

Meeting: Council

Date: Wednesday 24 February 2010

Subject: Petitions –implementation of new duty

Report of: Councillor Graham Marsden on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee

The Council is asked to consider the Scrutiny Committee minute and resolution from the meeting held on 8 February 2010. These are set out below.

Further copies of the report to the Scrutiny Committee are available on request – please see end of this report. Copies may be seen on the Council’s website at: <http://www.eastbourne.gov.uk/council/meetings/?category=8212>

The Council is recommended to:-

Agree that the Local Democracy Manager in liaison with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee and the lead Cabinet member be given delegated authority to:-

- (a) Agree revised wording of the Council’s petitions scheme (section M in part 3 of the Council’s Constitution) so as to comply with the requirements of the legislation and statutory guidance, including:-
- determining the signature thresholds for debates;
 - specifying the senior officers who may be held to account at an open meeting of the Scrutiny Committee and the signature thresholds for such petitions; and
 - determining the minimum number of signatures for an ‘ordinary’ petition.
- (b) Review the petitions scheme and thresholds 12 months after implementation of the e-petitions facility and report to the Scrutiny Committee.
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Minute Extract
SCRUTINY 8 February 2010

***20 Petitions – Response to Government consultation and implementation of new duty**

The committee considered the report of the Local Democracy Manager informing members of a new duty to respond to petitions from people who either live, work or study in the council’s area. Councils must respond to 3 types of petition:

- An ordinary petition.
- A petition requiring full council debate.
- A petition calling for a senior officer to appear at a public session of an overview and scrutiny committee.

Members were advised that the council must set minimum signature thresholds for each type of petition. In addition councils must make provision for both paper and electronic petitions.

The Government were consulting on draft statutory guidance and timing of implementation of the new duty. The report included a suggested response to the consultation and also made recommendations to Council in respect of implementing the new duty.

In addition, the report outlined proposals for the East Sussex councils to collaborate on a shared e-petitions facility whereby people could submit and sign petitions electronically.

RESOLVED: That Scrutiny (1) Agree the response to government as set out in the appendix to the report.

(2) Note the likely timetable for implementation of the new duty.

(3) Endorse the joint approach being developed across East Sussex for a shared e-petitions facility and noting that this might require a common petitions scheme with the same signature thresholds.

(4) Note that the Local Democracy Manager and the Head of IT and T-Government in liaison with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee and the lead Cabinet member would decide all matters in relation to the introduction of an e-petitions facility.

(5) Seek full Council approval to the Local Democracy Manager in liaison with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee and the lead Cabinet member being given delegated authority to:-

(a) Agree revised wording of the Council's petitions scheme (section M in part 3 of the Council's Constitution) so as to comply with the requirements of the legislation and statutory guidance, including:-

- determining the signature thresholds for debates;
- specifying the senior officers who may be held to account at an open meeting of the Scrutiny Committee and the signature thresholds for such petitions; and
- determining the minimum number of signatures for an 'ordinary' petition.

(b) Review the petitions scheme and thresholds 12 months after implementation of the e-petitions facility and report to the Scrutiny Committee.

For a copy of the report please contact Local Democracy at the Town Hall, Eastbourne, BN21 4UG. Tel. (01323) 415022 or 415023.
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