

PART 1
SUMMARY AND EXPLANATION

Date Approved:	June 2006
Date Revised:	May 2014, Oct 2015, July 2016, October 2019, March 2021
Date of Next Review:	October 2023
Owner:	Monitoring Officer

South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority has agreed a Constitution which sets out how the Authority operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local citizens. Some of these processes are required by the law, while others are a matter for the Authority to determine.

The Constitution itself is divided into 20 Articles, set out in Part 2, which set out the basic rules governing the Authority's business. More detailed procedures and codes of practice are provided in separate rules and procedures and protocols at the end of the Constitution.

What's in the Constitution?

Article 1 of the Constitution sets out the primary purpose of the Constitution whilst Articles 2 to 18 explain how the key parts of the Authority operates, including the rights of citizens.

These Articles are:

1. Purpose of the Constitution
2. Members of the Authority
3. Citizens and the Authority
4. The Role of the Authority, Legal Structure and Delegations
5. Chairing the Authority
6. The Role of the Audit and Governance Committee
7. The Role of the Appointments Committee
8. The Role of the Appeals and Standards Committee
9. The Role of the Principal Officer Review Committees
10. The Role of the Corporate Advisory Group
11. The Role of the Stakeholder Planning Board
12. The Role of the Performance and Scrutiny Board
13. The Key Officers and the Management Structure
14. Decision Making
15. Finance, Contracts and Legal Matters
16. Review and Revision of the Constitution
17. Suspension, Interpretation and Publication of the Constitution

How the Authority Operates

The Authority is composed of 12 Members, all of whom must be a Councillor elected to one of the four constituent district councils within South Yorkshire, as described in Article 2.1. The over-riding duty of Members of the Authority is to the whole community of South Yorkshire.

Members have to agree to follow an approved Code of Conduct designed to ensure high standards in the way they undertake their duties. The Appeals and Standards Committee advises Members on the Code of Conduct and reviews the training provided on ethical conduct.

All Members meet together as the Fire and Rescue Authority. Meetings of the Authority are normally open to the public. Members decide the Authority's overall policies and set the budget each year. At the annual meeting they make appointments to the various committees and boards.

How Decisions are Made

The Authority has ultimate responsibility for decision making but has delegated many decisions to committees and officers as described in this Constitution.

The Authority's Staff

The Authority has people working for it (described as "officers") to give advice, to implement decisions and to manage the day to day delivery of its services. Some officers such as the Monitoring Officer have a specific statutory duty to ensure that the Authority acts within the law. A Protocol on Member and Officer Relations has been approved to govern the relationships between officers and Members of the Authority.

Citizens' Rights

Citizens have a number of rights in their dealings with the Authority. These are set out in more detail in Article 3. Some of these are legal rights whereas other rights depend upon the Authority's own processes. Citizens' rights include the following:

The right to attend meetings of the Authority and its committees and sub-committees except where, for example, personal or confidential matters are being discussed.

- To inspect agendas and reports, except those which contain, for example, personal and confidential matters.
- To obtain a copy of this Constitution.
- To see reports and background papers (save for exempt confidential items) and to see records of decisions made by the Authority and its committees and sub-committees.
- To complain to the Authority under the Authority's Code of Conduct and using the agreed method (post, e-mail or 'Contact Us' form on the website). To complain to the Ombudsman if they think the Authority has not followed its procedures properly, however they should only do this after using the Authority's agreed complaints process.
- To complain to the Authority's Monitoring Officer if they have evidence which they think shows that a Member has not followed the Authority's Code of Conduct.
- To inspect the Authority's accounts and to make their views known to the external auditor.

The Authority welcomes participation by its citizens in its work.