

Birmingham City Council
Council Business Management Committee

22 January 2024



Subject: Petitions Update
Report of: Marie Rosenthal, Interim City Solicitor and Monitoring Officer
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Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

If relevant, state which appendix is exempt, and provide exempt information paragraph number or reason if confidential: N/A

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 To update the Committee on progress made in responding to petitions presented to full Council and to provide an update in relation to the continuing management of petitions.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That the Committee seeks an update from the Strategic Director, City Operations in relation to the number of petitions not yet discharged across the directorate.
- 2.2 That the Committee notes the progress made in relation to the responding to and discharging of other petitions.
- 2.3 That the Committee determines if any additional measures are required to ensure the continuing progress relating to the responding and discharging of petitions is maintained.

3 Background

- 3.1 During recent meetings of the Committee, Members have expressed concern with regards to the amount of time taken to respond to and subsequently discharge petitions submitted by Councillors.
- 3.2 The following protocol currently applies to all petitions submitted by Members:
1. Petition presented at City Council.
 2. Petition referred to the appropriate directorate for response within 3 working days.
 3. Directorate to write to the Councillor presenting the petition and the first named petitioner to acknowledge receipt within 14 days of the City Council.
 4. Progress of investigation into petition to be notified by the relevant directorate to Committee Manger for inclusion in the monthly Petitions Update no later than 10 working days before the next City Council.
 5. Final response to petition included in Petitions Update by Committee Manager.
 6. Director to notify the Councillor who presented the petition and the first named petitioner of the outcome within 14 days of the relevant City Council meeting discharging the same.
- 3.3 It should be noted that the protocol applies only to petitions sent internally and not to those which are referred to outside bodies for action.
- 3.4 The Interim City Solicitor has continued to liaise with department Directors, via consultation with the Chief Executive, to emphasise the importance of responding to petitions submitted by Members in a timely manner.
- 3.5 Following these discussions, Committee Services initially reported a month on month increase of the number of petitions being responded to and subsequently discharged.
- 3.6 However, at the Council Business Management Committee held on 23 October 2023 the process for responding to petitions was again reviewed as it was highlighted a number of petitions had still not been responded to within a reasonable period of time. Members therefore agreed that a petitions update should be submitted to each meeting of the Committee until further notice due to the number of petitions which had not yet been discharged.

- 3.7 Following the Council Business Management Committee meeting held on 20 November 2023, Committee Services contacted all directorates to further emphasise that all petitions submitted at City Council meetings must be responded to and discharged within the agreed timescales set out at 3.2 of this report. If a petition(s) was not responded to and discharged within these timescales, then senior officers from those directorates would be invited to future meetings to outline the reasons behind any delays.
- 3.8 Appendix 1 to this report outlines the number of outstanding petitions as of the 9 January 2024 City Council meeting.
- 3.9 Between the 5 December 2023 and the 9 January 2024 City Council meetings, approximately 14 petitions have been responded to and subsequently discharged.
- 3.10 Given a number of petitions have still not been discharged, or acknowledged within a reasonable period of time, it is proposed that when a response is not provided within 28 days the matter is immediately referred to the relevant Strategic Director for action.
- 3.11 Where a response remains outstanding the Strategic Director will be invited to attend the next meeting. This action has already been progressed in relation to the outstanding petitions addressed to City Operations with the Strategic Director invited to attend Committee on 22 January 2024.
- 3.12 To improve the process, it is also proposed that Corporate Leadership Team be provided with an update on outstanding petitions on a monthly basis by the Interim City Solicitor. If improvements are not made by the end of February this will include a review of the petitions protocol to ensure processes and performance are improved.

4 Legal Implications

- 5.1 There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report.

5 Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no immediate financial implications arising from this report.

6 Public Sector Equality Duty

- 7.1 There are no immediate equality implications arising from this report.

7 Other Implications

7.1 None.

8 Background Papers

9.1 None.

9 Appendices

10.1 Appendix 1: Outstanding petitions as of the 9 January 2024 City Council meeting.