



## Transport Delivery Committee

<b>Date</b>	9 September 2019
<b>Report title</b>	New Petitions Process
<b>Accountable Director</b>	Steve McAleavy, Director of Customer Experience Email: <a href="mailto:steve.mcaleavy@tfwm.org.uk">steve.mcaleavy@tfwm.org.uk</a> Tel: 0121 214 7388
<b>Accountable Employee</b>	Sarah Jones, Head of Customer Services Email: <a href="mailto:sarah.jones@tfwm.org.uk">sarah.jones@tfwm.org.uk</a> Tel: 0121 214 7014
<b>Report has been considered by</b>	Transport for West Midlands Leadership Team and Putting Passengers First (PPF) Lead Member Reference Group

### Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

- To note the contents of this report.

## **1. Purpose**

1. To notify Transport Delivery Committee (TDC) on the refreshed approach to managing transport-related Petitions received by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA).

## **2. Background**

- 2.1. WMCA has a history of receiving Petitions regarding transport related matters. The existing Protocol sees Petitions with less than 50 signatures reviewed, investigated and adjudicated on by the relevant subject matter Officers. A response and decision is then issued to the Lead Petitioner by the Customer Relations Team.
- 2.2. Petitions with over 50 signatures are reviewed and investigating by the relevant subject matter Officer and a recommendation put forward for consideration by the Putting Passengers First (PPF) Lead Member Reference Group. The PPF Group is accountable to the TDC and has specific remit for considering Petitions relating to bus, rail and Metro. Once endorsed by the PPF Group, decisions are ratified through a report to the TDC where the decision is formally minuted.
- 2.3. There are currently no established arrangements for managing Petitions received regarding non transport matters and since the vesting of the WMCA in 2016, there have been no such Petitions received.
- 2.4. The existing process has several issues as follows:
  - The scope of the current process is limited to transport and there are no arrangements in place to respond to wider WMCA related matters.
  - Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) is often asked to consider Petitions where the subject matter is outside of its direct control/remit.
  - There is no opportunity for Petitioners to be involved in the consideration of their Petition. Recurring customer feedback is that they don't feel they have been treated fairly as they have been unable to "present their case" in person.
  - There is no agreed Service Level Agreement covering target timeframe for resolution which leads to an inconsistent customer experience and poor public perception.
  - The low signature threshold of 50 means a high number of Petitions received require Member consideration, when only a small number of people may have supported the Petition.
  - The reliance for a Petition to be considered by the PPF Group at its monthly meetings and then reported on to the TDC, can also add delay to the process.
  - The absence of published information (online or otherwise) regarding the current process means there is lack of understanding and transparency around how WMCA considers Petitions.
  - Some Petitions lack information or clear instruction on what Petitioners expect TfWM to do.

## **3. Review**

- 3.1. The Constitution of the WMCA requires that the Authority has appropriate arrangements for considering Petitions in accordance with the scheme of delegation. Given the limitations of the current Petitions Protocol and at the request of the PPF Group, a comprehensive review of the current process has been undertaken by the Customer Relations Team. This included the end to end review of the current process taking in to account the customer experience. The review also considered customer feedback, benchmarking our arrangements with Local Authority partners and looked at how WMCA communicates with our customers both during and after the Petition review period.
- 3.2. The review found that the current arrangements for TfWM have a particularly low threshold for signatories in order for a Petition to qualify to be considered formally by elected Members. The

lack of opportunity for Petitioners to “present their case” was also unusual when comparing the arrangements in place across the West Midlands’ Local Authority areas. The details of the benchmarking exercise are shown below in Table A.

