

DEMOCRATIC ARRANGEMENTS

The Local Government Act 2000 requires most local authorities to adopt arrangements for taking decisions based upon a number of “models” set out in the Act. Following consultation, the Council decided to implement the Council Leader and Cabinet model from June 2001.

The Council’s Constitution

The Constitution commits the Council to its core values of working in partnership with citizens, businesses and other organisations, always acting in an open, transparent and accountable manner, producing value for money and continuous improvement of its services and ensuring equity in allocation and delivery of services. The Council’s core values are:

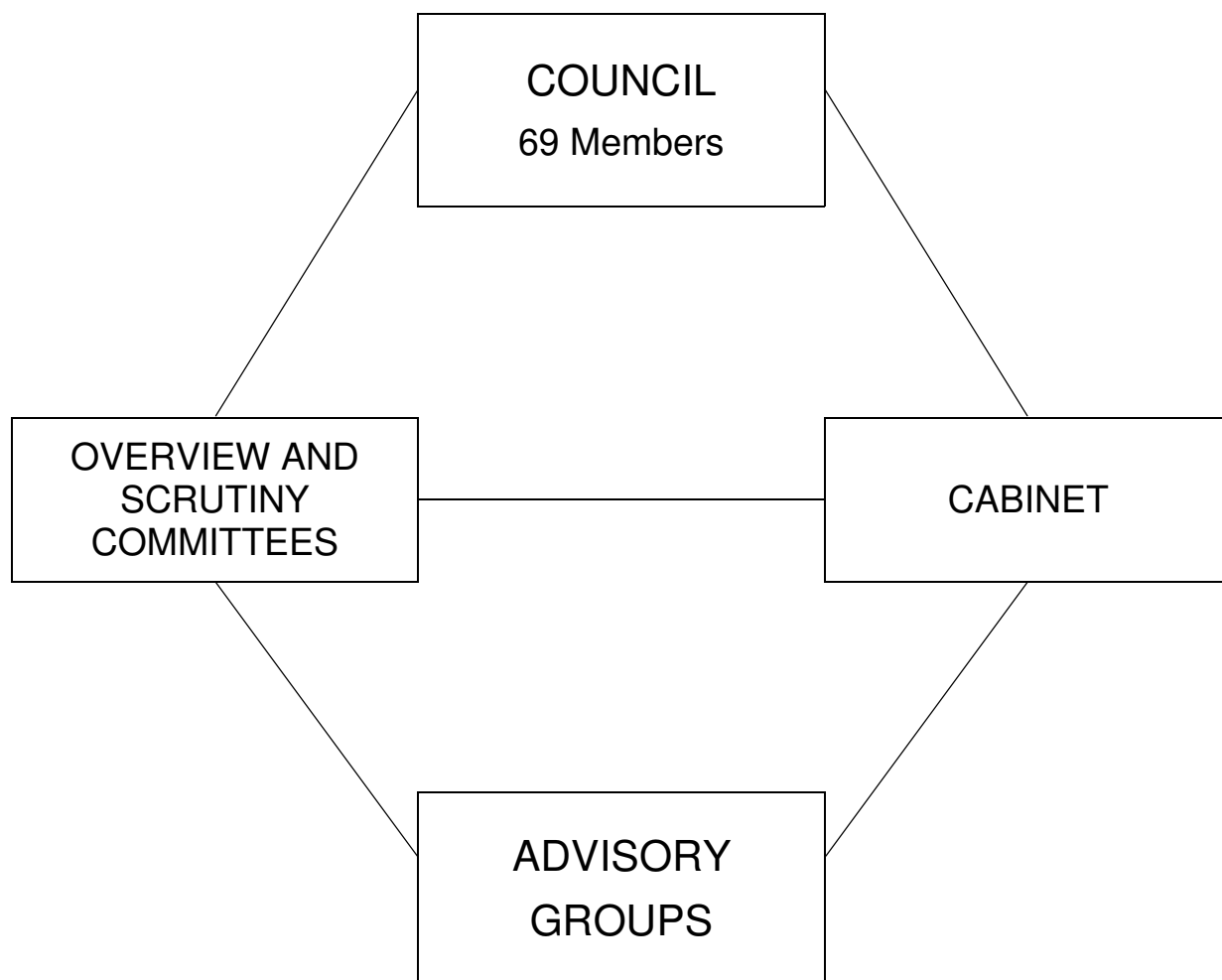
- Accountability
- Respect
- Integrity
- Value for Money
- Excellence
- Equity

