

How to contact us



www.gateshead.gov.uk

Legal and Corporate Services, Civic Centre,
Regent Street, NE8 1HH
Telephone: 0191 433 3000 Fax: 0191 477 3495
Answerphone: 0191 477 9954
e-mail: enquiries@gateshead.gov.uk

If you know of a relative or friend who would like this leaflet in the following languages (Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi, Bengali, Cantonese, Farsi, Czech, French, Portuguese, Kurdish), it is available on request by ringing Diane Brennan, Communications, on 0191 433 3444, or E-mail: dianebrennan@gateshead.gov.uk

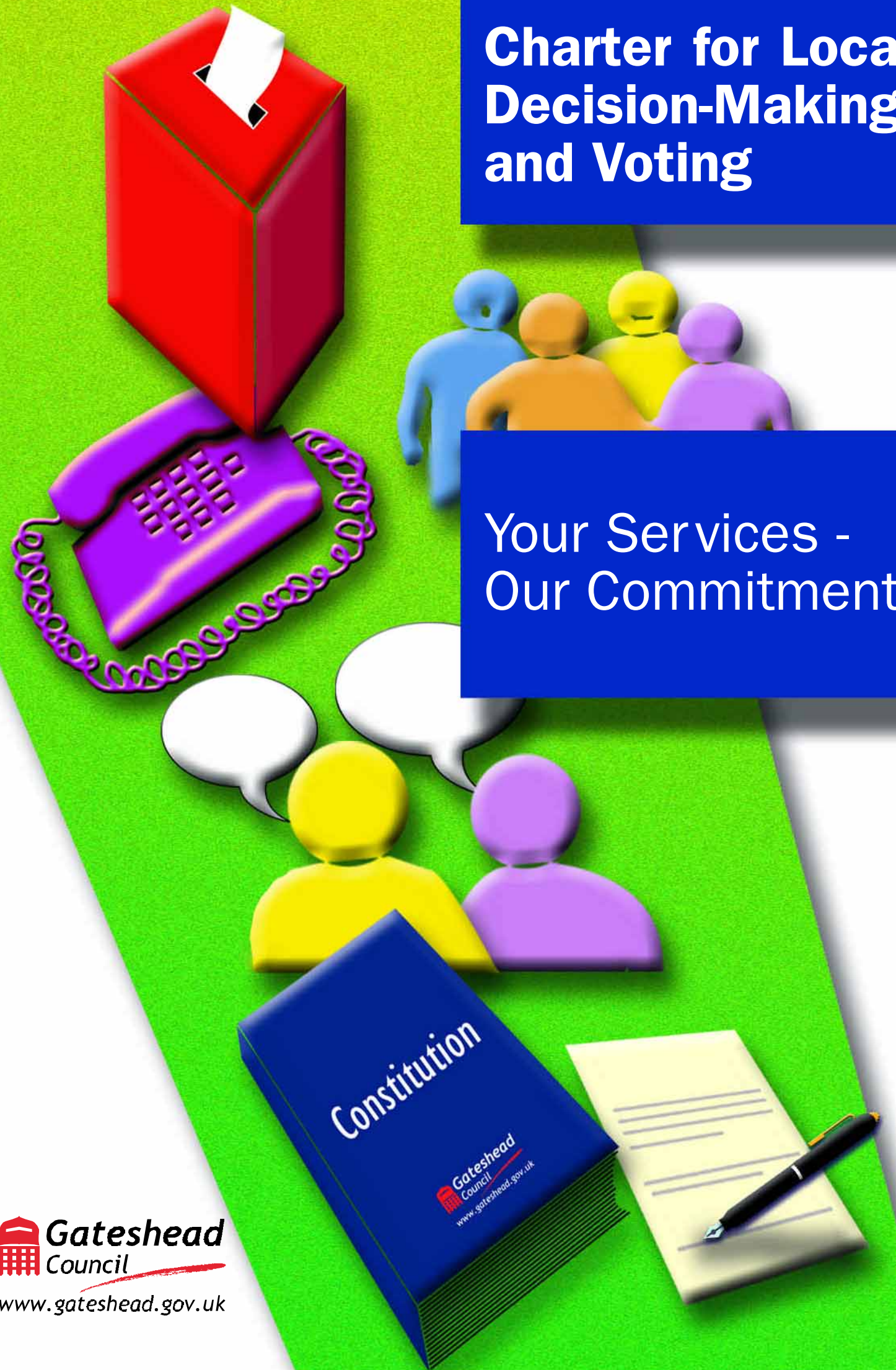
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Gateshead Central Library on 0191 477 3478
Minicom 0191 478 2060

