

**EXTRACT FROM THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD ON THE 13TH JULY 2010****BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL****GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

**4.00pm 13 JULY 2010
COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL**

MINUTES

Present: Councillors: Oxley (Chairman), Simpson (Deputy Chairman), Brown, Fallon-Khan, Kennedy, Mears, Mitchell, Randall, Simson and Watkins.

PART ONE**12. PETITIONS SCHEME**

- 12.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Strategy & Governance, concerning the new statutory requirements for councils in relation to handling petitions, including a requirement to adopt a Petitions Scheme. The report outlined the new provisions and recommended the adoption of a Petitions Scheme for Brighton & Hove City Council.
- 12.2 The Acting Assistant Head of Law explained that, while many of the provisions within the scheme were mandatory, wherever possible the council had used the available flexibility to provide maximum accessibility.
- 12.3 The Chairman reported that, unlike the existing scheme, the new scheme would make it permissible for Members to sign petitions. He explained that the report advised that, subject to approval by Full Council on 15 July, the scheme would come into force immediately and that it was proposed that an additional recommendation be added to reflect this.
- 12.4 In response to a question from Councillor Kennedy, the Acting Assistant Head of Law advised that, following approval, the new scheme would be uploaded to the council's website.
- 12.5 In response to questions from Councillor Mitchell, the Acting Assistant Head of Law confirmed that Members would be able to sign both paper and e-petitions, and that the

relevant decision-making body will have to consider all of the available options in determining the council's response to any petition.

- 12.6 The Chairman stated the proposed scheme had been influenced by recent experiences with petitions, including the Brighton History Centre e-petition, to create an inclusive and workable scheme.
- 12.7 Councillor Watkins raised concerns around the visibility of the names of signatories of e-petitions given that visitors to the council's website could easily print a list of the signatories of any e-petition.
- 12.8 The Head of Law advised that it was important to show the names of signatories to give users confidence in the credibility of the facility. He added that people could also request to see the names on any paper petition submitted to the council.
- 12.9 Councillor Simpson suggested that it be made clear to users that names would be visible on the website.
- 12.10 Councillor Simson advised that verification of email addresses was key because there was no way to prevent signatories using fictional names.
- 12.11 Councillor Kennedy suggested that officers consider using wording from the Prime Minister's petition website Number10.
- 12.12 The Acting Assistant Head of Law advised Members that the committee would review operation of the new scheme at a future meeting and that the review would include the opportunity to make any necessary amendments.

12.13 **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND:**

- (1) That the Petitions Scheme as detailed in Appendix One to the report be adopted as the Council's scheme for handling petitions pursuant to S11 Local Democracy Act 2009; and
- (2) That the Council's constitution be amended in accordance with the draft amended Procedure Rules as detailed in Appendix Two to the report.
- (3) **That, subject to approval by the Full Council, the scheme come into force immediately.**