
STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

2000 No. 2852

The Local Authorities (Referendums) (Petitions and Directions) (England) Regulations 2000

PART II

PETITIONS AND REFERENDUMS

Interpretation of Part II

3. In this Part—

“amalgamated petition” means the single petition resulting from an amalgamation of petitions in accordance with paragraph (1) or (2) of regulation 8;

“constituent petitions” means petitions that have been amalgamated;

“constitutional change” means a proposal that a local authority should operate executive arrangements—

(a) under which the executive—

(i) takes the form specified in subsection (2) or (4) of section 11 (local authority executives); or

(ii) otherwise includes an elected mayor, or

(b) in a form that, apart from an elected mayor, is not specified in the proposal;

“moratorium period”, in relation to a local authority’s area and a petition, means the period of 48 months commencing with the day on which a referendum was last held under Part II of the Act in relation to that area;

“notice period”, in relation to a petition, means the period of one month beginning with the petition date;

“petition”, unless the context otherwise requires, includes an amalgamated petition;

“petition date”—

(a) in relation to a petition submitted prior to the publication of the verification number in accordance with regulation 4(1) means the date on which that verification number is published;

(b) subject to paragraph (d), in relation to constituent petitions amalgamated in accordance with regulation 8(2), means the latest date on which any of petitions amalgamated was received by the authority;

(c) subject to paragraph (d), in relation to any other petition, means the date on which it was received by the authority;

(d) in relation to a petition received within the period of six months beginning with the date that is twelve months before the earliest date on which a second (or subsequent) referendum may lawfully be held in the area of the authority to whom the petition is addressed, means the date on which that period of six months ends;

“petition organiser”—

- (a) in relation to constituent petitions amalgamated in accordance with paragraph (1) of regulation 8, means the person determined in accordance with paragraph (5) of regulation 10;
- (b) in any other case, has the meaning given by paragraph (4) of regulation 10;

“post-announcement petition” means a petition received in the circumstances mentioned in regulation 7(1);

“proper officer” has the meaning given by section 270(3) of the Local Government Act 1972(1);

“valid petition” has the meaning given by regulation 9(1);

“verification number”, in relation to a petition, means the number to be used for verification purposes by virtue of paragraph (4), (5), (6) or (7) of regulation 4, as the case may be; and

“verification purposes” means the purposes of establishing the matters mentioned in regulations 8(3) and 9(1)(a).

Verification number

4.—(1) Not later than four weeks after the date on which these Regulations come into force, the proper officer of each local authority shall publish the number that is equal to 5 per cent. of the number of local government electors for the authority’s area as shown in the electoral register or registers published and having effect for the authority’s area for the period ending on 15th February 2001(2).

(2) Subject to paragraph (3), in each year after 2000, the proper officer of each local authority shall, within the period of 14 days beginning on the date of publication of the electoral register or registers having effect for the authority’s area(3), publish the number that is equal to 5 per cent. of the number of local government electors for the authority’s area shown in that register or, as the case may be, those registers.

(3) Where the whole of the period of 12 months beginning with 1st April in any year falls within a moratorium period, paragraph (2) shall not apply as respects the years in which part of that period of 12 months falls.

(4) Subject to paragraph (5), the number published in accordance with paragraph (1) shall be used for verification purposes in relation to any petition submitted to the authority before 1st April 2001.

(5) Where the number published in 2001 in accordance with paragraph (2) (“the number for 2001”) is less than the number published in accordance with paragraph (1), the number to be used for verification purposes in relation to any petition submitted in the period beginning with the date on which the number for 2001 is published and ending immediately before 1st April 2001 shall be the number for 2001.

(6) Subject to paragraph (7), the number published in any year after 2001 in accordance with paragraph (2) shall be used for verification purposes in relation to any petition submitted to the authority in the period of 12 months beginning with 1st April in that year.

(7) Where the number published in any year is less than the number published in the preceding year, the number to be used for verification purposes, in relation to any petition submitted to the authority in the period beginning on the date of publication of the lesser number and ending immediately before 1st April in that year, shall be that lesser number.

(1) 1972 c. 70.

(2) See section 13 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (c. 2).

