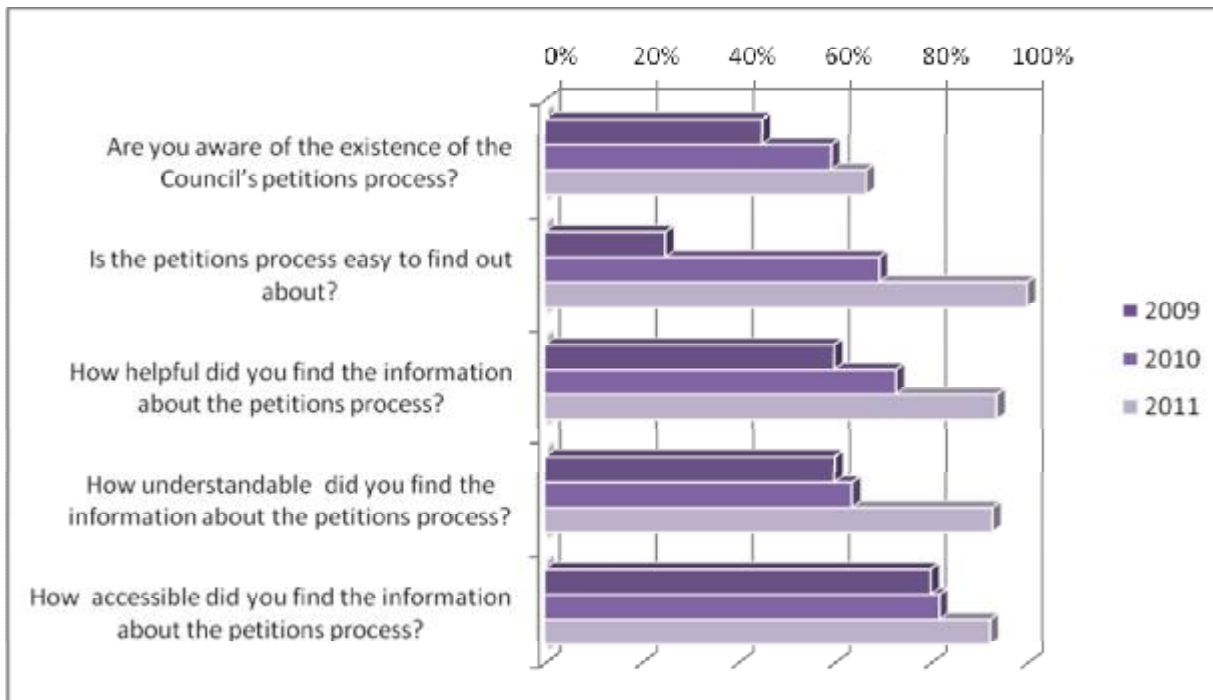


Renfrewshire Councils Petitions Process – Annual Consultation Results (2011)

We carry out an annual consultation to ensure our petitions' process meets the needs of the public. We asked the following questions:-

- Are you aware of the existence of the Council's petitions process and how could we improve awareness?
- How helpful, understandable and accessible did you find the information about the process and how could we improve the information we make available?

The results for the last three years are shown below.



We also asked 'How can we improve processing of petitions, including the use of ICT (Information Communication Technology) and has anything hindered your access to the process?' and some of the comments we received referred to (i) ease of navigation on the Council's website; (ii) not everyone having access to or being familiar with ICT; (iii) that the 'six-month' rule meant that issues which had short time factors couldn't be considered; (iv) that it was a protracted process; (v) that it would have been helpful if they had been asked to put in a written submission; (vi) the usefulness of the process; and (vii) that not all Board members asked a question. Comments on each of these issues are set out below:

(i) **Ease of navigation on the Council's website:** this is being discussed with the Council's communications team.

(ii) **Not everyone has access to or is familiar with ICT:** improvements to the processing of petitions via ICT will not preclude petitions being received and being processed in their present format. One helpful suggestion received was that the petitions form on the website should be interactive and this has been implemented.

(iii) **'six month' rule:** as detailed in paragraph 4.1(b) above, further to the decision of the meeting held on 7th February, 2011 that the clarity of the information provided to members of the public in relation to the submission of petitions be reviewed, this has been done and a revised leaflet is being prepared which explains in more detail that it is for the Board to

determine the validity of the petition and whether or not it will be heard, notwithstanding that it may not be valid in terms of the procedures.

(iv) **protracted process:** this is similar to comments received in the 2010 consultation. When petitions are received they are submitted to the first available meeting of the Board and this practice will continue. If the Board then seeks further information in relation to the petition this information, together with the petition, is again submitted to the next available meeting.

Information on the length of time a petition may take to be considered will be included in the revised leaflet. A 'mail in' box has been introduced which will help to reduce the time taken for petitions to be received in the Council.

(v) **written submissions:** the petitions form advises that written submissions may accompany the petition but should be no more than four A4 pages. Reference to this will be included in the leaflet.

(vi) **usefulness:** again similar comments were received in the 2010 consultation. The submission of a petition allows members of the public to have direct access to the Council and to raise awareness of a particular issue and stimulate debate and discussion regardless of the outcome of the petition. Research by the Scottish Parliament identified that people saw petitioning as 'a positive way of getting something done and making their voices heard'. Some petitioners may achieve all that the petitioner asks for, some only part of what they want, and some may not get what they want. However, the important point is to have the process which allows petitioners to raise a particular issue.

(vii) **Board member questioning:** the leaflet advises that "We [the Board] will invite you to make a statement..... We may ask you questions." The letter which is issued to petitioners inviting them to attend the meeting will clarify that members may ask questions but that this may not always be the case.