
PETITION SCHEME AND E-PETITIONS

**Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Andrew Scott,
Communities and Engagement Portfolio**

**Responsible Director - Paul Wildsmith
Director of Corporate Services**

Purpose

1. The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 requires that all Councils introduce a Petition Scheme for receiving and dealing with petitions. The law came into force on 15th June 2010. It also requires that a facility for dealing with e-petitions is in place by 15th December 2010.

Summary

2. The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 ('the Act') contains a number of requirements which local authorities must adhere to, including a duty to respond to petitions. This duty requires a local authority to adopt a Petition Scheme, and provide a facility for residents to petition the council electronically (e-Petitions). The scheme must allow for the subject of a petition to be debated in full council or for an officer to be held to account, depending on the number of signatures.
3. There is a model scheme which is recommended to members for approval. The model scheme leaves it to local members to decide on the trigger levels for a debate in full council, the trigger levels for an officer to be called to account, the method of verification of signatures and the level of officers who should be made available to be called to account. Members are asked to consider the draft scheme, in which it is recommended that the number of signatures required to trigger a debate in full Council be set at 1500 signatures, and that the number of signatures required to trigger a senior officer to be held to account in Scrutiny be set at 750 signatures.

Recommendations

4. It is recommended that Members approve the Petition Scheme attached at **Appendix 1**.

Reasons

5. To comply with new legislative requirements.

**Paul Wildsmith
Director of Corporate Services**

Background Papers

No Background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no implications for the Council's s17 duty in this report
Health and Well Being	This report has no impact on the health and wellbeing of any individual
Sustainability	This report has no particular impact on sustainability.
Diversity	This report does not have any implications for our duties in relation to race, gender and disability
Wards Affected	This report affects all wards equally
Groups Affected	This report affects all groups equally
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not affect the Council's budget and policy framework. The legislation requires approval by full Council.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The creation of a petition scheme is a statutory requirement. It is designed to encourage community involvement in council decision making.
Efficiency	This report is does not make efficiencies and may have cost implications in relation to staffing resources and e-petition systems.

MAIN REPORT

The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009

6. The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, which received Royal Assent on 12 November 2009, has a strong focus on strengthening local democracy, and outlines that a local authority has a duty to promote understanding of the functions of the authority, the democratic arrangements of the authority, how members of the public can take part in those democratic arrangements, and what is involved in taking part.

New Duties in respect of Petitions

7. The duty to respond to petitions in the Act means that, for the first time, councils will be required to respond to petitions and inform residents what action will be taken to address their concerns. Most of the requirements in relation the new duty to respond to petitions come into force, in relation to England, on Tuesday, 15th June 2010, and require principal local authorities:
 - (a) to devise, publicise and comply with a Petition Scheme for handling both paper and electronic petitions;
 - (b) to ensure that petitions are acknowledged in writing within a time specified in the Petition Scheme. The acknowledgement must say what the authority intends to do in response to the petition;
 - (c) to take one or more steps in response to petitions which meet the criteria, and are therefore “active” petitions;
 - (d) to provide an automatic right for the matter raised in a petition to be debated by the full council if more than a specified number of people have signed it;
 - (e) to allow certain Senior Officers of a principal local authority to be called to account at a public meeting; and
 - (f) to permit the Petition Organiser the power to ask a Scrutiny Committee to review the principal local authority’s response to their Petition, if the organiser is not satisfied with the steps taken by the authority under Section 14 of the Act.
8. The statutory guidance ‘Listening to Communities: Statutory Guidance on the Duty to Respond to Petitions’, issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government states that any Petition Scheme must be approved by a meeting of the Full Council before it comes into force, must be published on the local authority’s website and by any other method appropriate for bringing it to the attention of those who live, work or study in its area, can be revised at any time (however any revised scheme must then be approved by a meeting of the Full Council and publicised accordingly), and that the authority must comply with its Petition Scheme.
9. The duty in relation the provision of a facility for people to make petitions electronically (e-Petitions) will come into force, in relation to England, on Wednesday, 15th December 2010.

