

From: Joel Cook – Democratic Services Manager
To: Selection and Member Services Committee – 19 October 2023
Subject: Petition Scheme Review
Status: Unrestricted

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The County Council has had a petitions scheme since 1 September 2010. It was established, as was the case for all Councils, in response to specific legal requirements to put in place a scheme or policy that confirmed how a Local Authority would manage any submitted petition. However, the Localism Act 2011 repealed the relevant sections of the 2009 Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act (LDED&C 2009) and the associated statutory guidance, removing the legal requirements for Local Authorities to maintain relevant petition schemes or policies for petitions relating to normal council business. Like the majority of Councils, Kent opted to maintain a Petition Scheme despite the lack of legal requirement (confirmed 2012 during last scheme update). For reference, the now repealed legislation and associated guidance is still referred to and drawn from in this review as they informed the development of the current scheme.
- 1.2 The scheme was last reviewed by this Committee in April 2014. The last change made to the Petition Scheme was in 2012, when the number of signatures required for a petition debate at County Council was reduced to 10,000 and a requirement for a debate at a Cabinet Committee if over 2,500 signatures were received. A copy of the current scheme is attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 1.3 This review of the Petition Scheme and related arrangements, undertaken by Democratic Services at the request of the Selection and Member Services Committee covers the period 2014 to August 2023.
- 1.4 The petition scheme is an important tool in the Council's governance to manage and respond to public views and concerns. However, it should not be viewed in isolation and must be considered alongside the role of local Members, consultation activity, resident engagement and the Overview and Scrutiny functions already set up across the Council. There is also an expectation management aspect to be considered in that any change or review or indeed use of the petition scheme should be caveated with an understanding that no petition may bind the Council or relevant decision-maker to enact any requested activity. The purpose of any petition scheme is to promote debate and further consideration of issues, either directly by the decision-maker or by the wider elected membership on relevant committees or boards, with any recommendations being presented to decision-makers.

2 Petition Scheme

- 2.1 The Petition Scheme sets out for the public the process for submitting a valid petition, either a paper petition or an e-petition. The Petition Scheme makes it clear that if a valid petition is submitted it will receive a response and, depending on the number of signatures, it may lead to a debate at County Council, a Cabinet

Committee or be referred to another appropriate meeting. This information can be accessed via the [Petitions page](#) on the Kent.gov website.

2.2 A summary of the petition thresholds is set out below with brief commentary on how these operate in practice:

- All accepted petitions will receive a response from the responsible Cabinet Member (where further action such as committee debate is required under the process, the written response will commonly be confirmation that any detailed response will be deferred pending committee consideration).
 - (a) Where the petition relates to a County Council matter that relates to a specific District Council area and contains at least 1,000 signatures it will be debated at the most appropriate local meeting (e.g. Joint Transportation Board).
 - (b) Between 2500 and 9999 signatures, the petition will be debated at the appropriate Cabinet Committee.
 - (c) 10,000 signatures or more, the petition will be debated at County Council.

2.3 The majority of petitions receive signature numbers at double or low three figure levels. As a result, the most common response to petitions is a written response from the relevant Cabinet Member.

2.4 To confirm relevant terminology, 'accepted' petition refers to those petitions that meet the criteria within KCC's petition scheme. Issues as to the acceptability of a petition tend to relate to whether the actions requested are within the authority of the Council or whether the circumstances or issues presented in the petition are factually accurate.

3 Petitions Received

3.1 The petition scheme is administered by Democratic Services while responses are the responsibility of the relevant service and portfolio holder. The majority of petitions received are e-petitions hosted on Kent.gov. Most significant petitions are hosted via KCC's own e-petition system but externally hosted online petitions are also accepted, providing they are closed and submitted for response with relevant verification data. Where duplicate online and paper petitions (organised and run by the same individual) are submitted, these may be merged to be taken as a single petition and the numbers combined (providing they do not include duplicate signatures).