The Council’s Constitution provides for a separation of the executive functions of the Council (undertaken in the main by the *Cabinet*) from the overview and scrutiny function (a process led by special *Overview and Scrutiny Committees*). The *County Council* retains responsibility for the Council's overall level of spending and for the major policies of the Council, but the day to day decision making is the responsibility of the *Cabinet* or, is delegated to *Council officers*.

Some of the Council’s functions are exercised by separate committees (e.g. *Area Committees, Development Control Committee, Audit and Accounts Committee, Standards Committee* and *other committees* dealing mainly with appeals).

A number of *Partnership, Liaison and County Advisory Groups* provide opportunities for wider input into the County Council’s democratic processes.

A diagram illustrating these arrangements is set out below:



County Council Meetings

The full Council, comprising all *69 County Councillors*, is responsible for setting the *Council's budget*, the *Council Tax* and agreeing the Council's main policies. These policies comprise:

- Sustainable Community Strategy
- Transformation of Adult Social Care Strategy
- Cambridgeshire Rural Strategy
- Local Flood Risk Management Strategy
- Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy
- Climate Change and Environment Strategy
- Local Transport Plan
- Joint Municipal Waste Strategy
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Development Plan
- Youth Justice Plan
- Single Equality Strategy

- East of England Plan – Regional Spatial Strategy
- Enforcement Policy
- Corporate Asset Management Plan
- Strategic Asset Development Strategy
- Long Term Capital Strategy
- Procurement Strategy
- People Strategy
- Greater Cambridge Sub-Regional Economic Strategy.

The Cabinet will recommend the budget and major service plans to the Council for approval. The Council has the power to adopt the proposals, to ask the Cabinet to reconsider or to amend the proposals itself.

The Council will also consider reports from Overview and Scrutiny Committees and will debate issues of concern raised by those committees. In so doing the County Council will have a significant role in holding the Council's executive to account.

County Council meetings are held every two months. Meetings are open to the public who are welcome to attend. The *dates of meetings* and *agenda and minutes* are available on the Council's web site.

The Council's Executive - Cabinet

At the heart of the Council's executive arrangements is a Cabinet comprising of ten County Councillors. The Cabinet is responsible for making recommendations to the Council on the Council's budget, the Council Tax and major service policies, which together make up the agreed Policy Framework. The Cabinet has the power to decide any issue which falls within the Policy Framework, once agreed by the Council.

The Cabinet is led by the *Leader of Council* who is appointed by the full Council from amongst its membership. The other Cabinet members are appointed by the Leader of Council.

Members of the Cabinet have specific areas of responsibility. Cabinet members may also be referred to as "portfolio holders", indicating their responsibility for particular aspects of the Council's services. This includes responsibility for the Council's main services as well as for thematic and cross-cutting issues.

The *Cabinet* meets once a month in public to take decisions. *Dates of meetings* and details of *issues to be discussed* by each meeting and the Cabinet's decisions are published on the Council's web site. A *Forward Plan* showing Key Decisions to be taken by the Cabinet is also published.

Whilst most issues will be decided by the Cabinet collectively, individual Cabinet members may also take decisions on other issues delegated to them within their areas of responsibility.

Overview and Scrutiny Committees

The Overview and Scrutiny function is an important part of the Council's democratic arrangements. The key function of Overview and Scrutiny is to hold the Executive to account by scrutinising decisions before they are implemented (known as “call in”) and scrutinising the efficiency and effectiveness of implemented policies (known as “performance review”).

There are five standing Overview and Scrutiny Committees dealing with:

- *Adults, Wellbeing and Health*
- *Children and Young People*
- *Enterprise, Growth and Community Infrastructure*
- *Resources and Performance*
- *Safer and Stronger Communities.*

The Council may also establish *ad-hoc and time-limited overview and scrutiny committees* to consider particular issues.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committees comprise representatives of all the political groups on the Council but do not include members of the Cabinet within their membership. Each Committee may co-opt up to 3 additional persons at any one time.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings are held in public. *Dates of meetings* and *agenda* are available on the Council's web site.

