

Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee

19 June 2025

Annual Review of the Council's Petitions Scheme

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Summary

This report provides an annual review of the Council's Petitions Scheme.

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. The Committee is asked to note the annual review of the Council's Petitions Scheme.

2. Budget and policy framework

- 2.1. The Petitions Scheme forms part of the Council's Constitution and is attached as Appendix B to the report.

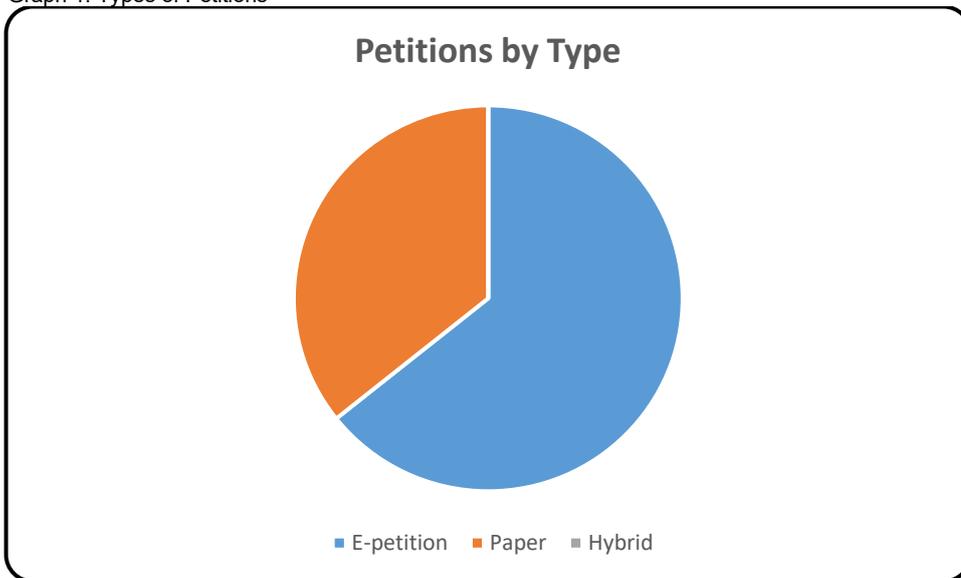
3. Background

- 3.1. Full Council adopted its current Petition Scheme on 25 November 2010 in response to provisions in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. The Act placed a new duty on local authorities to respond to all petitions and to establish a scheme for handling petitions including provision of a facility for electronic petitions (e-petitions).
- 3.2. With effect from 1 April 2012 the provisions relating to petitions in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 were repealed by Section 46 of the Localism Act 2011. The Government considered this would provide more discretion for local authorities to decide how to approach petitions locally. Full Council was advised of this at its meeting on 26 July 2012 and took the view that no change was required to Medway's Petition Scheme as it was working effectively.
- 3.3. The Committee has previously considered annual reviews of the Petitions Scheme, this report covers the period 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025.

4. Annual review

- 4.1. Information on the number of petitions received each year, their subject matter, the Council's response and the outcome of the review is published on the Council's website. The information available on the website dates back to 2011 (following Full Council approval of the current scheme at the end of 2010) and is regularly updated. This information with reference to April 2024 – 31 March 2025 is set out in full at Appendix A to the report.
- 4.2. 14 valid petitions were received during the period, compared to 23 in the 2023-24. Five paper petitions were received and nine e-petitions.

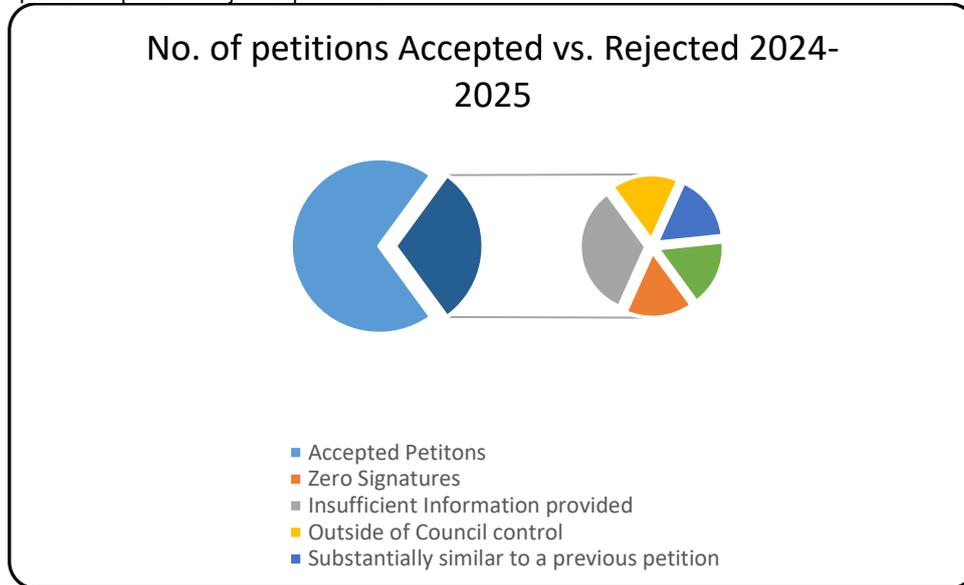
Graph 1: Types of Petitions



- 4.3. Six petitions were rejected in the period. The reasons for rejection are set out below:
- Two petitions were not accepted because not all of the required information was included. In both cases the Lead petitioner was contacted and further information requested, however, no further response was received for either petition.
 - One petition was rejected because it raised substantially the same issue as a previous petition within the last twelve months, which is prohibited under the terms of the petition scheme. The lead petitioner was directed to the response provided to the previous petition.
 - A petition relating to a planning application was rejected because it objected to a development in general terms. Petitions which object or support a planning application must refer to the specific application in question. The petitioner was contacted and has subsequently submitted a petition against a specific planning application.
 - One e-petition did not progress as it attracted no signatures. They were therefore referred to the relevant Directorate as a service enquiry.

