

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Date: 04 September 2017

Venue: East Northamptonshire House, Cedar Drive, Thrapston

Time: 7.30pm

Present: Councillors: Richard Lewis (Chairman)
 Glenvil Greenwood-Smith (Vice Chairman)
 Steven North (Leader of the Council)
 Glenn Harwood MBE (Deputy Leader of the Council)

Tony Boto
 David Brackenbury
 Wendy Brackenbury
 Val Carter
 Roger Glithero JP

David Jenney
 Andy Mercer
 Sarah Peacock
 Phillip Stearn

146. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Helen Harrison and Dudley Hughes JP.

147. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2017 were approved and signed by the Chairman, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Val Carter in the list of apologies.

148. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor	Item	Nature of Interest	DPI	Other Interest
Richard Lewis	Discretionary Rate Relief Policy	Has a small business premises		Yes
Sarah Peacock	Taxi Licensing Policy Review and Fare Increase	Family member is in the taxi trade as a private hire operator	Yes (left meeting)	
	Funding for Phase 5e East Northamptonshire Greenway	Is Chairman of the Greenway Board		Yes

149. QUESTIONS UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10.3

No questions were submitted under Procedure Rule 10.3.

150. MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES AND WORKING PARTIES

a) Housing Policy Working Party – 5 July 2017

The minutes of the meeting of the Housing Policy Working Party held on 5 July 2017 were received (see pages 196 to 199).

b) Personnel Sub-Committee – 10 July 2017

The minutes of the meeting of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 10 July 2017 were received (see pages 200 to 202).

Councillor Sarah Peacock left the meeting for the following item.

151. TAXI POLICY REVIEW AND FARE INCREASES

The Health Protection Manager presented a report which sought to make changes to the ENC Taxi Licensing Policy and to allow an increase to the current taxi fares rate for those vehicles licenced by this Authority.

Recent developments associated with employment in the UK, and the licensed taxi trade in particular, had highlighted a number of areas in the current Taxi Licensing Policy that needed to be updated. Changes had been made to the Policy and its supporting appendices, including the addition of a new appendix on documentation supporting the right to work in the UK. In addition, ENC's taxi trade had requested an increase in the current fares structure to accommodate the increases in the costs associated with operating the trade.

With regards to the Taxi Fares Structure, it was proposed to raise the initial charge to £2.80 for the first half mile or part thereof, and a reduction in the length of the charging unit to 1/15.5 miles (approximately 113.55 yards). The combined increase requested would vary dependent upon the length of fare but equated to approximately 10%. It was being recommended that the proposed increases be agreed, but in two stages, with the increase in the initial charge from £2.50 to £2.80 to take effect as soon after a final decision had been made, and the decrease in the length of the charging unit to occur six months after the increase of the initial charge.

A six week consultation would now be undertaken with the taxi trade, neighbouring licensing authorities, licensing responsible authorities, councillors and the public.

It was moved and seconded that an amendment be made to the recommendations that if there was to be any significant changes made following the consultation, that the Taxi Licensing Policy and Taxi Fares Strategy be brought back to the Committee for consideration.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the revisions presented in the Taxi Licensing Policy be accepted and that the Policy now be submitted for consultation, subject to any minor amendments agreed by the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee;
- (ii) That the preferred staged increase in the Taxi Fares Strategy be accepted and that the Strategy now be submitted for consultation; and

- (iii) That if there are any significant changes to the Taxi Licensing Policy and Taxi Fares Strategy following consultation, then the Policy and Strategy be brought back to the Committee for consideration.

(Reason: To ensure that the Council complies with its legal and public safety obligations in respect to taxi licensing.)

Councillor Sarah Peacock returned to the meeting.

152. HOMELESSNESS MONITORING STATISTICS AND TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION COSTS

The Executive Director presented a report which provided Members with details of the level and causes of homelessness in the district, together with Bed and Breakfast costs.