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Charter for Local Decision-Making and Voting

Your Services - Our Commitment



Your Services - Our Commitment

Gateshead Council has to take many decisions that affect people's lives. We are committed to taking these decisions in the most open and democratic way possible, and after wide consultation. We will also encourage citizens of the borough to exercise their democratic right to vote at elections. We will look for ways to make it easier for people to register as electors and to cast their vote.

This charter sets out our commitments for the delivery of services in relation to local decision-making and voting, the standards you can expect from us and how you can help us meet these standards.



Services provided in relation to local decision-making and voting are part of Corporate Administration in the Central Services Group. The service includes arranging meetings of the Council, providing public access to agendas, reports and the "Forward Plan", dealing with corporate complaints and electoral registration and voting.



We aim to:

- explain how the Council takes decisions, by widely publishing our constitution
- encourage people to give their views on the matters that affect them and take their opinions into account
- ensure that all meetings of Council bodies are open to the public, except where personal or confidential matters are being discussed, and publicise this widely
- provide access to agendas, reports, background papers and minutes of meetings, subject to rules on disclosure of personal or confidential information
- review your complaint if you think it has not been handled properly by another part of the Council
- ensure that every citizen who is eligible to vote gets the opportunity to have their name included on the electoral register
- make it as easy as possible for people to cast their vote in elections

What you can expect from us

We will:

- provide a helpful, friendly and courteous service
- publish a list every month, called a "Forward Plan" which sets out all the major decisions which the Cabinet is expected to take in the next 4 months (copies of the forward plan are available on our website www.gateshead.gov.uk, in local

libraries or by contacting **Jonathan Rew**, Legal and Corporate Services, Telephone: 0191 433 2120 or E-mail: jonathanrew@gateshead.gov.uk)

- keep our constitution up to date
- publish a list of meetings every month which are open to the public
- provide access to agendas and reports for meetings at least 5 working days before the meeting
- ensure that for every item in the Forward Plan, and every report on an agenda, a contact name and telephone number are given
- publish records of meetings as quickly as possible, usually within 2 working days
- give people an opportunity to speak at Development Control and Licensing Panel meetings on matters that affect them (subject to certain rules) and to present petitions and ask questions at meetings of the Council
- carry out a review of your complaint within 28 days, or let you know if we cannot meet this timescale
- send you immediately, on request, a form for a postal vote application, or an application to be included on the electoral register (however, for legal reasons there is a 'waiting period' before we can add your name to the register)
- publish documents on the internet where this is feasible, as well as providing a printed copy



You can help us by:

- making sure that we have your comments in good time so that they can be taken into account
- promptly returning your form to let us know who is living in your house, when we carry out the annual canvass of electors
- being polite and courteous to employees who are dealing with you

Your comments, compliments and complaints

You can also help us by providing feedback on our services. If you want to comment on the service provided please contact:



Mike Aynsley, Legal and Corporate Services (for meetings and local decision-making matters): Civic Centre, Regent Street, Gateshead, NE8 1HH. Telephone: 0191 433 2128, Fax: 0191 478 2755 or E-mail: michaelaynsley@gateshead.gov.uk

Jonathan Rew, Legal and Corporate Services (for constitutional and voting/electoral matters): Civic Centre, Regent Street, Gateshead, NE8 1HH. Telephone: 0191 433 2120, Fax: 0191 478 2755 or E-mail: jonathanrew@gateshead.gov.uk

Further information

More information and leaflets on the issues raised in this charter are available from Mike Aynsley and Jonathan Rew see the contact details above):

- Development Control Panel – Having Your Say
- Community Involvement Strategy
- Make Sure You Have A Vote
- Application forms for postal and proxy voting
- How to complain to the Local Government Ombudsman

To obtain copies of Gateshead Council's general customer care charter "Your Services – Our Commitment" or complaints leaflet "Our Services – Your Views", please contact **Jo Richardson**, Chief Executive's Department, 0191 433 2824 or E-mail: joannarichardson@gateshead.gov.uk