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## **Chapter 1**

### **INTRODUCTION, SUMMARY AND EXPLANATION**

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION, SUMMARY AND EXPLANATION

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1. This document is the Milton Keynes City Council's Constitution. It sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made, where to find information about the Council and the procedures which are followed to ensure that the Council's decision-making is efficient, transparent and accountable to local people.

#### **Purpose of the Constitution**

2. This is a document to help residents, businesses, partners, stakeholders, councillors and officers understand how the Council works.
3. If you have any queries about anything in this Constitution, please contact:  
Peter Brown (Head of Democratic Services)  
Tel: 01908 253671  
Email: [peter.brown@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:peter.brown@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

#### **The Council**

4. Milton Keynes City Council has 57 elected Councillors. Each Councillor represents the residents in their Ward. The overriding duty of councillors is to the whole community, but they have a special duty to represent all constituents in their Ward, including those who did not vote for them.
5. There are 19 Wards in the Council's area. Each Ward is represented by three councillors. Councillors are elected for a four-year term. A third of the councillors are elected every year for 3 years, with no elections in the fourth year.
6. Find out which [Ward](#) you are in and who your councillors are. [See a list of all councillors with their contact details](#)
7. View details of the [political composition](#) of the Council.

#### **Councillors**

8. Councillors are directly accountable to citizens for the running of the Council and councillors must make decisions in the best interests of the Borough as a whole. They are involved in decision making in the Council. Chapter 2 of the Constitution gives details of how councillors make decisions at the Council. Councillors can also represent the Council on external bodies.
9. Councillors have to observe a Code of Conduct to ensure high standards in the way they undertake their duties. The Standards Committee trains and advises councillors on the Code of Conduct.
10. Councillors also have to register and declare certain interests. You can access the Interests disclosed by individual councillors by clicking on the 'Members Interests' tab under the listing for each [councillor](#).

## How Decisions are Made

11. All councillors meet together a number of times each year as the Full Council. Full Council appoints a Mayor (who is chairman of the Full Council Meeting, performs the Council's civic role and represents the Council in the community) and a Deputy Mayor.
12. The Council operates an "executive" form of governance. This means that the Full Council appoints a Leader of the Council. The Leader then appoints up to 9 other councillors who, together with the Leader, form the Cabinet. The Cabinet is the part of the Council which is responsible for most of the day to day decisions.
13. Each of the councillors on the Cabinet (Cabinet members) is responsible for a particular area of the Council's activities (called "portfolios"). Cabinet members are also called Portfolio Holders current Cabinet portfolios can be found here [Cabinet portfolios](#). Details of how the Cabinet operates are available at the following link: [Cabinet](#).
14. The Full Council also appoints a number of committees to deal with different aspects of the Council's functions, for example, planning and licensing. There are also Scrutiny Committees which help the Cabinet formulate policy and hold the Cabinet to account. See details of the Council's Committees here: [Committees](#)
15. A diagram showing the Council's decision making and scrutiny arrangements involving councillors can be seen as Part 2 of the Constitution.

## The Council's Employees

16. Councillors are supported by the Council's staff/employees (called "Officers") to give advice, implement decisions and manage the day to day delivery of its services. Some officers have a specific duty to ensure that the Council acts within the law and uses its resources wisely.
17. The Protocol for Councillor / Officer Relations guides councillors and officers in their relations with one another to ensure the smooth running of the Council. Officers also have to comply with the Code of Conduct for Officers.
18. The most senior officer is the Chief Executive. Other senior managers lead different parts of the Council's services. Some officers have specific duties to ensure that the Council operates within the law and uses resources wisely. These are the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer (Chief Finance Officer).
19. The functions and responsibilities which the Council has given to the senior officers are listed in the Officer Scheme of Delegation and in the list of Statutory Officers and Proper Officer Functions.
20. The Council's Corporate Leadership Team comprises the following Officers who shall be regarded as "Chief Officers":
  - 20.1. Chief Executive
  - 20.2. Deputy Chief Executive

- 20.3. Director Adult Services
  - 20.4. Director Children's Services
  - 20.5. Director Environment and Property
  - 20.6. Director Finance and Resources (Section 151 Officer/Chief Financial Officer)
  - 20.7. Director Planning and Placemaking
  - 20.8. Director Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)
  - 20.9. Director Customer and Community Services
  - 20.10. Director Public Health
21. The recruitment, selection, discipline and dismissal of officers must be done in accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules.