The number of homelessness applications made to ENC under the legislation, together with the number of those whom the Council accepted a full duty to provide accommodation and the number of homelessness preventions undertaken through the Housing Options Contract was:

East Northamptonshire Council Homelessness Statistics					
Year	No. of Homeless Applications	No. of Homeless Acceptances	% of Applications Accepted	No. of Homelessness Preventions	Acceptances plus Preventions
2014/15	114	42	37	242	284
2015/16	125	48	38	266	314
2016/17	135	59	44	281	340
Q1 2017/18	40	20	50	77	97

The figures showed that there continued to be a slow, steady increase in the number of homeless applications. There were various reasons for homelessness and the reasons for those accepted as homeless were:

Reason for homelessness	2016/17	Q1 2017/18
Parents no longer willing to accommodate	10	2
Other relatives/friends no longer willing to accommodate	2	1
Non-violent breakdown of relationship with partner	6	2
Violent breakdown of relationship with partner	7	1
Other forms of violence	1	0
Harassment, threats, intimidation	1	0
Mortgage repossession	0	0
Rent arrears – registered provider	0	0
Rent arrears - private sector	1	0
Loss of rented through termination of Assured Shorthold Tenancy	24	11
Loss of private rented other reason	5	3
Left hospital	2	0
Total	59	20

The significant increase in the cost of B&B from 2015/16 to 2016/17 was likely to continue into this year and beyond as a result of the Homelessness Reduction Act. The Council had resolved to increase the homelessness B&B budget to £5,000 in recognition of the anticipated increase.

During debate on the item, Members highlighted that the increase in temporary accommodation costs was having an effect throughout the country and could become a considerable problem for the District and which may require a strategic review in the future. The introduction of letting agency fees was also having an impact with many tenants now unable to afford the size of up front costs and deposits being demanded. The payment of Housing Benefit direct to tenants instead of landlords had also caused problems.

RESOLVED:

That the continuing increase in the level of homelessness and B&B costs in the District and the further pressures anticipated as a result of the Homelessness Reduction Act be noted.

(Reason: To ensure that Councillors are aware of the changing situation in respect of homelessness and of the consequent impact on the delivery of the Council's homelessness service.)

153. PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER (DOG CONTROLS)

The Waste Manager presented a report which sought approval to replace existing Dog Control Orders (DCO) with Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO) as required by the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, and in addition to make new PSPOs for additional locations that had specific requirements. A revised appendix which listed the proposed PSPOs was tabled.

In October 2014, the Government implemented most of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 which gave local authorities and others more effective powers to tackle anti-social behaviour. The new powers brought together a number of other anti-social behaviour powers into a single Act, including the Dog Control Orders Regulations 2006.

The Council was now seeking to create PSPOs for the following types of land:

- Land such as playgrounds/play areas, which were used by children
- Sports fields where organised sporting events took place on a regular basis
- Any land, which was open to the air (on at least one side and that remained opened to the air at all times) that the public were entitled to have access to within the District

Following consultation on the proposed new order, when approximately 350 responses had been received, it was now recommended that the proposed order had the following main elements:

- A requirement that people cleaned up after their dog if it defecated on public land.
- A provision requiring people to place their dog on a lead.
- A provision prohibiting dogs from all outdoor enclosed children's play areas in the County.
- A requirement for dogs to remain on a lead at all times in certain locations.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the equality implications relating to the report be noted;
- (ii) That the publication of the dog related Public Space Protection Orders, as listed in the revised Appendix 1 of the report, be approved; and

- (iii) That the purchase of new signage and fixings be approved, the costs of which will be met from existing Waste Services budgets.

(Reason: To accord with legislation.)

154. FUNDING FOR PHASE 5E OF THE EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE GREENWAY

The Community Partnerships Manager presented a report which sought approval for the release of funding for the construction of Phase 5e of the East Northamptonshire Greenway.

Phase 5e would offer Irthlingborough residents and others another access point to the Greenway which would link the south-west part of the town to the main linear route, through the Irthlingborough Lakes and Meadows. The works would be a combination of constructing a complete new footpath and cycle way in certain parts of the route and upgrading the surface in other parts. A significant part of Phase 5e ran through the wetland areas of the designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and for that reason, The Wildlife Trust, as a partner of the Greenway, would procure and oversee all of the works associated with this phase.

Funding for Phase 5e was available from the s106 contributions from an Irthlingborough housing development for which the total contribution for the Greenway was £76,563.50 and under the terms of the s106, the money had to be spent by September 2019. The costs associated with full construction works on Phase 5e, including provision for The Wildlife Trust's costs for managing the works and VAT was £20,392. It was proposed that a provisional sum of around £10.5k was also made available to facilitate the upgrading of the existing surfaces on Phase 5e, making a maximum sum available of £31,000.