- A petition was rejected because it related to an issue which was outside of the control of the Council and would require national legislation. The petitioner was redirected to the UK parliament petition website as the most appropriate route for the petition.

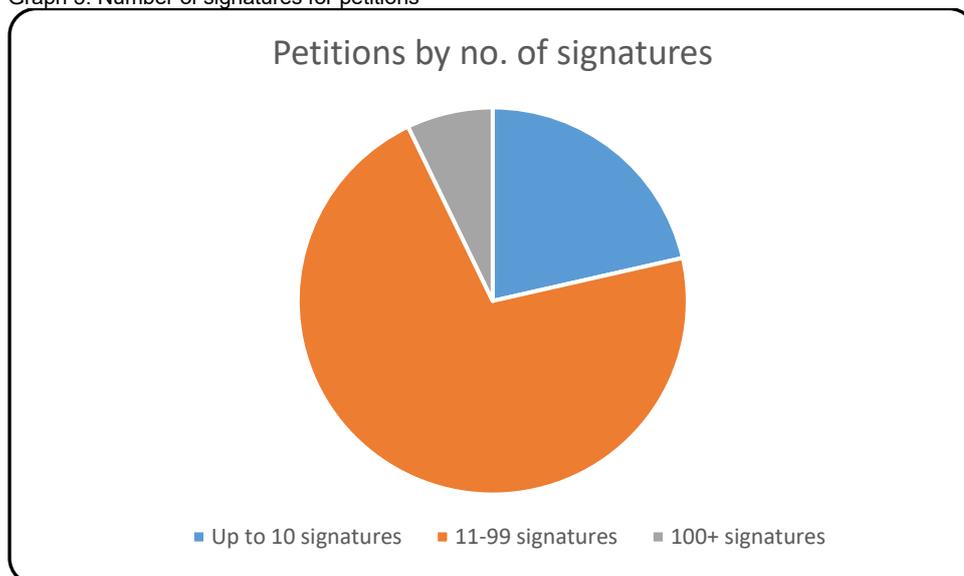
Graph 2: Accepted and rejected petitions.



4.4. Members will also note that a number of petitions were submitted for which other formal processes were in place, specifically planning or licensing applications. Such petitions were dealt with under those other formal processes instead of the Petitions Scheme. 3 of the 14 petitions received in 2024-25 fell into this category. All of the petitions received under the petition scheme were requests relating to the Place Directorate.

4.5. In total nearly 500 signatures were received during the period. Graph 3 shows the distribution of signatures for petitions.

Graph 3: Number of signatures for petitions



- 4.6. Once a petition has been received by the Council, the lead petitioner will receive a response from the relevant Directorate. Where a lead petitioner is dissatisfied with the response from the Directorate, the matter can be referred to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee for further consideration.
- 4.7. No lead petitioners stated they were dissatisfied with the responses that they received, compared to four in the previous year. One review of action undertaken by the Council in response to a petition was undertaken during the previous year. This related to a parking issue in Gillingham, the Committee were content with the work undertaken by the Department and requested further consideration of one matter, the installation of double yellow lines in the area. This was reviewed by officers and no further action was required.

5. Outcomes from Petitions

- 5.1. The Council has undertaken to complete a number of actions following petitions from residents either through responses to the petition or via a referral to the relevant Committee. Below are some outcomes from petitions received during the period.
- 5.2. In May 2024, the Council received a petition requesting the installation of double yellow lines near the entrance of Thorndike House, Chatham.
 - 5.2.1. This request was considered and actioned, with double yellow lines being installed in October 2024.
- 5.3. In October 2024, the Council received a petition requesting the speed limit on Sharnal Street, High Halstow be reduced from 40mph to 30mph.
 - 5.3.1. The investigation regarding this request remains ongoing and a response will be provided to the lead petitioner in due course.

6. Risk management

- 6.1. The publication of clear arrangements for handling petitions ensures transparency and consistency of approach.
- 6.2. Clear advice is set out on the Council's website strongly advising anyone wishing to start an e-petition to use the Council's e-petition facility to ensure the petition meets the requirements of the Council's Petitions Scheme. A template for paper petitions is also available to download from the Council's website for the same reason.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1. The cost of administering and processing petitions is met from within existing budgets.

8. Legal implications

- 8.1. Since the repeal of the provisions relating to petitions in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 local authorities have discretion to put in place locally determined arrangements for handling petitions. Any changes to the Council's Petition Scheme would require approval by full Council as the scheme forms part of the Council's Constitution.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Summary of petitions 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025
Appendix B – Council Petition Scheme

Background papers

None