

REPORT TO COUNCIL

18 MARCH 2026

REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM

Revisions to the Council's Constitution

Summary

This report asks Council to approve revisions to the Council's Constitution following consideration by Member' Advisory Panel and Cabinet.

Recommendations

That:

- 1) The wording within the Council's Constitution is amended to be clear and consistent that if there are over 1000 signatures on a petition, then referral to Council is automatic and that only final responses, not all correspondence, will be published.
- 2) The Council's Constitution specifies that electronic petitions are only accepted via the Modern.Gov platform to enable the Council to set the parameters of the petition (i.e. that the petition can only be signed by a person if they live, work or study in the Borough).
- 3) The Council's Constitution is amended to extend the composition of the Scrutiny Liaison Committee to include the Group Leader and Deputy Group Leader of each political party on the Council (where they are not already a member of the Forum in another role).

Detail

Petition Scheme

1. The petition scheme states that "Whenever possible we will also publish all correspondence relating to the petition (all personal details will be removed)." It is clearly not appropriate to publish all correspondence in relation to a petition. However, it would be in order to publish any final response and it is proposed that the wording within the Constitution is amended accordingly.
2. There is also some inconsistency around the use of the word "considered". The first page of the petition scheme states "If a petition has 1,000 signatures or more, it will be **considered for referral to a full Council meeting** for a full and proper debate. The petition scheme additional information then states "If your petition has received 1000 signatures or more, it will **automatically be referred to a meeting of full Council** for a full and proper debate". Page 5 of the petition scheme states "If a petition contains more than 1,000 signatures **it will be considered for debate by the full Council**. This

means that the issue raised in the petition will be discussed at a meeting which all councillors can attend. The Council will endeavour to consider the petition at its next meeting, although on some occasions this may not be possible, and consideration will then take place at the following meeting". Members' Advisory Panel proposed that the wording within the Constitution is amended to be clear and consistent that, if there are over 1000 signatures referral to full Council is automatic.

3. The Modern.Gov Committee administration system has e-petition functionality which allows the Council to be able to set the parameters of the petition before it goes live i.e. making it explicitly clear that persons should only sign the petition if they live, work or study in the Borough. Anyone signing a petition would tick a box saying which of these criteria they meet and then giving the address where they live, work or study which will ensure they are a valid signatory. It has proved problematic accepting them from Change.Org as we have been unable to ensure that the lead petitioner makes the public aware of the parameters that apply to the Council's petitions scheme i.e. live work or study in the Borough. Members' Advisory Panel therefore proposed that in future the Council should only accept electronic petitions submitted through the Modern.Gov platform.
4. The submission of hard copy petitions will still be permitted.

Composition of Scrutiny Liaison Forum

5. Under the Constitution, the role of Scrutiny Liaison Forum is to:
 - a) meet annually to provide a Forum to foster and develop a closer, more constructive working relationship between the Cabinet Members, the Corporate Management Team and Scrutiny Chairs and thereby assist in the efficient and effective working of scrutiny and the scrutiny work programme in order to deliver the Council's key priorities and secure added value and to consider the Scrutiny agenda for the forthcoming municipal year;
 - b) receive briefings from Cabinet Members, Corporate Management Team and Scrutiny Chairs on emerging policy development areas;
 - c) consider the current scrutiny work programme position and progress in delivering its aims;
 - d) consider and ensure support for the current scrutiny work programme and its delivery;
 - e) consider any special issues which may require urgent policy development advice or scrutiny work; and
 - f) undertake appropriate liaison with the Executive Scrutiny Committee on future policy development issues and review topics.
6. The membership of the Forum is comprised of Cabinet members, members of the Corporate Management Team, Executive Scrutiny Chair and Select Committee Chairs.
7. When the Forum was first established, there were opposition scrutiny chairs in place and the membership of the Forum therefore facilitated cross party informal discussions on the scrutiny work programme ahead of consideration by Executive Scrutiny Committee. Recognising that opposition chairs are not currently in place, Members' Advisory Panel proposed that the membership of the Scrutiny Liaison Forum be

extended to include the Group Leader and Deputy Group Leader of each political party on the Council (where they are not already a member of the Forum in another role).

Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment

8. None.

Corporate Parenting Implications

9. None.

Financial and Legal Implications

10. No financial and legal implications are identified at this stage.

Risk Assessment

11. This report is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

Wards Affected and Consultation with Ward/ Councillors

12. Not ward specific

Background Papers

13. None

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