(3) Not later than 15th February; see section 13 of the Representation of the People Act 1983.

(8) The proper officer may, in connection with the discharge of the duties imposed by paragraphs (1) and (2), require an electoral registration officer to provide him with information relevant to the number that is to be published in accordance with either of those paragraphs; and an electoral registration officer who receives such a request shall comply with it within the period of seven days beginning with the day on which the request is received.

Publicity for verification number

5. As soon as reasonably practicable after the publication of a number in accordance with regulation 4(1) or (2), the authority shall publish in at least one newspaper circulating in their area a notice containing a statement—

- (a) that the authority's proper officer has published the number that is equal to 5 per cent. of the number of local government electors shown in the electoral register or registers having effect for the authority's area for the period ending on 15th February in the following year;
- (b) of the number so published;
- (c) that the number so published will have effect—
 - (i) where it is published in the circumstances mentioned in paragraph (1) of regulation 4, for the purposes of determining the validity of petitions presented before 1st April 2001, unless the circumstances mentioned in paragraph (5) of that regulation apply;
 - (ii) in any other case, for the purposes of determining the validity of petitions presented after 31st March in the year of publication and before 1st April in the following year, unless the circumstances mentioned in paragraph (7) of regulation 4 apply;
- (d) of the effect of paragraphs (5) and (7) of regulation 4; and
- (e) of the address of the authority's principal office.

Petitions for a referendum

6.—(1) Subject to regulations 7 and 19, a local authority shall hold a referendum by virtue of this Part where they receive a valid petition (but shall not be required to hold such a referendum where they receive a petition which is not a valid petition).

- (2) A petition may be presented to a local authority—
 - (a) by properly addressing, pre-paying and posting it to any office of the authority; or
 - (b) by delivering it to any such office.

Post-announcement and post-direction petitions

7.—(1) In relation to a petition received after an authority have given notice of their intention to hold a referendum and of the date on which that referendum will be held (whether pursuant to this Part, a direction under regulation 18, or section 27 (referendum in case of proposals involving elected mayor)) on proposals which involve a directly elected mayor, nothing in this Part shall require an authority to hold a referendum or to take any steps other than those specified in paragraph (2) and regulation 12.

(2) The steps specified in this paragraph are to secure that the proper officer, as soon as reasonably practicable after the receipt of the petition—

- (a) notifies the Secretary of State and the petition organiser (if any)—
 - (i) of the receipt of the petition;
 - (ii) that the petition is a post-announcement petition; and
 - (iii) that the authority propose to take no further action in relation to it;

and

- (b) notifies the petition organiser (if any) that he may, within the period of two months beginning with the date of the notice, request the Secretary of State to consider the exercise of any power conferred on the Secretary of State by Part III of these Regulations.

(3) Where—

- (a) a petition is received by an authority—
 - (i) after they have received a direction under regulation 18(1); and
 - (ii) before they have given notice of the date on which the referendum is to be held pursuant to the direction; and
- (b) the constitutional change proposed in the petition is the same as that in relation to which the direction requires the referendum to be held,

the authority shall take no further action in relation to the petition and shall, as soon as reasonably practicable, comply with the requirements of paragraph (4).

(4) The authority shall notify the Secretary of State and the petition organiser (if any)—

- (a) of the receipt of the petition; and
- (b) that they propose to take no further action in relation to it because it proposes the same constitutional change as that in relation to which the referendum is to be held pursuant to the direction.

(5) Where—

- (a) a petition is received by an authority—
 - (i) after they have received a direction under regulation 18(1); and
 - (ii) before they have given notice of the date on which the referendum is to be held pursuant to the direction; and
- (b) the constitutional change proposed in the petition is not the same as that in relation to which the direction requires the referendum to be held,

the authority shall secure that the proper officer determines, in accordance with this Part, whether the petition is a valid petition.

(6) Where the proper officer determines that a petition of the description in paragraph (5) is not a valid petition, he shall comply with regulation 14(1) but, subject to that—

- (a) the authority shall take no further action in relation to the petition; and
- (b) for the purposes of regulation 21, the date of the direction shall be treated as the date of the proper officer's determination.

