

Scrutiny Restructure Working Group
Meeting Held 4 March 2009

Findings re Petitions

Over the course of the municipal year, a number of the reports requiring an Executive Member decision were as a result of a petition:

Executive Member for City Strategy = 25

Executive Member for Corporate Services = 1

Executive Member for Housing & Adult Social Services = 2

Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services = 3

In regard to the high number for City Strategy, it was not clear how many had been referred by Council and how many had come directly into City Strategy.

In some instances, the associated reports to the EMAPs requested approval for officers to carry out investigative work in relation to the petition, thus requiring a later report back on the findings.

In other cases, officers had already carried out the investigative work and were presenting their findings with recommendations.

A constitutional change to how Council deals with petitions has already been agreed and there is an outstanding commitment to report to Audit & Governance Committee on on-line petitions.

Suggestions

In order to provide a corporate approach for dealing with petitions:

- a corporate register could be set up to record all petitions received and provide an audit trail of what actions were taken as a result.
- The register could be made visible on line so that Members, officers and the public could access the information.
- It may also prove useful to the Scrutiny Committees as it could be used to keep them updated on the petitions submitted by the public, which in turn may generate possible topics for scrutiny review.
- The report to Audit & Governance Committee on on-line petitions could be extended to include how the Council deals with petitions in general and the relevant findings from this scrutiny project and the views of this Working Group could be fed into that process - this would ensure that the Council is equipped to respond to forthcoming new legislation in regard to petitions and provide a mechanism for the new scrutiny committees to be kept informed.