Requirements of the Petition Scheme

10. The statutory guidance outlines the minimum requirements expected of a Petition Scheme, and these provide the basic framework for such a scheme. Any Petition Scheme must therefore:
 - (a) Permit anyone who lives, works or studies in the local authority area, including under 18's, to sign or organise a petition and trigger a response;
 - (b) Provide a facility for making e-Petitions;
 - (c) Include a specified time period in which petitions must be acknowledged by the local authority;
 - (d) Incorporate a range of prescribed options in terms of a response.
 - (e) Petitions with a significant level of support trigger a debate of the Full Council. Councils are to determine this threshold locally, however it must be no higher than 5 per cent of the local population;
 - (f) Petitions with a requisite level of support, set by the local authority, require a senior local government officer to give evidence at a meeting of the authority's Scrutiny Committee;
 - (g) Petition Organisers can prompt a review of the local authority's response if the response is felt to be inadequate.
11. The guidance provides a model petition scheme which is attached at **Appendix 1**.

Exclusion of Petitions

12. Whilst it is important that petitions should be received positively in some situations a petition may be viewed as vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate.
13. When determining whether a petition is vexatious, the Council should use the guidance under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. It is the subject matter of the petition that determines whether the petition itself is vexatious, rather than the personality of the petitioners that is the deciding factor. One of the key issues is whether the authority has received previous petitions on the same topic or a scattergun approach to a particular issue, raising it through the complaints system, with the Ombudsman, the external auditors, MP or legal claim at the same time as the petition, in which case the Council will want to decide how best to deal with the particular issues raised. This may also be an opportunity to eliminate petitions which are abusive or which relate to an officer's personality or private life.
14. Petitions made under other enactments, such as petitions under the Local Government Act 2000 requesting a referendum on whether an area should have an Elected Mayor, must be dealt with in accordance with the procedures laid out in those enactments. If such a petition fails to meet the requirements of the enactment (ie, does not attract the requisite number of signatures), the petition may be dealt with under the local authority's Petition

Scheme. Given that Darlington cannot decide to hold a referendum for an elected Mayor under current legislation until 2017 a petition is unlikely to be effective for this purpose.

15. Where established processes already exist for communities to have their say in the decision-making process, mainly in relation to the Council's statutory functions, the Act excludes these areas from the scope of the petitions duty. These include:-
 - (a) Any matter relating to a Planning decision, including about a development plan document or the community infrastructure levy;
 - (b) Any matter relating to an alcohol, gambling or sex establishment licensing decision;
 - (c) Any matter relating to an individual or entity in respect of which that individual or entity has a right of recourse to a review or right of appeal conferred by or under any enactment.
16. However, any failure in the delivery of effective services in relation to the above areas does remain within the scope of the petitions duty.
17. Petitions deemed vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate, or which are excluded from the Petition Scheme by order, must still be acknowledged, as detailed in Section 13 of the 2009 Act. The acknowledgement should explain the reason why the Council will not be taking any further action in relation to the petition. If the petition can be taken into account as part of existing established procedures then it should be explained how this will happen, or alternatively petitioners should be directed to other existing arrangements to have their say.

Acknowledgement and Verification of Petitions

18. All petitions which meet the Petition Scheme criteria must be acknowledged within the period specified in the authority's Petition Scheme.
19. Local authorities have discretion in terms of how they verify the signatures on a petition, and must take account of the signatures of residents who provide valid addresses where they live, work or study within the Borough, however it is at the discretion of the local authority as to determine whether they take account of signatures of people who do not provide such information, or supply information which demonstrates that they do not reside, work or study in the Borough.

