

Petitions Update

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 imposed a duty on local authorities to respond to petitions and to tell local people what action was going to be taken.
- 1.2 This duty came into effect on 15 June 2010, with a requirement for each local authority to have an e-petitions facility available by 15 December 2010.
- 1.3 The Council approved a new petition scheme on 18 May 2010

2. Withdrawal of the statutory guidance on petitions

- 2.1 The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) issued statutory guidance on the duty to respond to petitions' on 30th March 2010.
- 2.2 However the current government has revoked this statutory guidance with effect from 24 September 2010, to allow for more local discretion in dealing with both paper and online petitions.
- 2.3 The requirements of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 in relation to Petitions however currently remain in force, including the requirement to offer an e-petition facility, which will come into effect on 15th December this year.
- 2.4 Local authorities therefore remain legally bound to comply with the minimum requirements of the statutory duty. CLG have said however that local authorities should consider how they approach the petitions requirements, including making arrangements to set up an e-petition facility, having regard to the government's commitment to remove unnecessary prescription for local authorities and the priority of cutting out all wasteful spending.
- 2.5 Wiltshire Council will continue to deal with any petition received in accordance with its petition scheme, which meets the statutory requirements, and in accordance with the constitution which emphasises the need for petitions to be dealt with flexibly.
- 2.6 A new e-Petitions facility has been brought online by Democratic Services, to meet the forthcoming requirement, using the existing

Modern.gov content management system, at no extra cost to the council. It is now available for use at the Wiltshire Council website at this web address:

<http://moderngov.wiltshire.council/mgEPetitionListDisplay.aspx>

3. Petitions Received

- 3.1 As of 28 October, **six** petitions have been received by Wiltshire Council, since the last Council meeting on 13 July, with a further petition expected, to be presented to the 09 November Council meeting. Further details are shown at Appendix 1 to this report.

Recommendations

That Council:

- 1) notes the report, the petitions received and the actions being taken, as set out in the Appendix to this report;**
- 2) notes the withdrawal of the statutory guidance relating to how local authorities deal with petitions and**
- 3) notes the activation of a new e-Petitions facility in advance of the statutory deadline of 15 December 2010, available to all those who live or work in Wiltshire, or use Wiltshire Council services.**

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