(7) For the purposes of paragraphs (3) to (5)—

- (a) in relation to a direction under regulation 18(1) that requires an authority to hold a referendum on a form of executive that includes an elected mayor, a petition received subsequently by that authority in which the form of executive is not specified, shall be treated as proposing the same constitutional change; and
- (b) other constitutional changes shall be treated as the same if they propose executive arrangements under which the executive takes the same form.

Amalgamation of petitions

8.—(1) Where more than one petition relating to the same area has been prepared, those petitions may, at any time before their presentation to the authority, be amalgamated; and those petitions shall then be treated for all other purposes of this Part as a single petition.

(2) Where constituent petitions amalgamated under paragraph (1) do not propose the same constitutional change, the amalgamated petition shall not be entertained by the authority unless it is accompanied by a statement, signed by the petition organiser in relation to the amalgamated petition, that the amalgamated petition is presented with the agreement of the petition organiser of each of the constituent petitions.

(3) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), where an authority receive more than one petition relating to the same area, the proper officer shall, if satisfied as to their validity in every respect other than that mentioned in regulation 9(1)(a), amalgamate those petitions in accordance with paragraph (6); and those petitions shall then be treated for all other purposes of this Part as a single petition.

(4) The proper officer shall not amalgamate petitions—

- (a) if he is satisfied that the first petition received by the authority (including constituent petitions amalgamated in accordance with paragraph (1)) contains a number of signatures of local government electors for the authority's area that equals or exceeds the verification number and is, in other respects, a valid petition; or
- (b) if he is satisfied that the first and other constituent petitions amalgamated in accordance with paragraph (3) contain numbers of signatures of local government electors for the authority's area that in aggregate equal or exceed the verification number and are, in other respects, valid petitions.

(5) (a) The proper officer shall not amalgamate petitions that do not propose the same constitutional change unless he has obtained in writing the agreement of the petition organiser of each petition that would, after amalgamation, be a constituent petition.

(b) It shall be the duty of the proper officer to inform each petition organiser whose agreement is required for the purposes of paragraph (3) of the consequence of amalgamation specified in paragraph (7) below.

(6) Petitions shall be amalgamated in the order in which they are received except that, where more than one petition is received on the same day—

- (a) the petition that contains the greatest number of signatures shall be treated as the first to be received;
- (b) the petition that proposes the same constitutional change as that proposed in the petition identified in accordance with sub-paragraph (a) shall be treated as the second to be received; and if there is more than one such petition, those petitions shall be treated as received in sequence, beginning with the petition that contains the greater number of signatures;
- (c) any other petitions shall be treated as received in the following order—
 - (i) the petition that contains the greatest number of signatures;
 - (ii) the petition, if any, that proposes the same constitutional change as the petition identified in accordance with paragraph (i);
 - (iii) the petition that contains the next greatest number of signatures;
 - (iv) the petition, if any, that proposes the same constitutional change as the petition identified in accordance with paragraph (iii);
 - (v) the petition that contains the next greatest number of signatures; and so on.

(7) Where an amalgamated petition results from the combination of constituent petitions which do not propose the same constitutional change, the amalgamated petition shall be treated for the purposes of this Part as proposing that the authority should operate executive arrangements under which the proposed form of executive is not specified.

(8) For the purposes of this regulation, constitutional changes shall be treated as the same—

- (a) if they propose executive arrangements under which the executive takes the same form; or

- (b) if the proposed form of executive is not specified in the constituent petitions.

Validity of petitions

9.—(1) Subject to paragraph (2), a petition shall be a valid petition if—

- (a) it is signed (whether before or after the passing of the Act or the coming into force of these Regulations) by not less than the number of local government electors for the authority's area that is the verification number; and
- (b) it satisfies the requirements of regulation 10.

(2) A petition shall not be invalid by reason only of a failure to satisfy any requirement of regulation 10 if the constitutional change in relation to which the referendum is sought can be ascertained.

(3) Where a person signs a petition but the information referred to in regulation 10(3)(a) is not included, or is not included in a legible form, that person's signature shall be disregarded in determining whether the petition satisfies the requirements of paragraph (1)(a).

