

Appendix A

West Suffolk Shadow Council Petition Scheme

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Scheme sets out the details of how the West Suffolk Shadow Council will deal with and respond to petitions.

2. Petitions

- 2.1 The Shadow Council welcomes petitions and recognises that petitions are one way in which people can let us know their concerns.

- 2.2 Petitions that meet the requirements about the number of signatories set out below can be presented at a meeting of the Shadow Council or the Shadow Executive or can trigger a Shadow Council Debate, or require specified officers of the Council to give evidence to a meeting of the Scrutiny Committees of Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury.

- 2.3 Petitions can be received by the Shadow Council in a number of ways:-

- (a) Petitions can be sent in writing to:

Interim Monitoring Officer
West Suffolk Shadow Council
West Suffolk House
Western Way
Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk
IP33 3YU

- (b) Electronic petitions can be created, signed and submitted by using free software that is available online. A number of websites provide this service which can be easily found by using an internet search engine.

- (c) Petitions can also be presented to a meeting of the Shadow Council, Shadow Executive. Details of the meetings timetable can be found here [Calendar of Meetings](#)

- 2.4 If you would like to present your petition at a meeting of the Shadow Council or the Shadow Executive or would like your councillor to present it on your behalf, please contact:-

Interim Monitoring Officer
Telephone: (01284) 757162 or
e mail: democratic.services@westsuffolk.gov.uk

at least 7 working days before the meeting and help you to arrange this.

3. What are the guidelines for submitting a petition?

- 3.1 Petitions submitted to the Shadow Council must be about:
- (a) a service that the Shadow Council provides and include a clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition; or
- 3.2 It should state:-
- (a) the 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 petitioner will not be placed on the Shadow Council's website;
 - (b) what action the petitioners wish the Shadow Council to take;
 - (c) the name and address and signature of any person supporting the petition. The contact details of the petition organiser will not be placed on the website;
 - (d) the petition must contain the signatures of people who live, work or study in the Shadow Council's area.
- 3.3 If the petition does not identify a petition organiser, we will contact signatories to the petition to agree who should act as the petition organiser. We will not consider petitions which are considered by the Interim Monitoring Officer to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate and these will not be accepted. In that case, we will write to you to explain the reasons.
- 3.4 In the period leading up to an election or referendum we may need to deal differently with your petition. If this applies we will explain the way that we will deal with the petition.
- 3.5 We will inform the petition organiser at the earliest opportunity of the grounds for rejecting a petition and will advise on how the petition could be validly submitted.

4. What will the Shadow Council do when it receives my petition?

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 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. Depending on the number of signatures, whether it can be presented to the Shadow Council or the Shadow Executive then the acknowledgment will confirm this and tell you when and where the next meeting will take place. If the petition needs more investigation, we will tell you the steps we plan to take.

- 4.3 We will not take action on any petition which the Interim Monitoring Officer considers to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate and will explain the reasons for this in our acknowledgement of the petition.
- 4.4 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).

5. How will the Shadow Council respond to petitions?

- 5.1 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:-

- (a) taking the action requested in the petition;
- (b) considering the petition at a Shadow council meeting;
- (c) holding an inquiry into the matter;
- (d) undertaking research into the matter;
- (e) holding a public meeting;
- (f) holding a consultation;
- (g) holding a meeting with petitioners;
- (h) referring the petition for consideration by the Shadow Council's Scrutiny Committee;
- (i) calling a referendum; or
- (j) writing to the petition organiser setting out our views about the request in the petition.

- 5.2 In addition to these steps, the Shadow Council will consider all the specific actions it can legally take on the issues highlighted in a petition.