Following a question from Members, officers undertook to investigate the VAT regulations to clarify whether The Wildlife Trust would be able to reclaim the VAT for the work or whether other options could be examined including whether ENC let the contract directly and then reclaimed the VAT.

RESOLVED:

That the release of Section 106 monies for Phase 5e of the East Northamptonshire Greenway, the maximum amount available being set at £31,000, be approved.

(Reason: To support the delivery of a green corridor for cycling and walking through East Northamptonshire that provides opportunities for active and healthy lifestyles.)

155. DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF POLICY

The Head of Customer and Community Services presented a report which sought amendments to the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy.

Each non-domestic property had a rateable value (RV) that was set by the Valuation Office Agency and which was used to calculate the level of business rates charged to the occupier. The 2017 revaluation had resulted in the business rates bills for some non-domestic properties in the District increasing when compared to the last revaluation in 2010.

In the Spring Budget, the Chancellor announced that a new scheme of relief would be made available for those ratepayers who faced large increases as a result of the loss of small business or rural rate relief due to revaluation, known as the Support for Small Businesses scheme. The Chancellor also announced that the Government would make available £300m of extra funding over the next four years for local authorities to provide discretionary rate relief to those businesses facing the steepest increases in their bills as a result of revaluation. Therefore, there was a need to develop a local policy and scheme which would be known as the Local Discretionary Relief scheme (LDR).

ENC's allocation of the Government's funding was:

Allocation of funding				
2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Total
£100K	£42K	£17K	£2K	£161K

An initial analysis had identified that there were 132 properties that had had an increase in their rate bill due to the revaluation; of these, five pubs still had a small amount left to pay despite having received the £1000 pub relief. If the Council determined to award LDR to all of the remaining properties the total amount of relief granted would be around £92.5K for the year 2017-18.

It was proposed that, for businesses to qualify for LDR, they must meet the following criteria:

- the property was occupied and had had an increase in its rate bill
- the property had a rateable value of less than £200K
- the business did not receive a nil bill due to receiving other reliefs
- the business was not a charity already in receipt of 80% mandatory rate relief
- the business was not a major national or multi-national company
- the property was not occupied by a precepting authority
- the business was liable for the bill in 2016/17 and was therefore directly impacted by the revaluation.

The discretionary rate relief policy had been amended to include all the above changes.

The discretionary rate relief policy needed to be reviewed in its entirety due to changes over the last few years and to ensure that the reliefs being applied were appropriate. However, the future position with regards to the retention of business rates locally remained uncertain and the application of the changes referred to above were needed as a matter of urgency to ensure that funding was distributed accordingly and in a timely manner. Once the changes had been applied and the rules on business rates retention had been set out by the Government, a full review of the policy would need to be undertaken at the appropriate time.

During debate on the item, Members acknowledged that revaluation had put a burden on small businesses and fully supported the use of the grant funding, along with a full review of the policy at the appropriate time.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That a consultation on the amendments to the Council's Discretionary Rate Relief Policy for application of the funding for year 1 be approved;

- (ii) That authority be delegated to the Finance Manager and Head of Customer and Community Services, in consultation with the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee, to approve the amendments to the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy, subject to satisfactory consultation; and
- (iii) That a full review of the Discretionary Rates Relief Policy to look at all reliefs given be approved.

(Reason: To meet consultation requirements and to enable reliefs to be granted promptly following the consultation period.)

156. PETITONS SCHEME

The Executive Director presented a report which sought to amend the Council's Petitions Scheme to reflect current circumstances and to review the provision and options for providing an e-petition facility under the scheme.

Since the introduction of the Petitions Scheme in 2010, circumstances had changed and it was considered that the scheme now needed to be brought up to date. The statutory requirement for the Council to operate an electronic petition facility had been repealed by the Localism Act 2011 and the expiry of the current contract provided an opportunity for the Council to consider whether it wished to continue to provide an e-petition scheme.

ENC's e-petition scheme was supported by specialist software and the contract for this software would expire on 10 November 2017. The annual cost of using this software was currently £1,300 per year and the Council had spent a total of £9,600 operating the software since its introduction in November 2010. Since its introduction, the e-petition scheme had been used on seven occasions.

If the Council wished to continue to provide a facility for members of the public to submit petitions on-line, there were a number of options available:

1. Continue with the current arrangement using the current software embedded in the Council's website.
2. Amend the Council's Petitions Scheme and no longer provide a facility to receive electronic petitions.
3. Signpost those wishing to submit Petitions to free to use e-petition websites.

