



## The local government system in

# Barbados



### SUMMARY

Barbados is a parliamentary democracy with no elected local government.

The Constituency Council Act 2009 created a new Department of Constituency Empowerment within the Ministry of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Community Development which is tasked with overseeing the creation and activities of newly formed constituency councils within Barbados' 30 constituencies.

### 1. CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Barbados is a parliamentary democracy and has a bicameral parliamentary system. The head of state is HM Queen Elizabeth II who appoints, and is represented by, a governor-general. The parliament comprises an elected House of Assembly and an

appointed Senate. The House of Assembly has 30 members elected by universal adult suffrage every five years. The Senate has 21 members appointed by the governor-general: 12 on the advice of the prime minister, two on the advice of the leader of the opposition and the remaining seven at the governor-general's discretion. The prime minister, usually the leader of the majority party, is head of government. The governor-general appoints 18 ministers to the cabinet from within the House of Assembly on the advice of the prime minister.

### 2. LEGAL BASIS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

#### 2.1 Constitutional provisions:

There is no constitutional provision for local government.

#### 2.2 Main legislative text:

Main legislative text governing local government is the Constituency Council Act 2009.

### 3. STRUCTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

#### 3.1 Local government within the state:

There is no elected local government in Barbados.

Local governance is through appointed councillors who are chosen after a detailed process that begins with their applying to serve. For administrative purposes Barbados is divided into eleven parishes plus the capital city of Bridgetown. These are further divided into 30 electoral districts or constituencies, each of which has a constituency council (CC).



### 3.2 Ministerial oversight:

The Department of Constituency Empowerment (DCE) within the Ministry of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Community Development has responsibility for Barbados' Constituency Empowerment Programme and, by extension, for the CCs. In addition to the creation of both the DCE and the CCs the programme will also in the future create constituency empowerment centres.

### 3.3 Constituency councils:

Constituency councils (CCs) have either recently been established (18) or scheduled to be established (12) within 2011, in each of the 30 constituencies. Local governance in Barbados takes the form of a voluntary constituency-based model which forms an integral part of Barbados' Constituency Empowerment Programme. Each CC consists of 15 persons appointed by the minister, including a chairman and a treasurer. Persons are invited to apply to serve on the CC for the area in which they live or with which they are otherwise associated. A selection committee of senior civil servants makes recommendations to the minister on who should be selected to serve on the CCs. Significant attention is paid to selecting persons who have relevant community experience and/or who represent a special interest group. The local member of parliament is an ex-officio member of the CC. A member holds office for a term of two years and is eligible for reappointment for a further term.

The Constituency Council is defined as 'a legally established body of local representatives, who have been appointed and given the authority to voice the concerns of the various residents of the constituency' and its role as 'to maintain links with the Government

and its agencies; and to effectively and efficiently assist in the management of resources assigned for the development of the given constituency.'

The CC has a number of sub-committees which gather socio-economic information for the constituency, paying particular attention to the demographic and geographic particularities. The sub-committees then advise the CC as to the major needs and concerns in its area. Larger projects are worked on in partnership with the DCE and other stakeholders. Many of the smaller projects are carried out by the CCs in direct collaboration with the community. The CC also acts as an advocacy group and supports public and private sector organisations through lobbying on behalf of constituents. The tenure of the members of the first six CCs is now up for review as these CCs were launched in July 2009. An additional 12 CCs were launched in March 2010, with 12 more yet to be launched.

## 4. ELECTIONS

### 4.1 Recent local elections:

There is no elected local government in Barbados. In the selection process for nominated councillors, efforts are made to ensure all vulnerable groups are included. In the 18 CCs created in 2010 there are 236 members, 140 are male and 96 (40.7%) female.

## 5. SYSTEMS FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

### 5.1 and 5.2 Legal requirement and Implementation:

The law requires that each CC hold biannual public meetings to update local residents on the progress and agenda of the CC for the prescribed period. The Constituency Council Act 2009 requires CCs to build databases of their

constituency in collaboration with government departments and to identify the priority needs of their constituency based on supporting data. The Act invites the public to submit requests to the CCs outlining their particular need and these must be discussed at CC meetings and formally reported on.

### 5.3 E-government:

The CCs have a website where issues raised can be publicly displayed along with minutes of meetings and news.

## 6. ORGANISED LOCAL GOVERNMENT

There are no organised country-wide associations of local government in Barbados.

## 7. INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

The DCE has set up formal protocols with all major government departments on behalf of the CCs, which allow for the fast-tracking of issues that have arisen at CC level. The CCs have named contact persons within various ministries and are free to contact them directly. Regular meetings are held between the leadership of the CCs and the ministry to share best practices and ideas as well as to address any common concerns that may arise.

## 8. MONITORING SYSTEMS

Each CC must keep adequate financial and other records for seven years and submit these monthly to the Ministry of Social Care, through the DCE. Each CC must also be audited annually. The Auditor General may at any time carry out an investigation or audit of the accounts of a CC. Additionally the DCE must submit a detailed account of the activities of each CC by the end of the financial year.

## 9. FINANCE, STAFFING AND RESOURCES

### 9.1 Locally raised revenue:

CCs have no authority to raise local revenue.

### 9.2 Transfers:

Each of the 30 CCs receives B\$100,000 per annum.

CCs receive money in tranches and have their accounts replenished only when there is a satisfactory report on spending. The funds are kept in the accounts centrally and released to the CCs as projects are programmes are undertaken and reported on. Each CC has its own bank account into which its money is deposited. The chairman and treasurer sign off expenditure on behalf of the CC.

### 9.3 Local authority staff:

There is an officer of the DCE, a fully salaried public servant, posted in every constituency

**Table 1.** Distribution of councils and population (Census 2000)

| Parish        | Constituency councils | Population (Census 2000) |
|---------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Christ Church | 5                     | 49,497                   |
| St Andrew     | 1                     | 5,254                    |
| St George     | 2                     | 17,868                   |
| St James      | 3                     | 22,741                   |
| St John       | 1                     | 8,873                    |
| St Joseph     | 1                     | 6,805                    |
| St Lucy       | 1                     | (insert)                 |
| St Michael    | 9*                    | 83,684                   |
| St Peter      | 1                     | 10,699                   |
| St Philip     | 3                     | 22,864                   |
| St Thomas     | 1                     | 12,397                   |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>30</b>             | <b>250,010</b>           |

\* inc. the capital city of Bridgetown Source: Barbados Statistical Service



whose role is to liaise with the public on behalf of the CCs. Members of the constituency councils received a stipend of B\$120 (US\$60) each and B\$200 (US\$100) for the chairman.

#### **10. DISTRIBUTION OF SERVICE DELIVERY RESPONSIBILITY**

CCs offer a wide range of services based on the needs of their constituents. CCs are also expected to effectively and efficiently assist in the management of resources assigned for the development of each constituency within a framework of good governance.

#### **References and useful websites**

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