

Petitions Scheme

Summary

- 1 This report seeks Members' support for changes to the Petitions Scheme which has been in operation for the last three years.

Background

- 2 In 2009 the Council approved an approach to handling petitions which included a centrally administered petitions register and the introduction of an e-petitions facility. In 2010 the previous Government introduced a legal requirement to produce a petitions scheme. A legal requirement to host an e-petitions facility was also introduced. The incoming Government signalled an intention to withdraw those requirements and did so through provisions in the Localism Act.
- 3 The e-petitions facility has now been used in excess of fifty times. A total of twelve petitions (including six in respect of the local plan) have gathered sufficient signatures to trigger or be considered as part of a debate at full Council.
- 4 It is anticipated that the Council would wish to maintain the best of the current arrangements. In the light of experience though and with the flexibility afforded by the legislative change some amendments are now being proposed to the petitions scheme. The changes are highlighted in the annexed scheme but in summary they include:
 - Increased clarity to the circumstances in which a petitions will be regarded as inappropriate

- A requirement that paper petitions include the details of the petition on each page thus ensuring that each signatory has signed up to the same wording
 - Including a reference to merging paper and e-petitions
 - Removal of the provision to petition to call Officers to account
 - Making provision for alerting the relevant Cabinet member to a petition which is due to go live.
- 5 Members will be aware of ongoing discussions relating to the conduct of the Council meeting. It is possible that these will result in changes to the way petitions are debated and any such changes will need to be incorporated into the scheme in due course.

Consultation

- 6 This report is coming to this Committee for consultation prior to it being presented to Council for approval.

Options

- 7 The Committee may express support for the current proposals or suggest amendments or additions.

Analysis

- 8 Not relevant for the purpose of the report.

Corporate Priorities

- 9 This report contributes to the corporate objective of making the Council an effective organisation.

Implications

- 10 **Legal** – the Council no longer has a statutory duty to have a petitions scheme and therefore has greater flexibility in decision making on this issue.

Recommendation

- 11 Members are asked to:

- (a) Recommend to Council that the revised scheme set out in the annex to this report be adopted as the Council's arrangements for handling petitions.

Reason

To ensure that the Council has clear arrangements in place to deal with petitions.

Contact Details

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**Report
Approved**



Date 25/10/13

Wards Affected: Not applicable

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers

None

Annex A

Petitions Scheme