



# Briefing: Responding to Petitions

## 1 The Framework for Dealing with Petitions

- 1.1 A report of the Council Business Management Committee to the City Council on 15 June 2010 sets out the full provisions of the revised Birmingham City Council Petitions Scheme. This revised scheme was developed in response to the Government's statutory guidance on the duty of Councils to respond to Petitions.
- 1.2 The key provisions of the City Council Petitions Scheme are as follows:
- A petition that is submitted which has collected 20,000 signatures (2% of the population) will automatically trigger a debate at City Council;
  - **If the petition has collected 10,000 signatures** (1% of the population of the City) **it will be referred to the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee;**
  - If a petition over 5,000 signatures is submitted it will be considered by the Council Business Management Committee to determine whether the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee should debate it.
- 1.3 Two petitions submitted were similar in wording and had signatures from over 5,000 Birmingham City Council residents (the front sheets are included in the agenda papers). The Council Business Management Committee considered the petition on 21 December 2020<sup>1</sup> and agreed to refer it to the Housing and Neighbourhoods O&S Committee.

## 2 How should O&S Committees handle Petitions?

- 2.1 The proposed approach for handling the item at Committee which draws from the established approach for Call in meetings:
- The Chair should introduce the item;
  - The Petitioner/presenting Councillor sets out the case and required action (if attending);
  - Cabinet Members/Officers should be asked to respond to the petition with reference to their report;
  - Committee members have the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the petition and response;

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<sup>1</sup>

<https://birmingham.cmis.uk.com/birmingham/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/11874/Committee/35/Default.aspx>



- It may be appropriate at this point to seek any further comments from the petitioner although this is not a requirement;
- Once the discussions have reached a close the Chair should formulate a clear formal resolution on the matter for agreement. This may include a letter or recommendations to the relevant Cabinet Member.

2.2 After the meeting, the Committee's resolution will be posted on the Council's website as part of the notes of the meeting; and:

- A letter is sent to the lead petitioner / presenting Councillor confirming the resolution;
- Committee Services are notified so that progress on resolving the petition can be reported to the City Council as part of their regular reports.

### 3 The Petition

3.1 The petition before the committee today is:

*"Birmingham City Council to protect graves of our loved ones*

*Over the last few months, we have started to see an increase in the number of occurrences where flooding is impacting the graves of loved ones resting at Handsworth Cemetery.*

*This has been raised to the Cemetery Office, and Birmingham City Council, and has fallen on deaf ears. Assurances have previously been made, yet, again, over the weekend of 3rd and 4th October, multiple graves were flooded, leading to some subsiding, and the families being hurt.*

*This isn't a lot we're asking for- when families pay in excess of £3,000 for their loved ones to be laid to rest, the least we can expect the Council to do is to care for the graves, and to conduct preventative maintenance. Fobbing off isn't acceptable, suitable action is.*

*With the council's response being slow, and incompetent at best, families, and volunteers are taking the responsibility to fix these graves, but are only permitted to be there during the restricted visiting hours which just isn't enough".*

3.2 Councillors Majid Mahmood and Zhor Malik have been invited as the Presenting Councillors.

3.3 Cllr Sharon Thompson, Cabinet Member for Homes and Neighbourhoods, and Paul Lankester, Interim Assistant Director, Regulation and Enforcement, will attend. An Executive Response has been provided and is included in the agenda papers.

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