Responding to Petitions

20. Where a petition has been verified, and accepted as a valid petition, the scheme needs to include a threshold which, if achieved, will trigger a response.
21. Statutory guidance suggests that the thresholds should be set so that they are locally achievable. Where practical, local authorities are expected to set thresholds which trigger a response to a petition, with some local authorities proposing that no threshold be set at all in order to generate a response. The proposed Petition Scheme incorporates this approach, which therefore ensures that all petitions received, which adhere to the guidelines, receive a response.

22. Thresholds can be reviewed after a period of activity, and amended if necessary, in accordance with the requirements of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.
23. Councils are to determine the threshold to trigger such a debate on a local basis, however it must be no higher than 5 per cent of the local population. It is recommended that local authorities set low thresholds, however these can be reviewed after a period of activity and amended if necessary. If, for example, no debates were triggered in the space of a year, a local authority should review their threshold and consider lowering it in order to ensure that it is locally achievable. Where it becomes apparent that local authorities are setting requirements which are unachievable, the Secretary of State has the power to direct authorities to amend their petition schemes.

Debate on the subject of the Petition

24. The Act requires that petitions with a significant level of support are required to trigger a debate of the Full Council.
25. A debate alone may not be considered a sufficient response to a petition with a high level of support, and a debate should be considered alongside other responses. Where a Petition has failed to meet the threshold to trigger a debate in Full Council, a response should be provided by the responsible Chief Officer.
26. The Petition Organiser will need to be informed, in writing, when any debate will be held, with sufficient notice to ensure attendance. Petitions should be considered at the next available Ordinary Meeting of the Council, however this may not always be possible, and therefore any debates of this nature should then be scheduled for the following meeting.
27. Petitioner Organisers will need to be offered the opportunity to present their petition to the Council at the beginning of the debate. It is for individual Councils to determine whether they then permit further contributions from Petitioner Organisers, for example, responding to questions from Councillors or responding to the debate. The debate should conclude with a decision being taken by the Full Council, which may include undertaking the action that the petition requests, not taking the action requested for the reasons put forward in the debate, or referring the matter to a relevant committee for further investigation. Where the matter is one where the Cabinet are responsible for making the final decision, the Council may make recommendations to inform that decision.
28. The Petition Organiser should then receive written notification of the decision, and the notification should also appear on the Council's website.
29. Where a petition is excluded from the scheme, for example because it is vexatious, abusive, or otherwise inappropriate, or relates to a statutory function, an authority is not required to hold a debate in response. Petitions which call for evidence from an officer are also excluded from the requirement to hold a debate.

Giving Evidence to a Scrutiny Committee

30. Petitions with a requisite level of support require a senior officer to attend and give evidence at a meeting of one of the Council's scrutiny committees. The threshold to trigger this is again set by the Council. This builds on the existing powers of scrutiny committees.

Petition Reviews

31. The legislation includes the power for a Petition Organiser to ask for a review via the Scrutiny process if they are not satisfied with an authority's substantive response to their petition. A flowchart setting out how petitions can be dealt with under the scheme and how the review mechanism will work is attached at **Appendix 2**.

Authority Responses

32. Among the many possible steps that the authority may choose to take in response to a petition the following steps must be included amongst the options listed in the scheme. The authority can add to the list.
- (a) Take the action requested in the petition;
 - (b) Consider the petition at a meeting of the authority;
 - (c) Hold an inquiry;
 - (d) Hold a public meeting;
 - (e) Commission research;
 - (f) Provide a written response to the Petition Organiser setting out the authority's views on the request contained with the petition;
 - (g) Refer the petition to a Scrutiny Committee.
33. A local authority response is expected to be proportionate to the seriousness of the issue and the level of support contained in the petition. The actions referred to above should not be regarded as the only options. Authorities are encouraged to be innovative when considering their response to petitions including considering any courses of action open to them that are specific to the subject of the petition.

