



Report To: Civic Affairs Committee
Lead Officer: Legal and Democratic Services Manager

15 January 2015

Revision of the Council's Petitions Scheme

Purpose

1. To enable the Civic Affairs Committee to consider a revised version of the Council's Petitions Scheme.

Recommendations

2. That the Civic Affairs Committee recommends the revised Petitions Scheme, as set out in **Appendix B**, to Full Council for approval.
3. That a new paragraph be added to the Council's Standing Orders, as follows:

"Petitions

The Petitions Scheme set out in Part 5 (N) of the Council's Constitution will be followed for all petitions submitted to the authority."

Reasons for Recommendations

4. The revised Petitions Scheme seeks to simplify the existing Scheme so that it is easy to follow and understand for the benefit of anyone wishing to submit a petition, officers administering the Scheme and elected Members.

Background

5. The Council's Petitions Scheme was last revised in 2009 to include a provision for e-petitioning following the introduction of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.
6. A number of petitions have been received and considered by Full Council in the last 18 months. In facilitating the consideration of these petitions it became apparent that the Scheme was more complex than it needed to be and did not make the process of receiving or debating petitions as clear as it could be. A copy of the existing Scheme is attached at **Appendix A**.

Considerations

7. The revised Petitions Scheme is attached at **Appendix B** and simplifies the existing Scheme so that it is more in the form of a guidance note. It explains clearly the different types of petitions that can be submitted, how it can be submitted, the minimum requirements that must be met for a petition to be accepted and the various processes that need to be followed when a petition is debated at a meeting of Council or any other body.

8. The Localism Act 2011 repealed the requirement for local authorities to provide an e-petitioning facility. The Civic Affairs Committee is asked to support the retention of the Council's process for receiving e-petitions as it provides members of the public with another way of engaging with the Council and further supports the principles of paperless working.

Options

9. The Civic Affairs Committee could opt to retain the existing Petitions Scheme or make any further alterations to the revised Scheme.
10. The Civic Affairs Committee may wish to consider the triggers for the number of signatures required for holding a debate at a meeting of Full Council (currently 100) and the number of signatures required for holding an officer to account (currently 500). For comparative purposes, the triggers of neighbouring second-tier Councils in terms of the number of signatures required are set out below:

Council	Trigger for debate at Full Council	Trigger for holding officer to account
Cambridge City Council	500	50
East Cambridgeshire District Council	2000	Not part of scheme
Fenland District Council	500	500
Huntingdonshire District Council	500	500

Implications

11. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered:

Legal

12. The legislation relating to the requirement for petitions schemes to be in place are set out in paragraphs 5 and 8 of the report with regard to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 and the Localism Act 2011.

Consultation responses (including from the Youth Council)

13. No consultation on the content of this report has been carried out. It is usual practice for the Civic Affairs Committee to initially consider items of a Constitutional nature prior to submission to Full Council.

Effect on Strategic Aims

We will aim to engage with residents, parishes and businesses to ensure we deliver first class services and value for money

14. A clear and concise process for receiving and considering petitions will assist the Council in engaging with the community and support the above strategic aim.

Background Papers

No background papers were relied upon in the writing of this report.

Report Author: Graham Watts – Democratic Services Team Leader
Telephone: (01954) 713030