

Meeting	Audit & Governance Committee
Date	6 November 2013
Present	Councillors Potter (Chair), Brooks (Vice-Chair), Ayre, Barnes, Burton and Mr Whiteley (Co-opted Non-Statutory Member)
Apologies	Councillors Watson and Wiseman

Part B - Matters Referred to Council

42. Review of the Petitions Scheme

Members considered a report that sought their support for changes to the Petitions Scheme which had been in operation for the last three years.

Discussion took place regarding the proposed changes including:

- The inclusion of wording stating that the scheme did not cover petitions which respond to a public consultation organised by the Council. Officers explained that this proposed amendment would remove the situation whereby a petition could trigger a debate at both the consultation stage and then later at the point when the decision was made.
- The deletion of the provision to call an officer to account. Officers confirmed that, although this option was included in the current scheme, it had never been used. There were, however, other mechanisms by which an officer could be held to account.

Members suggested that the final sentence of the first paragraph on Securing a Full Council Debate be amended to read "This means that the issue(s) it raise(s) will be discussed at a meeting which all Councillors can attend and the views will be considered by the relevant decision-makers".

Members also recommended that petition organisers be provided with the paragraph in the report detailing the action that could be taken if they believed that their petition had not been dealt with properly.

Councillor Ayre proposed and Councillor Brooks seconded that the draft scheme be amended to remove paragraph (c) under the section on petitions not covered by the scheme (i.e. respond to a public consultation organised by the Council). On being put to the vote the motion was lost.

Councillor Ayre then proposed and Councillor Brooks seconded that the draft scheme be amended to reinstate the provision to petition to call officers to account. On being put to the vote the motion was lost.

Recommended: That the revised scheme set out in the annex to the report be adopted as the Council's arrangements for handling petitions subject to the final sentence of the first paragraph on Securing a Full Council Debate being amended to read "This means that the issue(s) it raise(s) will be discussed at a meeting which all Councillors can attend and the views will be considered by the relevant decision-makers".

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

Councillor Potter, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 7.45 pm].