Darlington Proposal

34. The requirement for a petition scheme came into force on 15th June although we are not the only authority who did not have a scheme in place for that date. The legislation which brought the Act into force was approved in February and many authorities have felt it is appropriate to consider the guidance and model schemes amongst before approving a scheme. There are a number of specific issues that require consideration:

Number of Signatures

35. A chart attached at **Appendix 3** shows a selection of authorities in the region who have published their petition schemes already. There is a balance between the cost and burden of administering petitions from small groups of enthusiasts against the need to ensure that people with concerns in a small area of the town can be heard. There is always flexibility to refer a petition with a smaller number of signatures to Council if for example it is felt it represents a significant population of the area affected. There is scope for the Secretary of State to ask authorities to reconsider the scheme if it is felt to be too onerous, and we

wouldn't want to be in that category.

Verification of Signatures

36. The Mayoral Referendum regulations provide require that only electors with full names and addresses be counted which discounted a significant number of signatures which led to the petition being invalid. However the guidance in relation to this legislation is different its says:

'Local authorities can choose to verify the signatures given on a petition should they wish. Authorities must take account of the signatures of people who provide valid addresses where they live, work or study within the local authority area; but authorities may take account of signatures of people who do not supply such information, or supply information which shows that they do not live, work or study in the area.'

37. We will want to consider the cost before imposing upon ourselves the administrative burden of checking petitions against the electoral register every time they are received, and being seen to be over zealous in our rejection of signatures where a strength of feeling on a topic is apparent.
38. One idea would be to stipulate some 'Criteria for Signature' on the Council's own Petition Form / e-Petition signature screen, for instance:

- (a) Resident of the Borough;
- (b) Work within the Borough;
- (c) Own a Business within the Borough;
- (d) Study in the Borough.

39. Hopefully this would provide us with additional information, however we would have difficulty verifying that their declared employment or place of study was genuine if they reside outside of the Borough. Unless there was cause for concern that a significant number of signatures were invalid and the petition itself was therefore doubtful, it is suggested that no checking is done.

40. The options appear to be

- (a) Choose to verify no signatures and take them on face value (having asked them to account for their reason for being eligible to complete the petition);
- (b) Only verify those that we suspect may not be genuine;
- (c) Automatically verify a percentage sample;
- (d) Verify all signatures

41. The latter two options would obviously have staffing implications.

Verification of e-petitioners

42. On e-petitions the question is even more relevant. An e-petition could arguably be signed by anyone in the world and unless a restriction is imposed this could distort the democratic process if this system was exploited by mischief makers. In the case of e-petitions the

local authority must decide what counts as an authentic signature, for example it might decide that a valid email address is sufficient, a valid postcode or both.

43. We could, for example, require a postcode to be included as part of the e-petition of where the person lives, studies or works. This will exclude those who do not live in Darlington but come here to shop or use facilities. Unless we decide to verify the postcode there is still a risk that mischief makers will be able to get round the postcode check. The upgrades required to tailor any e-Petitions system to incorporate the suggested specifications would probably also incur a cost to implement. It is important that both a Paper Petition and an e-Petition should be subject to similar levels of scrutiny.
44. All petitions which meet the scheme criteria (see Section 12 (1) of the 2009 Act) must be acknowledged within the period specified in the authority's scheme.

Officers to be called to Account

45. Section 16 of the Act the Scheme is required to include a facility to hold an officer to account. The Scheme is required to specify which of the officers are able to be called to account in this way and include details of the names and job titles of the officers in question. The guidance indicates this should be the most senior officers. The options here are to include all Assistant Directors as well as members of CMT or CMT only. The guidance states that CMT is the minimum that should be stated in the scheme. The final decision as to who should attend rests with the Scrutiny Committee. The Committee may also consider it appropriate to call the relevant elected member with responsibility for the service area in question in addition to the senior officer. This is not significantly different to the current arrangements. The recommended Scheme includes all officers at Assistant Director Level or above. The guidance is specific that it should not be junior officers.

