

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Date of Meeting	Thursday 24 February 2022
Report Subject	Draft Petitions Scheme
Report Author	Chief Officer (Governance)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Members may recall from previous reports that Section 42 of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021, which comes into force with effect from 5th May 2022 places a duty on principal councils to make and publish a petitions scheme. Council has previously supported this, in principle, when consulted on the contents of the Local Government & Elections Bill.

There is a 'Petitions' item on the agenda for each ordinary meeting of Council. That is for Members to bring to the Council's attention petitions which have been raised within their ward. This is recognised as being an important part of the relationship between a Member and the people who live and/ or work in their ward. That process will be retained.

The officers have drafted a petitions scheme, based on the criteria of suitability for questions at Council. This has been in place for some years and following review is still considered to be suitable for our purpose. The Petitions scheme is to enable members of the public to organise and submit petitions directly to the County Council. The submission of electronic petitions can be managed using the Modern.gov software which supports the committee system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Council approves the petitions scheme for inclusion in the Constitution and adopts consistent criteria for petitions that are deemed acceptable
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE NEED FOR A PETITIONS SCHEME
1.01	Section 42 of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021, which comes into force with effect from 5 th May 2022 places a duty on principal councils to make and publish a petitions scheme.
1.02	This is in addition, rather than as a replacement of the current facility for Members to submit petitions at Council meetings. Those arrangements will continue (see comment below about a proposed amendment to the current process), and still be subject to an annual report. As in previous years, such reports would be made to the last scheduled Council meeting of a municipal year.
1.03	<p>Officers have prepared a draft Petitions scheme, which is attached as Appendix 1. It seems appropriate to apply criteria for which petitions will/will not be accepted. The proposed criteria for acceptability are based on those which we have had for some years for public questions to Council.</p> <p>Those criteria should apply equally to petitions submitted via either route for consistency. An amendment to the Council Meeting Procedure rules will need to be made to add these criteria to the process whereby councillors submit petitions to Full Council.</p>
1.04	The petitions scheme was considered by the Constitution and Democratic Services Committee at its meeting on 26 January 2022. It suggested a number of improvements to the draft scheme that are shown in tracked changes in Appendix 1.
1.05	Once adopted by Council, the Petitions scheme will be published on the Council's website.
1.06	The submission of electronic petitions can be managed using the Modern.gov software which supports the Committee system.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	It is anticipated that the introduction of this statutory scheme will have few resource implications.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	Constitution and Democratic Services Committee.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	The adoption of a Petitions scheme is a statutory requirement.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 - Draft Petitions Scheme - with tracked changes Appendix 2 - Draft Petitions Scheme – clean copy

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None Contact Officer: Gareth Owens, Chief Officer (Governance) Telephone: 01352 702344 E-mail: Gareth.legal@flintshire.gov.uk

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	None