3.2 Attached at **Appendix 2** is a list of petitions received from 1 April 2014 (when the scheme was last reviewed) to 31 August 2023. The majority of petitions received continue to relate to highways and transportation matters at district or ward level but there have also been petitions submitted relating to a range of high-profile issues, several of which have resulted in debate by a relevant committee. It should be noted that there have been circumstances where correspondence that included multiple signatures, akin to open letters or multi-person complaints, have been managed by the relevant directorates (notably Highways) via the petition scheme where this appeared appropriate. This means that some 'petitions' have been processed directly within services, without substantive recourse to the full petitions process. These do not appear in the full petition figures presented later in the

report but the Committee should be reassured that any such cases relate only to correspondence or petitions with signature numbers in single or low double figures. In light of the establishment of the modern complaints and correspondence management processes at KCC, greater distinction will be drawn in future which will improve data recording and support any future reviews of the scheme.

3.3 Whilst KCC is in the process of regularising and updating its recording approach for all petitions across all directorates, Democratic Services undertook an exercise to review and analyse the of number of petitions that Kent County Council has received since the scheme was last reviewed by this Committee in April 2014. The result of that exercise is set out below.

Table 1: Number of petitions received per year from 1 Apr 2014 – 30 Aug 2023 categorised via current petition threshold.

	0 - 999	1000-2499	2500-9999	10000+	Total
2014	67	5	3		75
2015	15	3	2	1	21
2016	27	2	2		31
2017	29	4	1		34
2018	27	2			29
2019	26	6			32
2020	16	2			18
2021	20	1	1		22
2022	25	4			29
2023	19	4	1		24
Grand Total	271	33	10	1	315

3.4 In line with the Council's petitions scheme, this resulted in the following responses:

- 3.4.1 The number of petitions debated at County Council: 1
- 3.4.2 The number of petitions debated at Cabinet Committee: 10
- 3.4.3 The number of petitions debated at an appropriate local forum / Joint Transportation Board: 33
- 3.4.4 The number of petitions that received a written response form the appropriate Cabinet Member: 271

4 Proposed Amendments and options considered

4.1 At a meeting of the [Selection and Member Services Committee on Thursday, 29th June, 2023](#), Members were invited to consider the merits and implications of the following proposed changes to the petition thresholds:

- 4.1.1 Reduction of County Council debate threshold from 10,000 to 2,000.
- 4.1.2 Reduction of Cabinet Committee debate threshold from 2,500 to 1,500.

4.2 The comments from the discussion were collated and are detailed below in sections 4.2.1 to 4.2.12, along with an analysis of the implications.

4.2.1 The county populations needed to be considered when comparing other council's signature thresholds.

A review was carried out against the petition thresholds within other County Council authorities of a similar size, namely, Hampshire and Essex, to identify how they administered their petition schemes against the proportionality of the county.

Table 2: comparison of KCC petition scheme with others

Comparator	Population	Parliament/ Full Council debate threshold	% of population	Minimum threshold for response
Parliament	67,000,000	100,000	0.15	10,000
Hampshire	1,844,245	32,000	1.74	0
Essex	1,832,752	14,000 ¹	0.76	10
Kent	1,578,500	10,000	0.63	0

Were Kent to reduce their full council debate threshold to 2,000 signatories, it would be equivalent to 0.13% of the population, putting it on par with Parliament but more generous than other County Councils. It should be noted that Parliamentary debate after 100,000 signatures is *considered*, not guaranteed.

The historic regulation, now repealed, indicated that the maximum figure which may be specified in an Authority's petition scheme to trigger a debate of the full council, should be no greater than 5% of the local authority's population. This was seen proportionate to balance the need to ensure that local people are able to place the issues which they think are important firmly on the Authority's agenda, and the need to ensure that the efficient functioning of an Authority is not "hi-jacked" by particular pressure groups.