Purchase of e-petition system

46. Work is underway to consider the purchase of a system to provide an e-petition facility. Demonstrations have been provided from three leading providers, further providers are due to be seen shortly. The Council was informed that funding would be provided for e-petitions systems, and that Local authorities will each receive a grant for 2010/11. This amount was to vary by local authority dependent on the local population but funding for future years would have been incorporated into the revenue support grant. As this advice predated the change in government this may well be under review now and it is therefore suggested that a decision is delayed until this point is clarified. The requirement is that an e-petition system be in place for 15th December 2010. However we have been advised that implementation has a relatively short lead in time, and therefore the decision can be delayed for the time being.

**Catherine Whitehead
Borough Solicitor**

PETITION SCHEME – PROCEDURE FOR RESPONDING TO PETITIONS

Petitions

The Council welcomes petitions 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 10 working days of receipt. This acknowledgement will set out what we plan to do with the petition. We will treat something as a petition if it is identified as being a petition, or if it seems to us that it is intended to be a petition.

Paper petitions can be sent to:

**Democratic Services Section
Room 116, Town Hall,
Feethams,
Darlington,
Co. Durham.
DL1 5QT.**

Or, from 15th December 2010, petitions will be able to be created, signed and submitted on-line.

Petitions can also be presented to a meeting of the Council. Ordinary meetings of the Council take place six times a year, and dates and times of meetings can be found here:

www.darlington.gov.uk/Democracy/Political+Management/Council/Council.htm .

If you would like to present your petition to the Council, or would like your Councillor or someone else to present it on your behalf, please contact the Democratic Services Section on tel. 01325 388351 at least 10 working days before the meeting and an Officer will talk you through the process. If your petition has been signed by 1500 or more of the population of the Borough it will also be scheduled for a Council debate, and if this is the case we will let you know whether this will happen at the same meeting or at a later meeting of the Council.

What are the guidelines for submitting a petition?

Petitions submitted to the Council must include:

- A clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition. It should also state what action the petitioners would like the Council to take;
- The name, address and signature of any person supporting the petition.

Petitions should be accompanied by contact details, including an address, for the **Petition Organiser**. This is the person we will contact to explain how we will respond to the petition. The contact details of the Petition Organiser will not be placed on the website. If the petition does not identify a Petition Organiser, where possible we will contact signatories to the petition to agree who should act as the Petition Organiser, however if we are unable to establish a Petition Organiser we may regard the petition as invalid.

Petitions which are considered to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate will not be accepted. In the period immediately before an election or referendum we may need to deal with your petition differently – if this is the case we will explain the reasons and discuss the revised timescale which will apply. If a 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 my petition?

An acknowledgement will be sent to the Petition Organiser within 10 working days of receiving the petition. It will let them know what we plan to do with the petition and when they can expect to hear from us again. It will also be published on our website.

If we can do what your 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 acknowledgment will confirm this and tell you when and where the meeting will take place. If the petition needs more investigation, we will tell you 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. Further information on all these procedures and how you can express your views is available via the Council's website.

We will not take action on any petition which we consider to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate and will explain the reasons for this in our acknowledgement of the petition.

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 details will be removed). When you sign an e-petition you can elect to receive this information by e-mail. We will not send you anything which is not relevant to the e-petition you have signed, unless you choose to receive other e-mails from us.

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 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 relevant Scrutiny Committee*;
- calling a referendum;
- writing to the Petition Organiser setting out our views about the request in the petition.

(*Scrutiny Committees are committees of councillors who are responsible for scrutinising the work of the Council – in other words, a Scrutiny Committee has the power to hold the Council's decision makers to account.)

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 (for example the local railway or hospital) we will consider making representations on behalf of the community to the relevant body. 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 at www.darlington.gov.uk

If your petition is about something that a different council is responsible for we will give consideration to what the best method is for responding to it. This 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 have taken.