R.7 RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL:

- (i) That the Equalities Impact Assessment be noted;
- (ii) That the proposed updates to the Petitions Scheme be approved (see pages 203 to 209);
- (iii) That Option 3, to cease provision of a dedicated ENC e-petition system and signpost those wishing to submit e-petitions to a free external e-petition site, be approved; and

- (iv) That the Executive Director be authorised to further amend the Petitions Scheme as necessary to incorporate any revisions to the Scheme if provision of a dedicated ENC e-petition system is agreed by Council as per the previous recommendation.

(Reason: To ensure that the Council's Petition Scheme remains compliant with its obligations to provide accessible services in a cost effective way.)

Chairman



**Housing Policy Working Party
Minutes of meeting held on
Wednesday 5th July 2017 at 2pm
in the Kasen Room**

Present

Councillors	Tony Boto (Chairman Richard Lewis Steven North Sarah Peacock Helen Harrison	CllrTB CllrRL CllrSN Cllr SP Cllr HH
--------------------	--	---

Also in attendance

Head of Planning Services	Paul Bland	PB
Housing Enabling Officer	Aine Cooper	AC
Housing Services Officer	Louise Bagley	LB

		<u>ACTION</u>
1	Appointment of Chairman	
1.1	Councillor Tony Boto was appointed as Chair of the Working Party	
2	Appointment of Vice-Chairman	
2.1	Councillor Helen Harrison was appointed as Vice Chair of the Working Party	
3	Planning for Larger & Higher Value Housing : Employers' Survey and Final Overview <i>Presentation of Final Report Richard Turkington, Housing Vision</i>	
3.1	Paul Bland presented the results of the Employers Survey on behalf of Richard Turkington who was unable to attend the meeting due to illness. The Employers Survey had attempted to gather employer's views in relation to the supply of higher value housing and establish whether its adequacy may be acting as a brake on the economic wellbeing and growth of the area. The survey had focused on:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers who had moved to the district in the past 12 months or who were planning to do so • Employers who had expanded their business in the past 12 months or who were currently expanding • 21 Employers had been approached and of those, 14 named contacts then followed up with a telephone interview. • 250 Chamber of Commerce members in East Northamptonshire approached by questionnaire and a reminder. 	
3.2	Members discussed the responses and noted that:	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There had been difficulty gaining any kind of response from some employers • 11 businesses did not have the information required – a ‘catch all response’ • 5 businesses did not respond, often after being referred to the HR department • 4 businesses completed the questionnaire • No response from the Chamber of Commerce Members 	
3.3	<p>Members discussed the results and noted the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 businesses had no problems with supply • 1 business said too many high value homes being built • 1 business had no problem accessing high value new build housing because <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. ‘non locals’ in senior positions were not relocating, preferring to either retain a home elsewhere and rent or to commute. II. An example was given of one senior manager who lived in Yorkshire and was commuting from there daily III. An important finding confirmed by estate agents: senior managers were highly mobile. 	
3.4	<p>Members noted the conclusions from the survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No evidence that the supply of high value new homes was a problem for senior managers • If a problem had existed then a higher response rate would have been received • Some evidence gathered of the type and scale of any problems • A highly mobile sector <p>A discussion took place and members agreed that it was important to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continue to develop a mix of housing • try to bridge the divide between the North and the South of the district • stretch policy on aspirational basis and focus on particular areas • justify aspirational policy with cross department working • Make Towns attractive enough for Managers • Work with smaller builders 	
3.5	<p>Cllr HH noted the loss of the Primary School in her ward, and potentially other community facilities, and the need for new development in the North of the district to assist with supporting and maintaining sustainable communities.</p>	
3.6	<p>The Working Party noted that there was no clear evidence emerging from the survey of employers, mainly because of the disappointing lack of response from them.</p>	
3.7	<p>The Working Party concluded that did not wish to have any further work done on the report and they regarded it is now complete and ready for presentation to the appropriate ENC Committee.</p>	

