

New Arrangements for Petitions

Summary

1. Members may recall a report to the last Corporate & Scrutiny Management Committee (CSMC) on 10 November 2014 which provided details of the new arrangements agreed by Council in October 2014 for dealing with petitions received by the Authority. The report set out the role of this Committee in those arrangements and asked Members to consider those petitions received since the new arrangements were put in place.
2. This is the second report to CSMC, following agreement of the new arrangements, and Annex A provides details of new petitions received by the Council (containing over 10 signatories), since the last report.

Background

3. The Audit and Governance Committee on 2 October 2014 agreed and recommended to Council some new arrangements for dealing with petitions received and those arrangements were approved by Council on 9 October 2014. In order to ensure some scrutiny of the actions taken in relation to petitions received either by Members or Officers, it was agreed for details of and actions relating to those petitions to be considered by this Committee.

4. The Process

Consideration was previously given to the process for responding to petitions, together with a range of potential options available to the Committee in considering petitions. It was noted that the options were not meant to be exhaustive and that the key message to scrutiny being that Audit & Governance Committee considered those to be a starting point and by way of suggestion only.

Schedule of Petitions Received

5. This is the second report to CSMC and the schedule at Annex A provides details of new petitions received by the Council since the last report. The schedule also includes updates in respect of a number of the petitions presented to the last meeting including actions taken by officers or Members since the petitions were received.
6. Ultimately, this schedule will become a database into which staff across the Council can enter the appropriate receipt and action details. That will ensure much more accurate coverage of petitions received within the Council. Discussions have taken place with our IT (Information Technology) Department about the best way to achieve this.
7. This Committee will continue to receive a schedule of petitions received and any action taken in this way at future meetings, as and when petitions are received and pending any improved IT solution being in place.
8. Members are asked to note that some petitioners may wish to attend the meeting to speak and present their petition.

Next Steps

9. The Committee now needs to consider the petitions and actions taken, where applicable and consider what it might like to do or recommend next, if anything. If Members feel that appropriate action has already been taken or is planned, then no further consideration by scrutiny may be necessary. As a reminder, some of the possible options for Members to consider, in relation to the petitions at Annex A are:
 - Request a fuller report in particular cases and might be expected to do so when a petition has received substantial support.
 - Note receipt of the petition and the proposed action.
 - Request a more detailed report on the matter.
 - Ask the relevant decision maker or the appropriate Cabinet member to attend the Committee to answer questions in relation to it.
 - Undertake a detailed scrutiny review, gathering evidence and making recommendations to the decision maker.

- Refer the matter to Full Council where its significance requires a debate in that forum.
10. Following this meeting, the lead petitioner will be kept informed of this Committee's consideration of their petition, including any further action Members may decide to take.

Consultation

11. All Groups have been consulted throughout the process of considering more appropriate ways in which for the Council to deal with and respond to petitions. That consultation resulted in consideration of a report by Audit & Governance Committee, which, in turn, made recommendations to Full Council to bring about this change. Relevant Directorates are involved in the handling of the petitions outlined in Annex A.

Options

12. Members have a range of options before them in relation to their consideration of these petitions. Some of these are set out above in paragraph 9.

Implications

13. There are no known legal, financial, human resource or other implications directly associated with the recommendations in this report. However, depending upon what, if any, further actions Members agree to there may, of course, be specific implications for resources which would need to be addressed.

Risk Management

14. There are no known risk implications associated with the recommendations in this report. Members should, however, assess the reputational risk by ensuring appropriate and detailed consideration is given to petitions from the public.

Recommendations

15. Members are asked to consider the petitions received, as set out in Annex A, and agree an appropriate course of action in each case.

Reason: To ensure the Committee carries out its new requirements in relation to petitions.

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Report Approved



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2 January 2015

Wards Affected:

All



Background Papers: None

Annexes:

Annex A - Schedule of petitions received