Accepting that the regulations no longer apply, the guidance was considered as part of the review to give relevant context around options for the Committee to consider. For Kent, 5% of the population equates to 78,925. It is recommended both in light of the historic regulation and operational consideration of petitions schemes that the signatory threshold should not exceed this figure, which neither the current nor proposed thresholds do. However, the Committee should note that the 5% figure set in 2010 gives a reasonable indication of the national government thinking around how many people should support a petition to trigger a debate at full Council at a time when Government was committed to requiring Councils to manage petitions in a more robust way. The repeal of the relevant legislation and regulation removed any upper limit to the threshold and arguably lowering the existing KCC threshold from 10,000 to 2,000 is moving further away from both the current requirements and the historic arrangements.

4.2.2. The eligibility to sign a petition should be reviewed, for example, a signatory should have a local connection or be over a certain age. Currently KCC required signatories to live, work or study in the

¹ At 14,000 signatures - The relevant Cabinet Member will provide a written response to the lead petitioner. If the Cabinet Member does not agree to take the action requested by the petition, then the matter will be considered at a meeting of the Essex Full Council for noting or, if appropriate, debate at a meeting of the Council which is open to the public.

county; the Committee intentionally left the eligibility requirements relatively open when the Petition Scheme was reviewed last time.

The eligibility criteria continues to reflect the original arrangements set up in response to Chapter the 2009 Act “to make a scheme for the handling of petitions made to the authority by people who live, work or study in the authority’s area.” The repeal of the Act allows for this to be broadened or limited. It should be noted that there is limited scope to apply significant verification processes to confirm signatory eligibility – any substantive change to this approach would require additional resourcing and technical solutions. In addition, privacy considerations relating to requiring any submission of evidence may be disproportionate to the petition scheme purpose. It could be viable, however, to require a Kent Postcode to be provided with any signature – if the Committee were to recommend a restriction to only those living in Kent, the scheme could stipulate a home address in Kent. If work and study remain acceptable standards for eligibility then the provision of a relevant Kent postcode for place of work or place of study could be made requirements. Such changes would involve greater resourcing for managing the scheme due to increased checks and this would offer limited benefit to the Council if the purpose of the review is to encourage and facilitate increased public engagement or debate of relevant issues.

4.2.3. For small petitions, considered at a local meeting, the number of signatures should be comparable with number required at District/Borough Councils.

KCC’s petition scheme allows for petitions relating to a County Council matter that relates to a specific District Council area and contains at least 1,000 signatures to be debated at the most appropriate local meeting (e.g. Joint Transportation Board). S&MS asked if this was comparable with thresholds set by district and borough councils. The thresholds are set out below, however there is no direct comparator with the council’s “local meeting” outcome.

Table 4: Comparison of District/Borough Petition Schemes

Authority	Signatures required to be a valid petition	Responded to by an officer	Scrutiny Committee	Full Council
Ashford	50	N/A	750	1500
Canterbury	15	16-999	16-999	1000
Dartford	15	15 or more	15 or more	N/A
Dover	20	N/A	20 or more	1600
Folkestone and Hythe	N/A	249 or less	N/A	250
Gravesham	N/A	N/A	750	1500
Maidstone	100	N/A	100	100
Sevenoaks	N/A	N/A	N/A	1000
Swale	10	200 or less	201 to 1499	1500
Thanet	50	50 to 1499	N/A	1500
Tonbridge and Malling	N/A	N/A	750	1500
Tunbridge Wells	N/A	50 to 499	500 to 999	1000

The arrangements put in place for local meeting consideration of petitions were established prior to the dissolution of the local area meetings and associated boards. In practice, the only official local boards still operating are Joint Transportation Boards. It would not be for the petition scheme itself to determine KCC's local meeting arrangements, therefore no change to the terms are recommended at this time but should be reviewed further in the event that alternative local boards / meetings are established within KCC's governance operating arrangements.

For purposes of considering the management of JTBs, their meeting arrangements are determined by the relevant Districts / Boroughs. However, there is provision for Members to raise issues (such as those identified through petitions) as agenda items outside of KCC's petitions scheme arrangements.