4	Apologies	
4.1	Apologies were received from Sharn Matthews, Carol Conway, Richard Palmer, Jenny Walker.	To note
5	Minutes of the Meeting of 17 May 2017	
5.1	The minutes were approved and signed by the chairman.	
6	Matters arising	
6.1	Item 6.4 - Finance Sub-Committee had agreed to recommend to Policy and Resources Committee that an additional Homelessness Prevention post be provided through the Housing Options Contract to assist with meeting the council's obligations in respect of its homelessness duties. The proposed invest to save homelessness prevention loan fund would be considered at the September meeting of the Housing Policy Working Party.	
7	Updates	
7.1	Housing: PB gave a brief update on work following the Grenfell Tower Fire, including risks in temporary accommodation such as bed and breakfast hotels and the night shelter..	
7.2	Welfare Reform: High court ruling changes for lone parents of children under two now not expected to work.	
8	Older People's Accommodation and Support Needs Report	
8.1	Working Party members noted the findings and recommendations of the study undertaken into the housing and support needs of older people by all the Local Authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups in Northamptonshire.	
8.2	Members were concerned about the complexity contained within the huge Conclusions and Recommendations section of the report and on the obligations this placed on LA s and parishes preparing their Neighbourhood Plans. They requested that officers consult with the other authorities to gain their views on the activities/workloads involved. It was agreed to focus on the many recommendations in the report at the September meeting. In the meantime, a presentation would be prepared to explain the contents of the report. The presentation would be given prior to the Planning Policy Committee on 24 th July 2017 and would be open to all councillors	CC / RP
9	Work Plan Update	
9.1	Members noted the updates to the work plan	
10	Housing Policy Working Party Risk Review	
10.1	Members reviewed the risks as detailed in CC's report.	
11	Any other business	

11.1	Housing delivery monitoring report. It was reported that recent survey work had identified that 806 new dwellings were constructed in the year to March 2017, against a delivery target of 420 dwellings per annum and 245 of those were affordable dwellings (equating to 30% of the total).	
12	Next and Future Meetings - all 2pm in the Kasen Room Wednesday 13 September 2017 Wednesday 25 October 2017 Wednesday 13 December 2017	



Personnel Sub-Committee

Minutes of a Meeting held on Monday 10 July 2017 at 6.30pm, East Northamptonshire House, Thrapston

Present: Councillors: Roger Glithero JP (Chairman)
Sarah Peacock (Vice-Chairman)
Glenn Harwood MBE
Steven North

Officers: Sharn Matthews Executive Director
Paul Bland Head of Planning Services
Katy Everitt Head of Resources and Organisational Development
Aime Armstrong Human Resources Manager
Michelle Drewery Finance Manager

1.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Wendy Brackenbury and the Chief Executive, David Oliver.

2.0 MINUTES

2.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 19 June 2017 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 No declarations of interest were made.

4.0 QUESTIONS UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 10.3

4.1 There were no questions submitted under Procedure Rule 10.3.

5.0 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED:

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business because exempt information, as defined under paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, may be disclosed.

6.0 PLANNING SERVICES STAFFING STRUCTURE

- 6.1 The Head of Planning Services presented a report providing an update on the current staffing and vacancies position in Planning Services, seeking approval for vacancies to be filled, the creation of an additional post and proposed alterations to current contracts in Planning Services. Details of the proposed Planning Services structure and potential sources of funding were reported.
- 6.2 It might be possible to use ring-fenced funding provided under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 to fund part of the cost of the proposed Housing and Planning Officer post, although the conditions attached to that funding would need to be ascertained.

RESOLVED: That

- i) the advertisement and filling of the following vacancies be authorised:
 - a) Principal Development Management Officer (re-advertisement)
 - b) Housing and Planning Officer
 - c) Administrative Assistant (2 posts)
- ii) the conversion of the Principal Planning Officer (Rushden East) post from an 18 month temporary contract to a permanent contract be authorised with permission to advertise if necessary on the basis of a full-time 37 hour week post.
- iii) the contractual hours for the Principal Building Control Officer be amended from 30 hours per week to 32 hours per week with effect from 1 April 2017, subject to a maximum cost of £1,000 being incurred for hours worked over contracted hours between 1 April and 10 July 2017.
- iv) the possible re-grading of the Housing Enabling Officer post be authorised, subject to the outcome of the current Job Evaluation appeal and to be effective from the date of the Job Evaluation appeal decision.

(Reason: To ensure that the Council's Planning Services Team is sufficiently resourced to carry out its duties).

