

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Refresh of the Council's Petitions Protocol</b>
<b>Report to be considered by:</b>	Council
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	19 September 2013
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	C2563

**Purpose of Report:**

To refresh the Council's Petitions Protocol in accordance with the agreed timescales for doing so and to consider a proposal from the Liberal Democrat Group for adjusting the threshold for triggering a debate at full Council.

**Recommended Action:**

1. To propose some minor amendments to Appendix C to Part 13 Codes and Protocols of the Council's Constitution.
2. To consider an amendment from the Liberal Democrat Group to the threshold for triggering a debate at Full Council.
3. To make a recommendation to Full Council in respect of these amendments.

**Reason for decision to be taken:**

1. It was agreed at the time the Petitions Protocol was adopted that it would be reviewed in September 2013.
2. To consider a request from the Liberal Democrat group in relation to thresholds.

**Other options considered:** None

**Key background documentation:** None

The proposals will also help achieve the following Council Strategy principles:

- CSP7 - Empowering people and communities**
- CSP9 - Doing what's important well**

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the above Council Strategy priorities and principles by: ensuring that the constitution is up to date, accords with the relevant legislation and is in line with best practice.

<b>Portfolio Member Details</b>	
<b>Name &amp; Telephone No.:</b>	Councillor Gordon Lundie
<b>E-mail Address:</b>	glundie@westberks.gov.uk
<b>Date Portfolio Member agreed report:</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> August 2013

Contact Officer Details	
<b>Name:</b>	Moira Fraser
<b>Job Title:</b>	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
<b>Tel. No.:</b>	01635 519045
<b>E-mail Address:</b>	mfraser@westberks.gov.uk

## Implications

- Policy:** Will Require Appendix C to Part 13 (Codes and Protocols) to be amended.
- Financial:** None – will be undertaken within existing resources
- Personnel:** None
- Legal/Procurement:** Will require changes to the Constitution in accordance with relevant Local Government Acts
- Property:** None
- Risk Management:** None
- Corporate Board's Recommendation:** Corporate Board supported the proposals.

Is this item relevant to equality?	Please tick relevant boxes	
	Yes	No
Does the policy affect service users, employees or the wider community and:		
• Is it likely to affect people with particular protected characteristics differently?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• Is it a major policy, significantly affecting how functions are delivered?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• Will the policy have a significant impact on how other organisations operate in terms of equality?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• Does the policy relate to functions that engagement has identified as being important to people with particular protected characteristics?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• Does the policy relate to an area with known inequalities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Outcome</b> (Where one or more 'Yes' boxes are ticked, the item is relevant to equality)		
Relevant to equality - Complete an EIA available at <a href="http://www.westberks.gov.uk/eia">www.westberks.gov.uk/eia</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Not relevant to equality		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Is this item subject to call-in?	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/>	No: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box:		
The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council		<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position		<input type="checkbox"/>
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission or associated Task Groups within preceding six months		<input type="checkbox"/>
Item is Urgent Key Decision		<input type="checkbox"/>
Report is to note only		<input type="checkbox"/>

# Executive Report

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council adopted a procedure for dealing with representations at a full Council meeting on the 23 September 2010 (The protocol is set out in Appendix C to Part 13 Codes and Protocols in the Council's Constitution). At the time of adoption it was agreed that the scheme would be revisited in September 2013. Since the inception of the revised procedure the Council has received 51 petitions.
- 1.2 No major issues have been experienced with the protocol and therefore only a small number of amendments have been proposed to the procedures for dealing with petitions as set out in Appendix A to this report.
- 1.3 In accordance with the Council's Constitution a debate can be triggered at full Council if a petition of 5,000 or more signatures is submitted (see paragraph 1.4(e) of the Protocol). Where a matter affects no more than two wards this requirement is reduced to 500 signatures per ward at the discretion of the Monitoring Officer.
- 1.4 The Liberal Democrat Group are requesting that the threshold for triggering a debate at full Council for matters affecting more than two wards be reduced to 1,500 signatures, in line with the thresholds set by many other local authorities.
- 1.5 The current Protocol for managing petitions at Council meetings allows the petition organiser to attend Council and address Members for up to 5 minutes on the subject matter. This is a unique situation in that members of the public are not permitted to address Council under any other circumstances.

## 2. Proposals

- 2.1 It is recommended that Members consider and where appropriate amend the Petitions Protocol in line with the suggested changes set out in Appendix A to this report.
- 2.2 Consideration be given to reducing the threshold for triggering a debate at full Council from 5,000 signatures to 1,500 signatures in line with the thresholds of the other Berkshire unitary authorities as set out below.

<b>Authority census)</b>	<b>signatures required</b>	<b>population (2011</b>
Windsor	1,000	144,600
Bracknell	1,500	113,205
Reading	1,500	155,700
Slough	1,500	140,200
Wokingham	1,500	154,400
West Berkshire	5,000	153,800

### **3. Equalities Impact Assessment Outcomes**

3.1 This item is not relevant to equality.

### **4. Conclusion**

4.1 The Liberal Democrat Group are of the opinion that this amendment would enable the people in West Berkshire to bring to Full Council matters that are important to them, and to hear the councillors debate these issues in a public meeting. The lower number of signatures required to trigger a debate would, in their opinion, encourage the engagement of the local population with politics.

### **Appendices**

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Appendix A – Procedures for Dealing with Representations

### **Consultees**

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**Local Stakeholders:** Not applicable

**Officers Consulted:** Andy Day, Gillian Durrant

**Trade Union:** Not applicable