Full Council debates

If a petition contains more than 1500 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 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. The Petition Organiser will be given five 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. They 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.

Where the issue is one on which the Cabinet are required to make the final decision, the Council will decide whether to make recommendations to inform that decision. 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 Members (Councillors) to enable them to make a particular decision.

If your petition contains at least 750 signatures, the relevant senior officer will give evidence at a public meeting of the Council's relevant Scrutiny Committee.

You should be aware that the Scrutiny Committees 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. The Committee may also decide to call the relevant Portfolio Holder to attend the meeting. Committee members will ask the questions at this meeting, however you will be able to suggest questions to the Chair of the Committee by contacting the Democratic Services Section up to three working days prior to the meeting.

E-Petitions

From 15th December 2010, the Council will also welcome e-Petitions which will be created and submitted through our website. E-petitions must follow the same guidelines as paper petitions.

The Petition Organiser will need to provide us with their name, postal address and e-mail address. You will also need to decide how long you would like your petition to be open for signatures. Most petitions run for six months, but you can choose a shorter or longer timeframe, up to a maximum of 12 months.

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 re-submit your petition if you wish. If you do not do this within ten working 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 the Democratic Services Section. In the same way as a paper petition, you will receive an acknowledgement within 10 working days. If you would like to present your e-petition to a meeting of the Council, please contact the Democratic Services Section within 10 working days of receipt of the acknowledgement. A petition acknowledgement and

response will be e-mailed to everyone who has signed the e-Petition and elected to receive this information. The acknowledgment and response will also be published on the Council's website.

How do I 'sign' an e-petition?

As of 15th December 2010, you will be able to see all the e-Petitions currently available for signature on the Council's website. When you sign an e-Petition you will be asked to provide your name, your postcode and a valid e-mail address. When you have submitted this information you will be sent an e-mail to the e-mail address you have provided. This e-mail will include a link which you must click on in order to confirm the e-mail 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.