4.2.4. If a petition related to an executive function, which was often the case, neither the County Council or Cabinet Committee could act upon the petition directly. They could only make recommendations to the Cabinet for consideration.

Those petitions reaching the relevant threshold will be debated at full Council or Cabinet Committee, where the committee membership will decide how to respond to the petition through majority resolution. In both cases, the 'committee' will not be the decision-maker. So a feature of the petition scheme is that referral to a committee for debate may result in the making of recommendations to the Executive who are the responsible decision-makers for almost all areas of Council business. Full Council has authority to determine a limited number of reserved functions, though commonly those Non-Executive powers are delegated to specific Committees and it would be inappropriate and procedurally improper for Full Council to make some decisions without the required consideration of professional advice. While Cabinet Committees, as advisory boards to the executive, have no lawful decision-making authority on any issues. This is the correct process within a Council using a Leader and Cabinet model of Executive governance and appropriately reflects the management of any petition scheme within such a model. It would not be viable to include specific requirements within the scheme that could 'restrict or require' decision-makers to comply with petition requests as that would unlawfully override the legal governance model of the Council.

4.2.5. 10,000 was a lot of signatures. People do a petition when they have been told to gather evidence that people want something. If the threshold was reduced, more voices would be heard.

Please refer to section 4.2.6 below.

4.2.6. The G&I Group's suggested threshold for County Council debate was proportionally in line with the Parliamentary threshold. This reduction would increase democratic engagement.

The G&I group have suggested KCC's petition threshold is amended as follows:

- Reduction of County Council debate threshold from 10,000 to 2,000.

- Reduction of Cabinet Committee debate threshold from 2,500 to 1,500.

As set out above, the parliament threshold for triggering the consideration of a debate at parliament is 100,000 (or 0.15% of the population). Reducing the KCC County Council debate threshold to 2,000 would be equivalent to 0.13%, which is more in line with Parliament but further away from the previous regulations. It should also be highlighted that 100,000 people represents a greater likelihood of strategic significance of any petition compared with KCC's 2000 signatures as a proportion of the population. The context between a national population figure and issues relevant to Parliamentary debate is different from the issues under KCC's control at a County level.

The table below demonstrates what impact the threshold change would have had on KCC's petitions over the last nine years.

Table 5: Impact of changing the petition scheme, using petition figures from 1 Apr 2014 to 30 Aug 2023

Type of response	Current scheme thresholds	No. of petitions under current scheme	G&I Proposed thresholds	No. of petitions under Proposed scheme
written response	0 - 999	271	0 - 999	271
response at local forum, e.g. JTB or letter from Cabinet Member	1000 - 2499	33	1000-1500	23
Cabinet committee	2500 - 9999	10	1500-2000	9
County Council	10000 +	1	2000+	12
Total		315		315

The table above demonstrates that petitions debated by full Council would have increased from 1 to 12, with the number debated at the relevant Cabinet Committee falling from 10 to 9. For reference (and as detailed in table 6 below), other comparable County Authorities have fewer than one petition debate at any committee per year. The above shift would put Kent as an outlier on these arrangements.

Table 6: Petition by Council – Number of petitions that met the debate threshold 2014 to 2023

Authority	Discussed at Committee	Discussed at County Council
Cambridgeshire	4	0

Derbyshire	11	0
Devon	0	0
East Sussex	0	1
Essex	0	0
Gloucestershire	0	1
Hampshire	0	0
Hertfordshire	24	4
Lancashire	0	0
Leicester	2	0
Lincolnshire	2	0
Norfolk	0	0

The one Kent petition that met the threshold for a debate at County Council was titled “Right to Light: Reinstate Streetlights Across Kent between 12am and 5.30am”. It received 11,065 signatories. Were the threshold to be lowered to 2,000 signatories, the following petitions would have been debated by full Council:

Table 7: Title of petitions that would have been debated at County Council (under proposed scheme)

