



# 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 The petition for consideration at your meeting today had signatures from over 10,000 Birmingham City Council residents (the front sheet is included in your agenda papers; the full petition is available for inspection on request) and has therefore been referred 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;
  - 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 states:

*"Birmingham City Council routinely sprays verges, pavements and parks with Glyphosate-based pesticides, which include herbicides, despite the negative impact this controversial chemical has on Bees, health and the local environment.*

*Many Birmingham residents are concerned about the use of pesticides being applied in spaces where our children, pets and local wildlife may come into contact with it. Many countries, including France, Belgium and the Netherlands have already restricted or banned their use due to the many issues associated with them, and within the UK over 60 councils are now implementing programs to phase out their use.*

*Glyphosate has both direct and indirect effects:*

*Glyphosate is detrimental to invertebrate well-being, Bees are crucial pollinators that are in serious decline globally. Glyphosate has been shown to affect their navigation, sleep, larval development, and immunity to deadly infections. This could be due to the direct effects of glyphosate on the bee, or by glyphosate detrimentally altering their gut microbiome. Furthermore, bees rely on the presence of pollen and nectar-rich flowers; as 95-97% of British wildflower meadows have disappeared since the 1940s, the additional removal of so-called 'weeds' by glyphosate destroys available foraging sites for them. Earthworms and snails have also been shown to be adversely affected by this pesticide.*

*Glyphosate is suspected to have a direct effect on human health. The World Health Organisation says that Glyphosate is "classified as probably carcinogenic to humans" and research continues to confirm this.*

*Birds and other animals are indirectly affected by the widespread use of pesticides due to the wiping out of weeds and wildflowers, destroying habitats and food supplies."*

- 3.2 The petition broadly asks for Birmingham City Council to hear the concerns of its citizens and to work with council contractors to phase out all use of pesticides, including glyphosate, in Birmingham.
- 3.3 Both the Lead Petitioner and the presenting councillor, Cllr Izzy Knowles, have been invited to attend.



- 3.4 The Lead Petitioner will be accompanied by the co-organiser of the petition and a representative from Pesticide Free Towns.
- 3.5 Cllr Majid Mahmood, Cabinet Member for Environment, and Darren Share, Assistant Director, Street Scene, will attend. An Executive Response has been provided and is included in the agenda papers.

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