

PART 1

SUMMARY

AND

EXPLANATION

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1. The Council's Constitution

The London Borough of Islington has agreed a Constitution which sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. The law requires some of these processes, while others are a matter for the Council to choose.

The Constitution is divided into 15 Articles which set out the basic rules governing the Council's business.

2. What is in the Constitution

Article 1 of the Constitution commits the Council to clear, transparent and accountable decision-making, which is inclusive and provides opportunities for community involvement whilst ensuring effective and efficient use of resources. Article 2 explains the role of members and Article 3 explains the rights of residents in relation to the Constitution. Articles 4–15 explain how the key parts of the Council operate. More detailed procedures and codes of practice are contained in separate rules and protocols at the end of the document.

3. How the Council operates

The Council is composed of 48 Councillors elected every four years. Councillors are democratically accountable to residents of their ward. The overriding duty of councillors is to the whole community, but they have a special duty to their constituents, including those who did not vote for them.

Councillors have to agree to follow a code of conduct to ensure high standards in the way they undertake their duties. The Standards Committee is responsible for overseeing training and advising members on the code of conduct and for receiving (and normally dealing with) complaints that a councillor has breached the code.

All councillors meet together as the Council. Meetings of the Council are normally open to the public unless matters are discussed which must be kept confidential. Here councillors decide the Council's overall policies and set the budget each year. The Council appoints the Leader and members of the Executive.

4. How decisions are made

The Executive is the part of the Council, which is responsible for most day-to-day decisions. The Executive is made up of the Leader and a number of Executive members. All key decisions to be made by the Executive will be published in the Executive's Forward Plan in so far as they can be anticipated. Decision making meetings of the Executive will generally be open for the public to attend except where personal or exempt matters are being discussed. The Executive has to make decisions which are in line with the Council's overall policies and budget. If it wishes to make a decision which is not in line with the budget or policy framework, this must be referred to the Council as a whole to decide.

5. Overview

There is one Overview Committee which has three roles. Firstly, to support the work of the Executive and the Council as a whole by considering and making recommendations on policy. Secondly, it is the main body responsible for scrutinising decisions made by the Executive and for holding it to account. It has the power to consider decisions made by the Executive but not yet implemented and can ask the Executive to reconsider those decisions or, if it considers that a decision may be contrary to the Policy Framework and/or contrary to or not wholly in accordance with the Budgetary Framework, it may refer the matter on to full Council. Finally, it is also responsible for reviewing matters relating to the Council's education functions.

In addition, there will be three review committees, each responsible for reviewing and making proposals on the following areas of the Council's work:

- Regeneration
- Sustainability
- Health and Well-being

6. Area committees

There are four area committees each covering four wards as follows:-

Area Committee North:	Hillrise, Tollington, Junction and St. George's
Area Committee South:	Bunhill, Clerkenwell, Canonbury and St. Peter's
Area Committee East:	Highbury West, Highbury East, Mildmay and Finsbury Park
Area Committee West:	Holloway, Caledonian, St. Mary's and Barnsbury

Membership of each area committee will consist of the elected councillors for the wards and proportionality will not therefore apply.

7. Functions

The role of the area committees will include to:

- Act as a focal point for community engagement, capacity building and outreach work into the community;
- Consider and submit observations to the appropriate body on any matters referred to them by the Council, Executive, a review committee, or any other matter having a direct link with each area;
- Contribute to the scrutiny activities of the Council through seeking and representing local views on scrutiny and by monitoring the performance of both Council services and other agencies' work in each area;
- Act as a consultative forum for best value reviews where appropriate;
- Build and develop partnerships in the area.

Each area committee may establish a sub-committee to deal with planning applications affecting the area. The terms of reference of the Area Committees in Part 5 of this Constitution set out when such matters can be considered by the area committees or their sub-committees. In areas where the volumes of planning applications are low, the area committees may decide to deal with planning itself rather than establish a sub-committee to do so.

8. Meetings

Meetings of area committees will be held at a venue normally located within the area. Individual committees will decide whether they wish to move around within their respective areas in order to maximise attendance. Planning Sub-Committee meetings will normally be held in the Town Hall. Meetings of the area committees and sub-committees will be open to the public, subject to any confidentiality requirements.

9. Other committees

There are also the following committees dealing with the matters shown:

- Audit: personnel, audit, accounts, strategic planning, pensions
- Licensing: all matters under the Licensing Act 2003 and Gambling Act 2005
- Licensing Regulatory: all non-Licensing Act 2003 functions
- Standards: matters relating to standards of member conduct

10. The Council's staff

The Council has people working for it (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.

11. Involving the public

Islington residents* have a number of rights in their dealings with the Council. These are set out in more detail in Article 3. Some of these are legal rights, whilst others depend on the Council's own processes. Where members of the public use specific Council services, for example as a parent of a school pupil or as a Council tenant, they have additional rights. These are not covered in this Constitution.

The Council welcomes participation by residents in its work. People's rights to access to meetings and papers are set out in the Access to Information Procedure Rules contained in Part 4.

*For the purposes of this constitution, the term residents includes (where appropriate) those people who study, work or have businesses in the borough or who receive services for which the Council is responsible.

DECISION MAKING STRUCTURE CHART