Title of Petition	Number of Signatures	year	Directorate
Reduce the Cost of the Young Person’s Travel Pass for those Aged 16-19	2,012	2014	GET
Reinstate Bus Services in Canterbury	2,783	2015	GET
Young Person Travel Pass	3,045	2016	GET
the new proposed Young Person’s Travel Pass costing £200 per annum is extended to 16-19 year olds.	3,114	2014	GET
Cheriton Cycle Lanes Scheme	3,500	2021	GET
Keep Kent Frack Free	3,522	2014	GET
Save Folkestone Library	3,647	2023	GET
No Lower Thames Crossing to the East of Gravesend	3,672	2016	GET
Save Our Public Libraries	3,775	2015	GET
Scrap the £350 cap on Kent Freedom Pass	4,814	2014	GET
Save Kent’s Dedicated Breastfeeding Services	4,931	2017	ASC&H
Right to Light: Reinstate Streetlights Across Kent between 12am and 5.30am	11,065	2015	GET

Placing a duty on local authorities to respond to petitions was a government mechanism for addressing the perception of communities that they cannot influence decisions in their local area. The government removed this requirement but KCC has opted to maintain its approach to encourage public engagement and the raising issues through a petition scheme. Signing a petition is a way for people to express their concerns and ask for change, and

guaranteeing a petition will be responded to is a way of encouraging people to organise or sign one. Reducing the threshold that triggers debate at Cabinet Committee or full Council sends a message that the Council is treating the views of its residents, students and workers seriously.

However, Members must consider which forum is best placed to debate the type of issue being raised in petitions, and bear in mind that it is the Executive's responsibility to develop policies and ensure services are delivered to improve the quality of life of Kent residents. Other things to be mindful of are the additional resource requirement in allowing a greater number of petitions to be debated at full Council; whether the outcome would be different when considered by a Cabinet Committee / other committee as opposed to Full Council; and whether another Committee, such as Scrutiny, may be best placed to debate the issues within the scope of the Overview & Scrutiny functions.

Table 7 illustrates that the type of petition that would be affected by the threshold change varies from local, District focused ones to County wide policy issues. The Committee should consider whether County Council is the appropriate forum to consider and debate service changes at a local, district or ward level when alternative forums or processes are in place to manage this type of issue. The commentary here in no way devalues the importance of the issues raised by residents but seeks to highlight the difficult balance KCC must strike between listening and responding to its residents generally and ensuring its formal governance structures can focus on the strategic decision-making functions of the authority.

To provide context on the above point, substantive policy change already requires relevant consultation and engagement with the public and relevant stakeholders, with that information an important factor in any final decision. The current governance model already incorporates debate of all key and significant decisions due to be taken by the Executive as a feature of the Cabinet Committee system. This pre-decision consideration covers all Executive decisions, includes reference to consultation feedback and any relevant petitions submitted on the issue and maximises the benefit of Member local knowledge and connection with residents to help inform the decision-making.

It is recognised that a key role petitions can play is in the post decision space. Where large scale petitions are submitted that seek to challenge or oppose a decision already taken, as was the case with Streetlights, the petition supported further reconsideration of the decision and prompted some amendments to the arrangements. However, this consideration should be balanced against the existence of legitimate options for people to challenge KCC decision-making such as judicial review and it should also be noted that the Scrutiny Committee has a role in monitoring and reviewing the activities and decisions of the council, with the potential for making recommendations including the suggestion of full reconsideration or reversal of decisions.

4.2.7. Officers could send a survey to petition organisers to incorporate their experience and feedback into the review.

When a member of the public signs an e-petition, they will be required to provide Kent County Council with basic personal information. More information can be found via the [KCC Petitions - Privacy Notice](#). KCC is bound by General

Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and can only process information for the purpose in which it was collected.

Further work will be carried out regarding user feedback (both of systems and petition debates) but this no recommendations for change included within this report. Any operational updates will be reported to the Committee in due course.

