



Report of the Chief Democratic Services Officer

General Purposes Committee

Date: 18th May 2010

Subject: Review of Call In Procedures

Electoral Wards Affected:

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Executive Summary

1. In January 2009 Council agreed to amend the Call In procedure rules, requiring that original signatures be used on the Call In Request Form. General Purposes Committee in recommending this change to Council asked that it be reviewed in six months. This review took place and was considered by this committee on 8th September 2009.
2. At its meeting on 8th September 2009 Members resolved to continue with the requirement to have original signatures on Call In request forms. The committee however asked that the process be kept under review and that a further report be submitted in six months, including an analysis of the number of individual Members involved with Call Ins.
3. The purpose of this report is to review the requirement to have original signatures on Call In request forms in the light of 12 months operational experience and the comments of Members identified in Paragraph 3.4
4. The report also details the analysis of the number of individual Members involved with Call Ins.

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to review the requirement to have original signatures on Call In request forms in the light of 12 months operational experience and the comments of Members identified in Paragraph 3.4. The report also provides an analysis of Members involved in Call In.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 In September 2009 this committee reviewed the requirement to have original signatures on Call In request forms. By way of a reminder, when this matter was first discussed some Members were concerned that requiring original signatures may inconvenience Members who had other commitments outside of the City, and consequently may not be able to provide a signature within the required time-scale. Concerns were also raised that the quality of Members' contributions to discussions would not change even if original signatures were required. Some Members also questioned why electronic signatures should not be accepted, as they were in other circumstances (on White papers, for example). However, other Members argued that requiring original signatures would help to avoid decisions being Called In by Members who were not fully aware of the issues involved, in addition to the possibility of Members' signatures being added to Call In Request Forms without the knowledge of the Member concerned.
- 2.2 To help the discussion Members considered research (below) that demonstrated that the practice of requiring original signatures varies amongst Core Cities.

Core City	Procedure
Birmingham	require original signatures.
Newcastle	Allow electronic signatures
Liverpool	Require original signatures on paper copies, however they would accept electronic signatures ONLY if they have been sent by that person through their individual email account (Not on behalf of them)
Bristol	Only accept original signatures.
Sheffield	Have not had this debate but would currently accept electronic signature
Nottingham	Never had a Call In
Manchester	Rules unclear but are likely to ask for an original signature

3.0 Review of current arrangements

3.1 Since the adoption of the 'original signature rule' there have been eight Call Ins. (as of January 2010) These were;

- Budget Action Plan Staffing Issues (April 2009)
- Voice Recognition system (April 2009)
- Supporting People (May 2009)
- ICT Refresh - Sports for the Future (August 2009)
- North Hyde Park Resident's Association, South Headingley Community Association, and Friends of Woodhouse Moor regarding the Council's proposal to establish BBQ areas on Woodhouse Moor. (September 2009)
- To award a contract for the delivery of Connexions Intensive Support Services – Wedge Based Services (October 2009)
- 2009/10 Well-being Fund. Radio Fever – approval of revenue funding (December 2009)¹
- Neighbourhood Networks²

3.2 From the Scrutiny Unit's perspective there were no administrative issues faced in progressing these Call Ins in terms of delays or reported difficulties in obtaining signatures.

3.3 In June 2009 and again in February 2010 the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development wrote to the Leaders of the five political groups, their Whips and all Scrutiny Chairs, inviting views on the current arrangements.

3.4 Cllr Brett has responded stating that he is happy with the current arrangements, as have Cllrs Hyde, Pryke, Chapman and Anderson. Cllr Smith has stated that he would be content for the rule to be relaxed. Cllr Gruen has stated that the Labour Group considers the requirement to be cumbersome and unnecessary. However he also states that the Labour Group has not experienced any particular problems in obtaining signatures.

Analysis of Members involved in Call In.

3.5 General Purposes Committee requested an analysis of those Members involved in Call In. Appendix 1 provides the full breakdown of Call Ins received and those participating over the period 2001 to now.

3.6 Since 2001 there have been various rules in place regarding who can initiate a Call In and the numbers of signatures required. Further more, there have been a number of changes to the membership and political balance of the Council with some Members leaving and new Members joining. As such it is very difficult to draw any meaningful conclusions from the data.

¹ This Call In was withdrawn

² Decision withdrawn

- 3.7 Since 2001 there have been 38 Call Ins, of which 9 (23%) involved Members of the ruling Administration. These 38 can be broken down as follows;
- 12 - Executive Board Decisions (32%)
 - 24- Delegated Decisions (63%)
 - 2 - Area Committee decisions (5%)³
- 3.8 Since May 2008 and the requirement that any two Members *not* from the same Group or *any* five Members must be present to initiate a Call In, there has been a total of 16 Call Ins. This represents 42% of all Call Ins. Of these 16 Call Ins four (25%) involved Members of the ruling Administration.
- 3.9 Of the eight Call Ins received since the introduction of the original signature rule, three have involved Members of the ruling Administration,
- 3.10 These eight Call Ins have required a total of 32 signatures. These have been provided by 21 Members. Eight Members have signed two Call Ins. Those Members are; Cllrs Gruen, Taggart, Driver, Oglivie, Illingworth, Lowe and D Blackburn. Cllr Pryke signed three Call Ins of the eight Call Ins.

4.0 Implications for Council Policy and Governance

- 4.1 The Council's Scrutiny arrangements are one of the key parts of the Council's governance arrangements. This review of Scrutiny Board procedure rules seeks to ensure that the arrangements continue to be efficient and relevant to the work of the Council.

5.0 Legal and Resource Implications

- 5.1 There are no legal or resource implications to the proposed amendments.

6.0 Recommendation

- 6.1 The General Purposes Committee is requested to review the requirement to have original signatures on Call In request forms in the light of 12 months operational experience and the comments of Members identified in Paragraph 3.4.

Background Papers

Scrutiny Board Procedure Rules
Report to General Purpose Committee – 20th November 2008

³ One Area Committee decision Called In was withdrawn