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

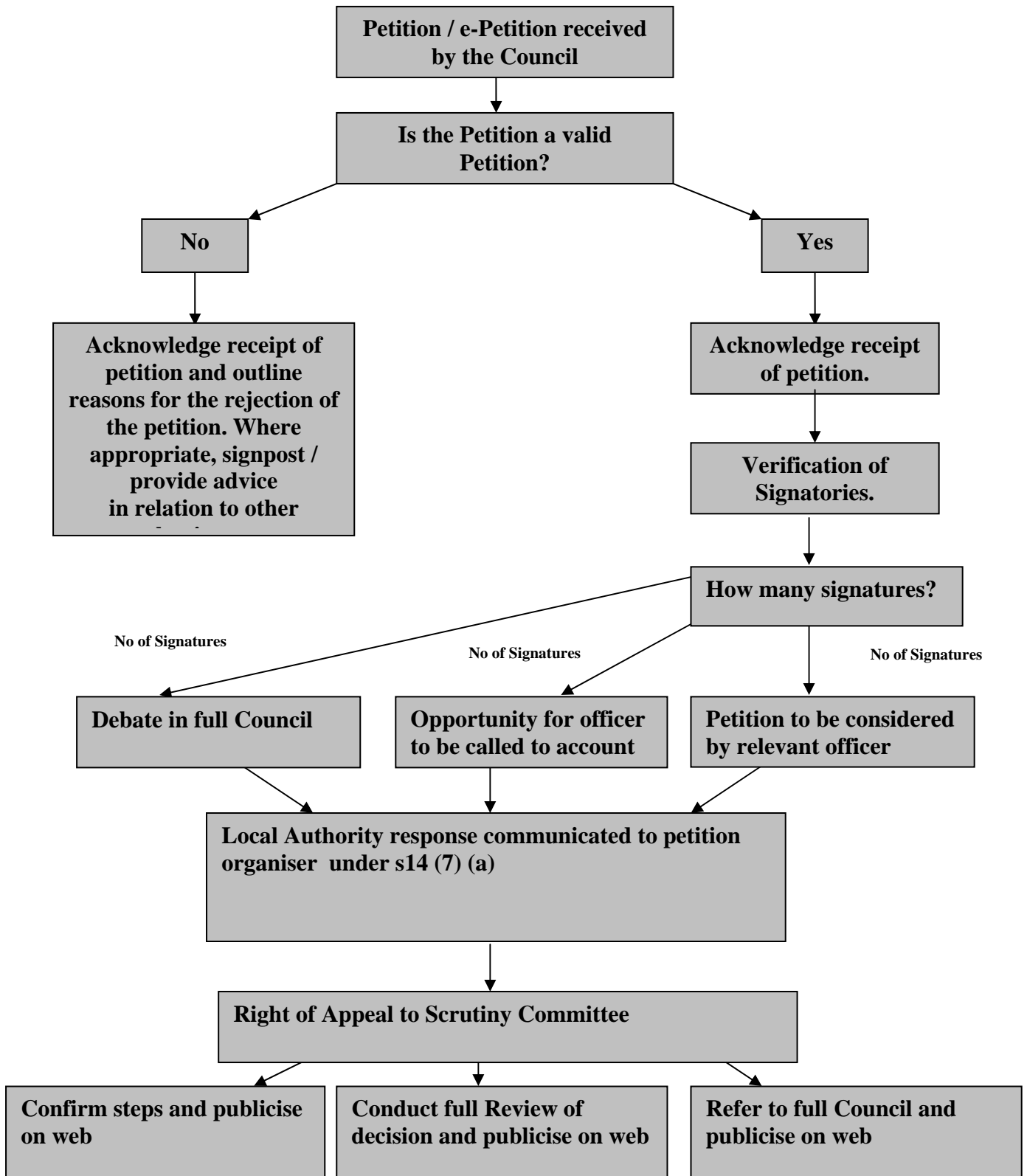
If you feel that we have not dealt with your petition properly, the Petition Organiser has the right to request that the Council's appropriate Scrutiny Committee review the steps that the Council has taken in response to your petition. It is helpful to everyone, and can improve the prospects for a review, if the Petition Organiser gives a short explanation of the reasons why the Council's response is not considered to be adequate.

The Committee will endeavour to consider your request at its next meeting, although on some occasions this may not be possible and consideration will take place at the following meeting. Should the Committee determine we have not dealt with your petition adequately, it may use any of its powers to deal with the matter. These powers include instigating an investigation, making recommendations to the Cabinet and arranging for the matter to be considered at a meeting of the Full Council. Once the appeal has been considered the Petition Organiser will be informed of the outcome within five working days. The outcome of the review will also be published on our website.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Petition Organiser: In relation to a petition made to a local authority means:

- (a) the person designated in the petition as the person with whom the authority may deal in relation to the petition, or
- (b) such other person as agrees with the authority to be the person with whom the authority may deal in relation to the petition.

PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH A PETITION / e-PETITION

Petition Scheme Thresholds – Comparisons between other Authorities:

Authority	Population of Area (Approx.)	Threshold for a Response (Number of signatories)	Threshold for a Debate in Full Council (Number of signatories)	Threshold for Chief Officer giving evidence to Scrutiny Committee (Number of signatories)
Cumbria County Council	500,000	50	3000 (0.6%)	1500
Gateshead		10	2000	1000
Hartlepool	100,000	Not specified	1500 (1.5%)	750
Middlesbrough Council	135,000	No threshold	1500 (1%)	750
Newcastle City Council	260,000	20	2500 (1%)	2500
Northumberland County Council	300,000	10	1500 (0.5%)	750
North Tyneside Council	200,000	Not specified	5000 (2.5%)	2500
Stockton		50	2000	1000
Sunderland City Council	280,000	Not specified	7000 (2.5%)	3000