4.2.8. There were some advantages to hosting petitions on the KCC ePetition system, it could be used to provide updates to those who have signed the petition. The ePetition user experience was an area that could be further explored as part of the review. There were reports that the KCC ePetition system was a cumbersome experience for users.

The council's E-petition process is run through the Modern.Gov software commissioned from Civica. The system has a number of functionalities which benefit both the organisation and the general public. From a resourcing perspective, the provision of this system within KCC's committee management system allows for ongoing delivery of a managed online petition scheme which requires users to engage with KCC before launching their petition. This is very valuable as it allows for signposting and information sharing with petitioners to minimise duplication or ineligible petitions.

Should there be a desire to change the functionality of the system, this would have cost implications either through design work with Civica or the commissioning of an alternative petitions platform. In view of the Council's current financial position, neither approach is recommended.

However, Democratic Services will continue to review and identify ways in which it can both improve the user experience through the e-petition system and ensure the correct policies and procedures are in place to support democratic participation in local decision making.

With regard to user feedback and how this can be utilised to improve the system, details of this can be found under section 4.2.7.

4.2.9. In cases where there was a paper petition and an ePetition running simultaneously about the same issue, the number of signatures could be combined. There was petition guidance that advised people not to sign both petition formats as there would be checks for duplication.

Under the current system, duplicate online and paper petitions (organised and run by the same individual) will be merged to be taken as a single petition and the numbers combined – duplicate signatures will be removed and only counted once.

Similarly, for any electronic petitions that have not been set up via KCC's own petition system (such as through change.org), Democratic Services treats the petition in the same way as it does paper petitions. The lead petitioner can submit a list of signatories to Democratic Services once the petition has closed. If there is a duplicate petition on the KCC system, the two may be merged to be taken as a single petition and the numbers combined (again, duplicate signatures will only be counted once). A common challenge in this area is that petitioners sometimes run petitions on external sites but never close and

submit them. It is only possible for KCC to process and respond to petitions when they are submitted. External petition website functionality no longer allows for direct messaging of lead petitions, likely due to bullying and harassment of petitioners, so KCC is unable to contact lead petitioners direct in the first instance and rely on the petitioner making contact – the petition scheme and associated guidance will be updated to make this more explicit.

4.2.10 In cases when there were multiple petitions about similar, but not identical issues, the number of signatures were not combined, however they would be grouped together to enable to decision maker to see what had been received.

If multiple petitions are submitted relating to a similar (but not the same) issue, e.g. local Children's Centres, these are not combined to ensure that the concerns presented in one petition are not diluted with another petition of a similar nature. Such petitions, however, are flagged to the responsible Cabinet Member to ensure they are sighted on issues of significant public interest.

In instances where a petition is received relating to a live consultation, the lead petitioner would receive a response from the appropriate Cabinet Member, acknowledging their submission and advising that it will be taken into account as part of the wider consultation feedback. Examples of this include:

- Kent Community Assets Programme Consultation
- Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) booking system consultation
- Phased recovery programme for reopening of libraries after Covid

It is important to highlight that part of the purpose of a petition is to prompt or require consideration of public views on a subject that may otherwise be determined without any direct reference to public opinion. Where there are live consultations, KCC has already committed to seeking, collecting and consideration the views of the public and other stakeholders and therefore the sharing of the petition details with the decision-maker as part of these types of projects supports the same outcome of the petition scheme.

In cases where Democratic Services have received two separate petitions on the same topic from two separate individuals, officers would write to the newer petitioner advising them of the existing petition and offer guidance in the signing and sharing of that existing petition should they wish to proceed.

4.2.11. Part of the review would look at how to handle multiple different petitions that had a strategic connection. The aim was to help ensure peoples voices were heard. It was recognised that petitions were often submitted as an act of last resort.

Please refer to section 4.2.10.