6. Petition requiring Shadow Council debate

- 6.1 If a petition contains more than 2500 signatures it will be debated by the Shadow Council unless it is a petition asking for a senior council officer to give evidence at a public meeting.
- 6.2 The issue raised in the petition will be discussed at a Shadow Council meeting which all councillors can attend. The petition organiser will be given not more than five minutes to present the petition at the meeting and the petition will then be discussed by Councillors for a maximum of 20 minutes. The Shadow Council will decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting, it may decide to:-
- (a) take the action the petition requests;
 - (b) not to take the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate; or
 - (c) to commission further investigation into the matter, .
- 6.3 The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of this decision. This confirmation will also be published on our website.

7. Petition requiring an officer to give evidence

7.1 If it contains at least 1250 signatures 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. A list of the officers that can be called to give evidence is as follows:-

- Chief Executive
- Directors
- Assistant Directors

7.2 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 to enable them to make a particular decision.

7.3 The evidence will be given at a meeting of the Council's Shadow Scrutiny Committee and you will be given due notice to enable you to attend. These meetings are normally held in public but the Shadow Scrutiny Committee has the option to exclude the Press and Public from any part of the meeting that discusses confidential information. You should be aware that the Shadow Scrutiny Committee 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. Shadow Scrutiny Committee members will ask the questions at this meeting, but you will be able to suggest questions to the Chairman of the Shadow Scrutiny Committee by contacting the Interim Monitoring Officer on (01284) 757162 or email: democratic.services@westsuffolk.gov.uk up to three working days before the meeting.

7.4 Petitions containing not less than 100 signatories can be presented at a meeting of the Shadow Council during public question time, provided seven working days notice has been given to the Proper Officer before the meeting. The Shadow Council will, without debate, refer any petition to the appropriate forum for consideration.

7.5 If petitioners so wish, a petition containing not less than 20 signatures may, instead, be presented to the Leader of the Council or the relevant Chief Officer, for consideration by the Shadow Executive provided seven working days' notice in writing has been given to the Proper Officer before the relevant meeting. When a petition is considered by the Shadow Executive, a representative of the petitioners may speak at the meeting for not more than three minutes.

8. E-petitions

8.1 The Shadow Council welcomes petitions in electronic format. A number of websites are available that allow electronic petitions to be created and for the final petitions to be emailed to the Shadow Council. These should be sent to: democratic.services@westsuffolk.gov.uk

- 8.2 Please note that the Shadow Council is not responsible for the content of any external websites used to create e-petitions. The Shadow Council shall not be liable for how your personal data may be used by the website providers or the petition host.
- 8.3 The e-petition organiser will need to:-
- (a) provide us with their name, postal address and email address; and
 - (b) state how long you would like your petition to be open for signatures (most petitions run for three months, but you can choose a shorter period).
- 8.4 When an e-petition has closed for signature, the petition organiser should submit it to democratic.services@westsuffolk.gov.uk for further consideration as appropriate. In the same way as a paper petition, you will receive an acknowledgement within 10 working days. If you would like to present your petition to the Shadow Council, or would like your councillor to present it on your behalf, please contact:

Interim Monitoring Officer
Telephone: (01284) 757162 or
Email: democratic.services@westsuffolk.gov.uk

within five days of the petition closing.

- 8.5 The acknowledgment and response to the e-petition will also be published on the Shadow Council's website.

9. How do I 'sign' an e-petition?

- 9.1 The free online software used will enable people wishing to 'sign' the petition free of charge by submitting their name and email address. The signer will usually receive an automatic email from the provider, asking them to confirm that they want to sign the petition.

10. What if my petition has not been dealt with properly?

- 10.1 If you feel that we have not dealt with your petition properly, the petition organiser has the right to request that the Scrutiny Committees of Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury review the steps that the Shadow Council has taken in response to your petition.
- 10.2 The Scrutiny Committees will consider your request at the next available meeting receiving it. Should the Scrutiny Committees determine that the Shadow Council has 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 Shadow Council and arranging for the matter to be considered at a meeting of the Shadow Council.

- 10.3 Once the appeal has been considered the petition organiser will be informed of the results within 5 working days. The results of the review will also be published on our website.