

**REPORT TO ENGAGEMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP**

**REPORT OF: Legal Services Manager (Monitoring Officer)**

**REPORT NO: LEG066**

**DATE: 11<sup>th</sup> May 2010**

<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>PETITIONS SCHEME</b>	
<b>KEY DECISION OR POLICY FRAMEWORK PROPOSAL:</b>	N/A	
<b>PORTFOLIO HOLDER: NAME AND DESIGNATION:</b>	Councillor Ray Auger – Access and Engagement	
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	Lucy Youles - Legal Services Manager (Monitoring Officer) Tel:01476 406105. e-mail:l.youles@southkesteven.gov.uk	
<b>INITIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT:</b>	Carried out and appended to the report:N/A	Full impact assessment Required:N/A
<b>Equality and Diversity</b>		
<b>FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT:</b>	This report is publicly available via the Local Democracy link on the Council's website: <a href="http://www.southkesteven.gov.uk">www.southkesteven.gov.uk</a>	
<b>BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>	Report to Council DEM - 22.4.10 Model Petition Scheme The Department of Communities and Local Government Statutory Guidance on Petition Schemes	

## 1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the PDG consider the terms of the petitions scheme as adopted by Council at its meeting on the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2010, establish a task group to consider issues relating to the petition scheme to report back findings to the PDG to make recommendations to the Portfolio Holder for Access and Engagement in respect of the following:-

- Designation of a Petitions Officer, to be responsible for recording all petitions received, responding to petition organisers, ensuring that petitions are reported to Council, Scrutiny Committee or to Cabinet Members as required, updating a Petitions Site on the authority's website once established, inviting petition organisers to attend meetings. It is recommended that this work is best handled by the Democratic Services Team, and that the Head of Legal and Democratic Services Officer be designated as Petitions Officer for this purpose;
- Council has determined the number of signatures required for petitions as 2,500 for a petition to hold an officer to account to be referred to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration and 5000 for a petition for debate to be referred to Council for consideration. These figures can be revised at any time if they are found to act as a deterrent to petitions.

- The authority needs to decide who will be provided with copies of petitions. It is suggested that Group Leaders and ward Councillor be provided with a copy of each petition within 5 working days of receipt, at the same time as it is put on the Petitions Site on the Council website.
- The authority will in practice need to set a maximum time to be allowed for discussion to discharge its ordinary business effectively. Accordingly, it is suggested that a maximum of 30 minutes be allowed at any meeting, but that this can be extended by the Chairperson when appropriate.
- Any other issues relating to petition schemes which the task group consider appropriate to refer to the Portfolio Holder for decision.

## **2. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT/DECISION REQUIRED**

The purpose of the report is:

- to inform the PDG with as much information about petition schemes as is available to enable it to consider the issues relating to petition schemes.
- To make suggestions as to the issues for consideration relating to the petitions scheme to enable the PDG to make recommendations to the Portfolio Holder for Access and Engagement for decision.

## **3. CONTRIBUTION TO PRIORITY THEME**

The consideration of issues relating to the petition scheme will contribute to the “quality organisation” priority by ensuring relevant issues are considered.

## **4. DETAILS OF THE REPORT**

4.1 At its meeting on the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2010, Council approved the model scheme for petitions (attached to this report as **APPENDIX 1**) as the approved petition scheme in readiness for the deadline for introduction of petition schemes on the 15<sup>th</sup> June 2010. This is a requirement of statutory regulations introduced under sections 10-22 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. As a result of the timing of the introduction of the regulations, a petitions scheme had to be approved by Council at its meeting on the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2010 to meet the statutory deadline. To enable appropriate consideration to be given to the scheme, it was referred to the PDG for consideration.

4.2 The Department of Communities and Local Government Guidance is attached at **APPENDIX 2**. Members are asked to take into account this guidance when considering the issues arising.

## **5. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

Members should consider any issues relating to petition schemes which they consider relevant for recommendation to the Portfolio Holder.

## **6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING FINANCIAL, PEOPLE)**

Any petition scheme, its management and administration must be met within current budgets.

**7. RISK AND MITIGATION (INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY AND DATA QUALITY)**

None applicable

**8. ISSUES ARISING FROM EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

None applicable

**9. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

The scheme will enable any concerns by local residents on crime and disorder matters to be referred to the Council.

**10. COMMENTS OF SECTION 151 OFFICER**

Any comments that the Section 151 Officer has will be reported at the meeting.

**11. COMMENTS OF MONITORING OFFICER**

The comments of the Monitoring Officer are included in this report and the Monitoring Officer will attend the meeting of the PDG

**12. COMMENTS OF OTHER RELEVANT SERVICE MANAGERS**

None relevant

**13. APPENDICES:**

**Appendix 1 – The model scheme**

**Appendix 2 – The Department of Communities and Local Government Guidance**