4.2.12. There would always be the opportunity for an individual to submit a paper petition.

All petitions, paper or electronic, are subject to the same verification process and KCC will continue to accept paper petitions. Any petitioner making contact with Democratic Services in advance of running a petition is provided with the relevant advice about the different processes involved with paper and online

petitions so they are supported in either choosing the best option for them or assisting them in approaching a merged option.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 Previously at a meeting of the Selection and Member Services Committee held on 29 June 2023, Members discussed what an appropriate threshold would be to trigger a debate at either a Cabinet Committee or Full Council meeting. Members considered the suggested reduction in the County Council debate threshold from 10,000 to 2,000 and a reduction in the Cabinet Committee debate threshold from 2,500 to 1,500. This review clarifies the context and explores these possible threshold figures.
- 5.2 Democratic Services carried out a review of the ideas discussed by the committee to identify both the merits and implications of any changes to the thresholds, as well as other elements of the scheme. The report aims to respond to those areas which were highlighted by Members of this Committee at its meeting on 29 June 2023 and pending further comment and consideration, relevant activity will be undertaken to support the Committees decision.

Key areas to note are as follows:-

1. Should the reduced thresholds be implemented - petitions debated by full Council would have increased from 1 to 12, with the number debated at the relevant Cabinet Committee falling from 10 to 9. This may suggest that between 1 and 2 Full Council petition debates will be required per year in future.
2. Petitions debated at the appropriate level are more likely to achieve the required outcome. Escalation to Full Council debate does not overrule the Executive's role as the final decision-maker. The Scheme must manage the expectations of the Lead petitions and signatories.
3. What would be the merits in debating the petition at Full Council as opposed to Cabinet Committee / other Committees?
4. It is the Executive's responsibility to develop policies that ensure services are delivered to improve the quality of life of Kent residents. The current thresholds reflect the Council as a Strategic Authority.
5. Should the reduced thresholds be implemented, additional resources would be required to manage an increase in petitions debated at Full Council and timetabling for all substantial or challenging decisions would have to be planned accordingly.
6. The 100,000 signature requirement for Parliamentary debate does not automatically trigger but rather prompts consideration of a debate. Also the figure needs to be considered in context – an issue supported by 100,000 UK residents is more likely to have strategic implications for the Government and therefore merit Parliamentary debate. The equivalent figure in Kent of 2000 does not necessarily indicate an issue of a similar strategic scale, with various petitions having a distinctly local or operational focus.

6. Recommendation

Selection and Member Services is asked to consider the following:

Option 1:

- a) Agree that no changes be made to the Petition Scheme;

Option 2:

(SMS may recommend one or more of the following changes to the Scheme)

- a) Recommend that the eligibility criteria be amended, only permitting signatories who reside in Kent.
- b) Recommend that 'live, work or study in Kent' be maintained as the eligibility criteria but require a specific Kent postcode evidence the Kent link.
- c) Recommend that the threshold for a petition to be debated at County Council be reduced from 10,000 to one of the following options:
- 8000 signatures
 - 5000 signatures
 - 2000 signatures
- d) Recommend that the Cabinet Committee debate threshold be reduced from 2500 to one of the following:
- 2000 signatures
 - 1500 signatures

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Petition Scheme

Appendix 2 – List of petitions received

Appendix 3 – Comparison of District Borough Schemes

8. Background Documents

Agenda Item, Petitions Review, Selection and Member Services meeting, 29 June 2023 [Agenda for Selection and Member Services Committee on Thursday, 29th June, 2023, 2.30 pm](#)

Agenda Item, Petition Scheme Review, Selection and Member Services meeting 25 April 2014, [Agenda for Selection and Member Services Committee on Friday, 25th April, 2014, 2.30 pm \(kent.gov.uk\)](#)

Agenda Item, Petition Scheme Review, Selection and Member Services meeting 10 July 2012, [Agenda for Selection and Member Services Committee on Tuesday, 10th July, 2012, 11.00 am \(kent.gov.uk\)](#)

Agenda item, Proposed changes to the Constitution (a) Adoption of a Petition Scheme, County Council meeting 22 July 2010, [Agenda for County Council on Thursday, 22nd July, 2010, 10.00 am \(kent.gov.uk\)](#)