**Table A**

Authority	Paper/Online Process	Signature Threshold	Service Level Agreement	Panel	Customer attend?
Birmingham City Council	Yes / Yes	>10,000	None	Scrutiny Committee	No
		>20,000		Full Council Debate	Yes
Coventry City Council	Yes / Yes	>5	5 days	Senior Officer	No
		>10,000	None	Public Meeting	Yes
		>15,000	None	Full Council Debate	Yes
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council	Yes / No	>10	None	Development Control Committee	Unsure
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	Yes / No	>10	60 days	Senior Officer	No
		>1,500		Public Meeting	Yes
		>3,000		Full Council Debate	Yes
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	Yes / No	<2,000	None	Senior Officer	No
		>2,000		Full Council Debate	Yes
Walsall Council	Yes / Yes	<500	None	Senior Officer	No
		>500		Scrutiny & Performance Panel	Yes
		>1,500		Full Council Debate	Yes
City of Wolverhampton Council	Yes / Yes	<2,500	None	Senior Officer	No
		>2,500		Scrutiny Committee	Yes
		>5,000		Full Council Debate	Yes

#### 4. Principles for WMCA Petitions Protocol

- 4.1. The Customer Relations team oversees the management of complex investigations including petitions, subsidised bus service queries, appeals regarding the siting of bus shelters and consultation relating to network service changes as well as ad hoc schemes. The team also provide support to the wider WMCA and Mayoral Office. The nature of the enquiries received, routinely requires liaison with other departments and stakeholders in order to ascertain specialist detail to resolve the enquiry.
- 4.2. To address the limitations of the existing arrangements in terms of both scope and customer satisfaction, a new Petitions Protocol will be established. The new approach has been endorsed by Transport for West Midlands Leadership Team and Putting Passengers First

(PPF) Lead Member Reference Group. The new Protocol will be formalised around the following proposed principles:

- **Petition Signatories** – the threshold number of signatories for a Petition to be managed through the formal Petitions Protocol is increased from 50 to 250 for all Petitions.
- **Officer Petition Panel (all Petitions below 250 Signatures)** – Terms of Reference are to be developed for an internal Officer Petition Panel to consider Petitions where the number of signatories is less than 250. Membership will comprise the lead Customer Relations Executive responsible for communication with the customer, the relevant subject matter expert(s) and a nominated Head of Service and or Director.
- **Transport Petitions Over 250 Signatures** – Transport related Petitions with in excess of 250 signatures will broadly follow the same arrangements as present in that the TDC (passing via the PPF Group) will be asked to approve the recommendations of the Officer Petition Panel.
- **Non Transport Petitions Over 250 Signatures** – With regard to subject matter, the WMCA’s Monitoring Officer will determine the appropriate Committee to consider the recommendations of the Officer Petition Panel in relation to non-transport Petitions.
- **Petitioner Involvement** –The Lead Petitioner is permitted to address the relevant Committee when a Petition has in excess of 250 signatories.
- **Service Level Agreement** – Introduce a 30 calendar day resolution target for Petitions where the number of signatories is less than 250. Introduce a 60 calendar day resolution target for Petitions where the number of signatories is more than 250. It is accepted that particularly infrastructure related issues can take longer to resolve and therefore this will need to be monitored closely to ensure that in the majority of cases it can be achieved.
- **Scope** – with particular reference to transport related matters, include within any published guidance for customers, information on what can be considered within the parameters of the Protocol. This will make specific reference to matters that are under the jurisdiction of transport operators and Local Authorities.

## 5. Next Steps

- 5.1. Following notification to TDC of the new arrangements, guidance explaining the process will be published in the form of a WMCA Petitions Protocol and Terms of Reference will be drawn up for the Officer Petitions Panel. A suite of standard documents will also be developed to bring consistency to reviewing Petitions. It is proposed that the new Protocol is applied to Petitions received on or after 1 October 2019.

## 6. Legal Implications

- 6.1. In terms of response and resolution timescales, consideration will need to be given where the petition is statutory petition or where there is already an existing right of representation or appeal. Legal advice should be sought where necessary to ensure compliance.

## 7. Financial Implications

- 7.1. There are no financial implications in relation to this report.

## 8. Equalities Implications

- 8.1. There are no equality implications in relation to this report.