

Procedure for dealing with petitions (revised March, 2010)

1 Introduction

- a Petitions allow you to raise issues with us, either as an individual or on behalf of an organisation. Councillors cannot send us petitions but everyone else can. We will consider your petition as long as it keeps to the following procedures.
- b We will consider petitions at ordinary board meetings which are open to you and the press.

2 The role of the board

- a The board will consider each petition, listen to you and ask you questions and take the relevant action for each petition. This will be one of the following options:-
 - No action will be taken, in which case we will give you the reasons.
 - The board will pass the petition to the relevant director or policy board to investigate, with or without any specific recommendation.
 - If the petition relates to another public organisation, we may pass it on to that organisation with or without any specific recommendation.
- b The Board cannot change our decisions, although they may ask for us to review a particular policy or procedure.

3 Valid petitions

- a Petitions should be about what we are doing or issues that are relevant to our residents. Petitions can be about services provided by other organisations such as the police and health services, and you should know that the board has a limited say in what these organisations do.
- b You cannot make petitions for the following:-
 - Petitions about complaints or issues that should go through our normal procedures.
 - Petitions about individual planning, licensing or other applications (including decisions already taken) where there are already procedures in place.
 - Petitions about personal or business interests.
 - Petitions about complaints about the behaviour of individual officers or councillors which should go through the normal procedures.
 - Petitions about employees' terms and conditions of employment which should go through the normal procedures.

- Petitions which could be defamatory (contain information which is not true) or discriminatory or contain offensive or inappropriate language.
- Petitions which accuse someone of breaking the law or codes of practice.
- Petitions which are, or are from petitioners who are, just trying to cause trouble.
- Petitions which are the same or are very similar to petitions the board have already considered in the last 12 months.
- Petitions about any decision we have made as a Council, or decisions a board, committee, joint committee or officer has made in the last six months.
- Petitions which support one or more political parties.

4 **Format of petitions**

- a You should send in petitions using the template, which is in the appendix. If you are sending us a petition, you must be an individual or an organisation and will need to provide the following information. You are known as the main petitioner.
- You should include your details including your name, address, phone number and e-mail address.
 - You should include the text of the petition, which should clearly show the issue and what action is wanted.
 - You should include any extra information you have to support the petition on no more than four sides of A4 paper.
 - You should include any action already taken to deal with the issue.
 - Please also list the names of other petitioners, if there are any.

5 **How petitions are dealt with?**

- a Finance & Corporate Services staff check all petitions to make sure that they keep to the procedures. We will pass all valid petitions to the board to consider. We will prepare a summary report for the board about any petitions which do not keep to the terms of these procedures. The board will then decide whether or not these petitions are valid.
- b If there is any missing information, such as no contact address, we will speak to you about this. We will speak to you about the terms of your petition to bring it in line with the procedures.

- c We will tell you if your petition is valid and give you a reference number. We will give you five working days' notice of the date of the meeting where we will consider your petition.
- d Depending on the rules about access to information, we will consider all petitions in public. We will ask you to make a statement (lasting no more than 10 minutes) to support your petition. You can bring one supporter to speak on your behalf. You and/or your supporter should be prepared to answer questions from the board.
- e The board can stop you or your supporter speaking if you talk about something which would have made the petition invalid if it was included in the petition, or if you behave in an inappropriate way when you present your petition or statement.
- f The board can consider two or more petitions together if they are similar or if they deal with the same subject. You will be told beforehand about this and will be asked to make either joint statements or individual statements for each petition.
- g Where appropriate, our officers will be present to provide any information about the petition that may be necessary.
- h The board will reach a decision about the petition at the meeting and this will be confirmed in writing. The board can take longer to consider a petition if they are waiting for more information.
- i The procedures depend on our procedural standing orders which deal with how our meetings are organised.

6 **Annual report**

We will put details about each petition the board has considered on our website. The board will also consider in its annual report the petitions considered and the outcomes achieved.

7 **Reviewing procedures**

The board will review these procedures every year.