

Report of the AD Governance & ICT

New Arrangements for Petitions

Summary

1. Members will recall their new role in relation to initially considering and dealing with petitions received by the Authority. This report sets out the role of the Committee and asks Members to consider those petitions received since the last meeting of the Committee in January 2015 and to comment on actions taken in relation to existing petitions. Attached at Annex A to this report is a schedule of all petitions considered to date by this Committee, including new ones received since the last meeting in January 2015.

Background

2. The current petitions process was considered and recommended by Audit and Governance Committee on 2 October 2014 and endorsed by Council on 9 October 2014. The process aims to ensure scrutiny of the actions taken in relation to petitions received either by Members or Officers.

3. The Process

The Council receives both paper copy and e-petitions on a wide variety of issues relating to it. All Directorates now ensure that details of those petitions, where they exceed 10 signatories, are provided to Democratic Services for inclusion on the attached Schedule (Annex A). Democratic Services then update that schedule according to the status of any actions planned or taken in relation to petitions and arrange for its consideration by this Committee. There are a number of options available to the Committee as set out in paragraph 4 below. These are not exhaustive. Every petition is, of course, unique, and it may be that Members feel a different course of action from the standard is necessary.

Options

4. Having considered the Schedule attached with the actions taken in relation to existing petitions and details of new petitions received, Members have a number of options in relation to those petitions:
 - Request a fuller report, if applicable, for instance when a petition has received substantial support;
 - Note receipt of the petition and the proposed action;
 - 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;

If Members feel that appropriate action has already been taken or is planned, then no further consideration by scrutiny may be necessary.

5. 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

- 6.. All Groups were consulted on the process of considering more appropriate ways in which the Council to deal with and respond to petitions, resulting in the current process. Relevant Directorates are involved in the handling of the petitions outlined in Annex A.

Implications

7. 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

8. 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

9. Members are asked to consider the petitions received and actions reported, as set out in the Schedule attached at 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.

Contact Details

Author:

Dawn Steel
Head of Civic & Democratic
Services
Tel No. 01904 551030
e: dawn.steel@york.gov.uk

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Andrew Docherty
AD Governance & ICT

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Wards Affected:

All



Background Papers: None

Annexes:

Annex A - Schedule of petitions received