7.0 BUILDING CONTROL EARLY COMMENCEMENT OF RECRUITMENT

- 7.1 The Head of Planning Services presented a report outlining proposals for adopting succession plans to cover the departure of two key members of Building Control staff in 2018 to maintain the strength and resilience of the professional Building Control team in recognition of the need to work effectively within the competitive Building Control market.
- 7.2 The Sub-Committee noted that the Building Control service was operating with a £92,000 deficit and questioned whether the fees being charged were too low. However, this deficit arose from building control activities which were required to be carried out, but could not be charged for.

RESOLVED: That

- i) the early start of the recruitment process for a replacement Building Control Surveyor be approved subject to any additional costs being recovered via a review of hourly rates so that the service meets the statutory requirement to recover costs only.

(Reason: The Council and its customers will receive the maximum benefit from the option proposed)

- ii) a further report be brought back to this Sub-Committee in March 2018 to review the effectiveness of the revised structure and its match to demand at that point.

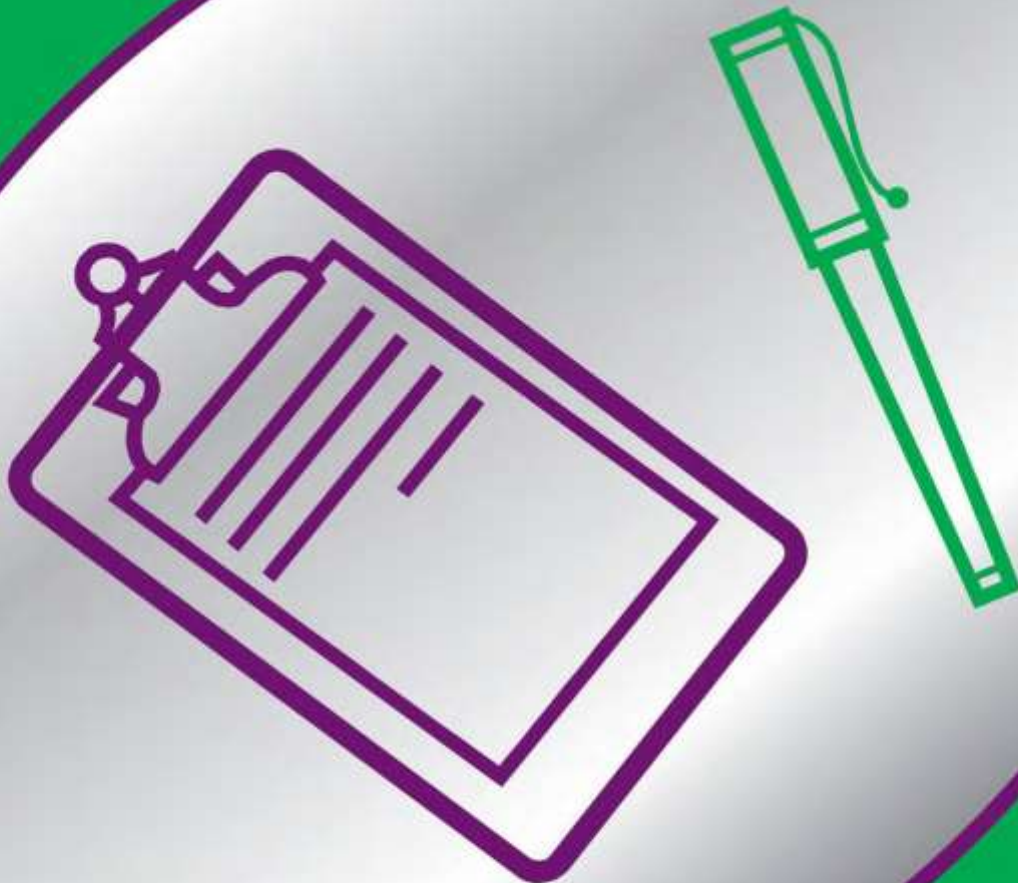
(Reason: To review the staffing levels in the Building Control Team in the context of the market and potential staff vacancies at that time)

Chairman



East
Northamptonshire
Council

Petitions Scheme



Information on the petitions scheme

East Northamptonshire Council Petitions Scheme

The Council welcomes petitions bearing 50 or more signatures within this Scheme and recognises that petitions are one way in which people can let us know their concerns. All petitions sent or presented to the Council will receive an acknowledgement from the Council within 14 days of receipt. This acknowledgement will set out what we plan to do with the petition.

