions are made

Decisions are taken either by Full Council, Policy Committees, Regulatory Committees, or officers, according to rules set out in this Constitution.

Councillors are personally responsible for taking major decisions about many aspects of what the Council does. Councillors will take these decisions collectively in Policy Committees and Regulatory Committees, or delegate decisions to officers. Certain types of decision have also been delegated by Full Council to Area Committees.

Certain business considered by Policy Committees is defined as a 'Key Decision'. These key decisions are included on the Forward Plans for each of the Policy Committees which is a document that is published every month with details of the decisions to be taken by Policy Committees over the coming months. The Constitution sets out a specific definition of what are key decisions. In summary these are decisions where the Council will incur significant expenditure/savings or which have a significant impact on communities in two or more wards in the City.

4) Council Staff

The Council employs officers to give professional advice to Full Council, Committees and Councillors, to implement decisions taken and to manage the day to delivery of services. The Head of Paid Service is a statutory role that every Council must have. This person has responsibility for managing all Council staff and decides how Full Council, Committees and Councillors should be supported by staff. There are other statutory posts including an officer who has responsibility for ensuring that the Council takes sound financial decisions (Service Director, Finance) and an officer who is responsible for ensuring all decisions taken by the Council are lawful (Service Director, Legal and Democratic Services). There are also statutory officers with responsibility for Children's Services and for the Council's Adult Social Services functions.

5) Citizens' Rights

Citizens of Bristol have a number of rights in dealings with the Council.

A list of some of the other rights that citizens have is set out below which is in addition to any rights for example as a parent of a school student or a tenant of the Council which are beyond the scope of this Constitution.

Citizens have the right to:

- (a) Register and vote at elections
- (b) Contact their local Councillor about issues of concern within their ward
- (c) View the Constitution which is available on the Council website
- (d) Attend Council and other committee meetings
- (e) Attend Area Committees within their area to hear from and speak to their local councillors about local issues in their wards.
- (f) View the Forward Plan to see future decisions
- (g) View the agenda and papers for forthcoming meetings on the Council's website
- (h) Use the Council's complaints procedure if they are dissatisfied with a service after which if still dissatisfied they can complain to the Local Government Ombudsman
- (i) Contact the Monitoring Officer if they have a concern about the conduct of a Councillor under the Code of Conduct
- (j) Inspect the Council's Accounts and make their views known to the External Auditor

6) Structure of the Constitution

The Constitution is split into 'Parts' to help readers find relevant information. This introduction is Part 1.

Part 2 of the Constitution sets out Articles 1 – 17 which describe the basic rules governing the Council's business.

Part 3 describes how functions and responsibilities are allocated between the Full Council and the Policy Committees.

Part 4 sets out the various rules of procedure that govern how the Council makes decisions.

Part 5 incorporates a number of codes and protocols, including the Member Code of Conduct.

Part 6 contains the Member's Scheme of Allowances.