Area Joint Committees

Certain of the Council's environment and transport functions are delegated to area joint committees covering each of the five district Council areas of the County (Cambridge City, East Cambridgeshire, Fenland, Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire). The *membership* of each of these committees includes representatives of both the County and relevant district/city council together with representatives from parish councils. The Committees operate within an overall policy framework and scheme of delegation set by the County Council and Cabinet.

Meetings of the Area Joint Committees are open to the public. The *dates of meetings* and *agenda and minutes* are available on the Council's web site.

Development Control Committee

The Council's *Development Control Committee* comprises members from all the political groups on the Council and is responsible for taking decisions mainly on planning issues but also determines other issues relating to land (e.g. commons registration). Most detailed planning applications are determined by the relevant district or city council but there are certain planning issues which are the remit of the County Council. These include decisions on local plans and mineral plans as well as determining planning applications for developments on County Council-owned land.

Meetings of the Development Control Committee are open to the public. *Dates of meetings* and copies *agenda and minutes* are available on the Council's web site.

Standards Committee

The Council has established a *Standards Committee* with responsibility for the conduct of councillors. The Committee comprises five councillors but specifically excludes the leaders of the political groups on the Council. The Committee also includes three independent members to provide an independent and objective focus to the Committee's work. The Committee is chaired by one of the independent members.

The main functions of the Committee include:

- promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by councillors and co-opted members
- advising on the content and implementation of the Members Code of Conduct
- dealing with alleged breaches of the Members Code of Conduct by individual councillors and co-opted members
- establishing a Code of Conduct for officers
- advising on the protocol governing of the relationship between members and officers
- keeping an overview of the Council's whistleblowing policy
- monitoring the Council's exercise of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act.

Meetings of the Standards Committee are open to the public. *Dates of meetings* and copies *agenda and minutes* are available on the Council's web site.

Audit and Accounts Committee

The Audit and Accounts Committee comprises 7 members of the County Council including the Cabinet Member responsible for the Resources and Performance function but not any other Cabinet member. The Committee may also appoint up to three non-voting co-opted members.

The Committee's responsibilities include:

- the County Council's responsibilities under the Accounts and Audit Regulations
- monitoring the effectiveness of the Council's risk management arrangements, the control environment and associated anti-fraud and anti-corruption arrangements and to seek assurances that action is being taken on risk-related issues identified by auditors and inspectors
- reviewing the financial statements, external auditor's opinion and reports to Members, and monitoring management actions in response to the issues raised by external audit
- approving and monitoring delivery of the Internal Audit's Strategy and performance and to consider and endorse the Annual Work Programme.

Meetings of the Audit and Accounts Committee are usually open to the public. *Dates of meetings* and copies of *agenda and minutes* are available on the Council's website.

Appeals Committees

There are a number of other functions of the Council, often relating to appeals of one description or another, which will be determined by separate committees outside the executive arrangements. Because they are dealing with individual cases, these committees are generally not open to the public.

Partnership, Liaison and County Advisory Groups

The Council has also established a number of Partnership, Liaison and County Advisory Groups whose purpose is to provide a forum to develop links with other agencies and to give a focus for specialist services.

The Representative Role of Members

A key part of the Council's democratic arrangements is the role performed by all members in representing their local community. Members will take part in Neighbourhood Panel and other locality based meetings.

Supporting the Democratic Processes

The democratic arrangements are underpinned by the Council's *Constitution* which sets out how the arrangements are to operate. The Constitution includes:

- rules for the conduct of meetings of the Council, Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings and how business is to be progressed through the new structures
- terms of reference which specify the powers and responsibilities of each of the different types of member group
- the membership of the various member groups
- schemes of delegation indicating powers which have been delegated to Council, the Cabinet, Committees and officers
- rules on access to information
- budget and policy framework procedure rules
- a protocol on the relations between Members and Officers
- financial and contract procedure rules
- officer employment procedure rules
- Members' allowances
- Member and officer codes of conduct.