Paper petitions can be sent to:

Member Services, East Northamptonshire Council, Cedar Drive, Thrapston NN14 4LZ

On-line petitions can be created, signed and submitted by following the link to

<http://www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk/petitions>.

Petitions can also be presented to a meeting of the Council. There are 5 meetings of the Council each year, and dates and times can be found [here](#). If you would like to present your petition to the Council, or would like your councillor to present it on your behalf, please contact the Democratic Services Manager on 01832 742113 or e-mail MemberServices@east-northamptonshire.gov.uk at least 5 working days before the meeting and we can guide you through the process.

Throughout this Scheme, reference is made to “you” or “your” and this generally means the “petition organiser”.

What are the guidelines for submitting a petition?

Petitions submitted to the Council must relate to a function of the Council and include:-

- a clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition. It should state what action the petitioners wish the Council to take
- the name, address and signature of any persons supporting the petition must be accompanied by your telephone or e-mail contact details as the petition organiser, . This is to enable us to contact you to explain how we will respond to the petition. Your contact details as the petition organiser will not be placed on our website.
- a minimum number of signatures to justify any action under this Scheme. This has been set at **50** but there are higher thresholds which will justify other types of action (see pages 4 and 6).

If there is any doubt about the identity of the petition organiser, we will contact signatories to the petition to agree who should act as the petition organiser.

Approved by Council 1 March

Petitions which are considered to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate will not be accepted. If your petition does not follow the guidelines set out above, the Council may decide not to do anything further with it. In that case, we will write to you to explain the reasons.

What will the Council do when it receives the petition?

An acknowledgement will be sent to you, as the petition organiser within 14 days of receiving the petition, advising what we plan to do with the petition and when we will make a further response. It will also be published on our website.

If we can do what the petition asks for, the acknowledgement may confirm that we have taken the action requested and the petition will be closed. If the petition has enough signatures to trigger a Council debate, or a senior officer giving evidence, then the acknowledgement will confirm this and advise when and where the meeting will take place. If the petition needs more investigation, we will outline the steps we plan to take.

If the petition applies to a planning or licensing application, is a statutory petition (for example requesting a referendum on having an elected mayor), or on a matter where there is already an existing right of appeal, such as council tax banding and non-domestic rates, other procedures apply and your petition will not be taken further under the petitions scheme.. Further information on all these procedures and how you can express your views is available here:

- [Comments, Compliments and Complaints](#)
- [Planning – Appeals](#)
- [Council Tax – Appeals](#)
- [Licensing \(Liquor and Entertainment\) – Appeals](#)
- [Licensing \(Taxi\) – Appeals](#)
- [Northamptonshire County Council](#)

To ensure that people know what we are doing in response to the petitions we receive, the details of all the petitions submitted to us will be published on our website, except in cases where this would be inappropriate. Whenever possible we will also publish all correspondence relating to the petition (all personal data will be removed).

When your petition has been processed we will keep it in line with our retention guidance. It will not be used for any purpose other than the purpose you submitted it for without your/your signatories express permission.

How will the Council respond to petitions?

Our response to a petition will depend on what a petition asks for and how many people have signed it, but may include one or more of the following:

- taking the action requested in the petition
- considering the petition at a Council or committee meeting
- holding an inquiry into the matter
- undertaking research into the matter
- holding a public meeting
- holding a consultation
- holding a meeting with petitioners
- referring the petition for consideration by the Council's Scrutiny Committee (responsible for scrutinising the work of the Council)
- calling a referendum
- writing to the petition organiser setting out our views about the request in the petition
- responding in accordance with the Council's comments, complaints and compliments procedure

In addition to these steps, the Council will consider all the specific actions it can potentially take on the issues highlighted in a petition.

If your petition is about something over which the Council has no direct control we will consider whether to make representations on behalf of the community to the relevant body. Where this is the case, we will advise you of what we propose to do in our response to the petition to seek your agreement. The Council works with a large number of local partners and where possible will work with these partners to respond to your petition. If we are not able to do this for any reason (for example if what the petition calls for conflicts with Council policy), then we will set out the reasons for this to you. You can find more information on the services for which the Council is responsible [here](#).

If your petition is about something that a different Council is responsible for we will consider the best method for responding to it. It might consist of simply forwarding the petition to the other Council, but could involve other steps. In any event we will always notify you of the action we propose to take to seek your agreement..