### **Civic Honours**

22. The Council has adopted a protocol for the award of Civic honours (minute ref 2023/24 CL70).

### **Aldermen and Alderwomen**

23. The Council may confer the title of Honorary Alderman and Alderwoman on former councillors who, in the opinion of the Council, have both rendered eminent service to the council and completed 15 years' service with either Milton Keynes City Council or former constituent councils.
24. The Council may invite Honorary Aldermen and Alderwomen to attend Civic Ceremonies, including meetings of the Council. Should an Honorary Alderman and Alderwoman attend a meeting of the Council, they may ask a question, or speak during a debate in accordance with the rules for public questions or public speaking as set out in Council Procedure Rules, specifically Council Procedure Rule 9.
25. Should an Honorary Alderman and Alderwoman be elected to the Council, the use of the title must cease while serving as a councillor.

### **Freedom of the City**

26. The Council may award the Freedom of the City to individuals or organisations in recognition of their exceptional service to the City or because they are a person of distinction.
27. The award of Freedom of the City does not confer any special privileges or rights upon the appointee to speak or vote at Council meetings, beyond the rights and privileges already afforded to the public.

## **Rights of Residents and Members of the Public**

28. Everyone has an equal right to access high quality Council services. Members of the public have rights to:
  - 28.1. vote at local elections if they are registered;
  - 28.2. contact their local councillor about any matters of concern to them;
  - 28.3. obtain a copy of the Constitution;
  - 28.4. attend meetings of the Council, its Committees and the Cabinet, except where, for example, exempt / confidential matters are being discussed;
  - 28.5. petition to request a referendum on a Mayoral form of executive;
  - 28.6. submit a petition, ask questions, or contribute to the debates, at meetings of the Council, ask questions, or contribute to the debates, at meetings of Cabinet, the Council's committees and sub-committees and contribute to the debates, at meetings of the scrutiny committees;
  - 28.7. find out from the Cabinet's Forward Plan what major decisions are to be discussed by the Cabinet or decided by the Cabinet, Cabinet members, or officers and when;
  - 28.8. see reports and background papers, and any record of decisions made by the Council, the Cabinet, individual Cabinet members, or officers when taking 'Key Decisions';
  - 28.9. inspect copies of the Agendas for meetings of the Council, the Cabinet, scrutiny committees or any other committees open to the public;
  - 28.10. on payment of a reasonable fee, buy or receive copies of Agendas for meetings of the Council, the Cabinet, scrutiny committees or other public committees;
  - 28.11. contact local Councillors about any matters of concern – [Councillor details](#);
  - 28.12. contribute to investigations by the scrutiny committees;
  - 28.13. complain where there are problems with Council services – [How to Make a Complaint](#); and
  - 28.14. complain to the Commission for Local Administration (the Ombudsman) if the Council has not followed its procedures properly – access the Ombudsman Complaint Form can be accessed at [Ombudsman](#).

28.15. Local Government Ombudsman,  
PO Box 4771,  
Coventry,  
CV4 0EH,  
Tel: 0300 061 0614 or 0845 602 1983  
Text 'call back' to 0762 481 1595  
Website: [www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk)

28.16. complain to the Council if you believe there is evidence that a councillor has not followed the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors and Co-opted Councillors - [Complaints about the Conduct of Members of the Council](#).

29. This Constitution will be kept under regular review.

30. The Council welcomes participation by the public in its work. For further information on your rights as a citizen, please contact the Director Law and Governance at the Civic Offices, 1 Saxon Gate East, Milton Keynes MK9 3EJ. Telephone (01908) 252314  
Email: [meetings@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:meetings@milton-keynes.gov.uk)