Full Council debates

If a petition contains more than **4,000** signatures it will be debated by the full Council unless it is a petition asking for a senior Council officer to give evidence at a public meeting. This means that the issue raised in the petition will be discussed at a meeting which all councillors can attend. The petition organiser will be given three minutes to present the petition at the meeting and the petition will then be discussed by councillors. The Council will decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting. It may decide to take the action the petition requests, not to take the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate, or to commission further investigation into the matter, for example by a relevant committee. The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of this decision. This confirmation will also be published on our website.

Officer evidence

Your petition may ask for a senior council officer to give evidence at a public meeting about something for which the officer is responsible as part of their job. For example, your petition may ask a senior council officer to explain progress on an issue, or to explain the advice given to elected councillors to enable them to make a particular decision.

If your petition contains at least 2000 signatures, the relevant senior officer will give evidence at a public meeting of the Council's Scrutiny Committee. The senior staff who can be called to give evidence are:-

- Chief Executive (Head of the Paid Service)
- Executive Director and Monitoring Officer
- Chief Finance Officer
- Head of Customer and Community Services
- Head of Environmental Services
- Head of Planning Services
- Head of Resources and Organisational Development.
- Head of Economic and Commercial Development

You should be aware that the Scrutiny Committee may decide that it would be more appropriate for another officer to give evidence instead of any officer named in the petition – for instance if the named officer has changed jobs. Committee members will ask the questions at this meeting, but you will be able to suggest questions to the chair of the committee by contacting Member Services – (see page 1) up to three working days before the meeting.

E-petitions

The Council welcomes e-petitions which are created and submitted through our website at <http://www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk/petitions>. E-petitions must follow the same guidelines as paper petitions (see page 1).

The petition organiser will need to provide us with a name, postal address and email address, and decide how long the petition is to be open for signatures. This will usually be for a maximum of one month.

When you create an e-petition, it may take five working days before it is published online. This is because we have to check that the content of your petition is suitable before it is made available for signature.

If we feel we cannot publish your petition for some reason, we will contact you within this time to explain. You will be able to change and resubmit your petition if you wish. If you do not do this within 14 days, a summary of the petition and the reason why it has not been accepted will be published under the 'rejected petitions' section of the website.

When an e-petition has closed for signature, it will automatically be submitted to Member Services – see page 1. In the same way as a paper petition, you will receive an acknowledgement within 14 working days. If you would like to present your e-petition to a meeting of the Council, please contact the Democratic Services Manager – contact details on page 1 - within five working days of the petition closing.

A petition acknowledgement and response will be emailed to everyone who has signed the e-petition and elected to receive this information. The acknowledgment and response will also be published on this website.

How do I 'sign' an e-petition?

You can see all the e-petitions currently available for signature here <http://www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk/petitions>. When you sign an e-petition you will be asked to provide your name, your postcode and a valid email address. When you have submitted this information you will be sent an email to the email address you have provided. This email will include a link which you must click on in order to confirm the email address is valid. Once this step is complete your 'signature' will be added to the petition. People visiting the e- petition will be able to see your name in the list of those who have signed it but your contact details will not be visible.

Petitions with between 50 and 199 signatures

Petitions within this category will be considered as part of Stage 2 of the Council's published [Comments, Complaints and Compliments Procedure](#). Petition organisers will receive a response from the Executive Director.

Petitions with between 200 and 3,999 signatures

Petitions falling within this category (unless it is a petition asking for a senior Council officer to give evidence at a public meeting) will be considered in the first instance by the Council's Corporate Management Team. The Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, and, if appropriate, Committee Chairman will be advised of the petition at the time of submission.

The action taken will be notified to all Members of the Council for information as well as the petition organiser and details will appear on the Council's website.

What can I do if I feel my petition has not been dealt with properly?

If you feel that we have not dealt with your petition properly, you, as petition organiser, have the right to request that the Council's Scrutiny Committee review the steps that the Council has taken in response to your petition.

The committee will consider your request at the next appropriate meeting. Should the committee determine we have not dealt with your petition appropriately, it may use any of its powers to deal with the matter. These powers include instigating an investigation, making recommendations to the appropriate committee or officer and arranging for the matter to be considered at a meeting of the full Council.

Once the appeal has been considered you will be informed of the results within seven working days. The results of the review will also be published on our website.