(4) If a person signs a petition more than once, his second or subsequent signature shall be disregarded in determining whether the petition satisfies the requirements of paragraph (1)(a).

(5) Any signature on a petition which bears a date earlier than 12 months before the petition date shall be disregarded in determining whether the petition satisfies the requirements of paragraph (1)(a).

Formalities of petition

10.—(1) A petition shall on each sheet state—

- (a) the name of the local authority to whom it is addressed; and
- (b) the constitutional change in relation to which the referendum is sought.

(2) A petition shall, on each sheet, contain a statement in the terms set out in Schedule 1 to these Regulations or in terms to similar effect.

(3) In relation to each person who signs a petition the following information shall be given—

- (a) his first name and surname and address; and
- (b) the date on which he signs the petition.

(4) A petition shall contain, or shall be accompanied by a statement that contains, the name and full address of the person (in this Part referred to as the "petition organiser") to whom correspondence relating to the petition is to be sent.

(5) Where petitions are amalgamated before they are presented to the authority—

- (a) the petition organisers of each of the constituent petitions shall determine the identity of the person (whether or not he is the petition organiser of any of the constituent petitions) who is to be the petition organiser for the purposes of the amalgamated petition; and
- (b) the petition organiser of the amalgamated petition shall notify the authority of his name and full address.

Procedure on receipt of petition

11.—(1) As soon as reasonably practicable after receipt of a petition, the proper officer shall—

- (a) if paragraph (3) of regulation 8 applies in relation to the petition—
 - (i) amalgamate it in accordance with that paragraph; and

- (ii) notify the petition organiser (if any) of each of the constituent petitions, of the petition date of the amalgamated petition; or
 - (b) in any other case, notify the petition organiser (if any) of the petition date.
- (2) As soon as reasonably practicable after receipt of a petition, and not later than the end of the notice period, the proper officer shall, subject to paragraph (3), satisfy himself as to the validity of the petition.
- (3) Where the petition is a second (or subsequent) petition (“later petition”) which cannot lawfully be amalgamated with an earlier petition for a reason mentioned in paragraph (4) or (5) of regulation 8, the proper officer shall take the steps specified in paragraph (4) below, and such other steps as the Secretary of State may direct.
- (4) The steps specified in this paragraph are that, within the notice period, the proper officer—
- (a) shall notify the Secretary of State and the petition organiser (if any)—
 - (i) of the receipt of the petition and of its petition date;
 - (ii) of the receipt of every earlier petition and of its petition date;
 - (iii) of the reason why the later petition cannot be amalgamated with any earlier petition; and
 - (iv) that, by reason of the receipt of an earlier valid petition, the proper officer proposes to take no further action in relation to the later petition; and
 - (b) shall notify the petition organiser (if any) that he may, within the period of two months beginning with the date of the notice, request the Secretary of State to consider the exercise of any power conferred on the Secretary of State by regulation 18.

Public inspection of petitions

12. The authority shall secure that, for the period of six years beginning with the petition date, a petition is available at their principal office for inspection by members of the public at all reasonable times and free of charge.

Publicity for valid petitions

- 13.—**(1) Where the proper officer is satisfied that a petition is valid, he shall, within the notice period, notify the Secretary of State and the petition organiser (if any)—
- (a) of his conclusion; and
 - (b) that a referendum will be held.
- (2) In a case to which paragraph (1) applies, the authority shall publish in at least one newspaper circulating in their area a notice which contains a statement—
- (a) that a valid petition has been received;
 - (b) of the constitutional change sought or, as the case may be, treated as sought, by the petition;
 - (c) of the petition date;
 - (d) that the petition is available at the authority’s principal office for inspection by members of the public at all reasonable times and free of charge;
 - (e) of the address of the authority’s principal office; and
 - (f) that a referendum will be held.

Publicity for invalid petitions

14.—(1) Where the proper officer is satisfied that a petition is not a valid petition, he shall, within the notice period, notify the Secretary of State and the petition organiser (if any) of his conclusion and of the reasons for that conclusion.

(2) In a case to which paragraph (1) applies, the authority shall publish in at least one newspaper circulating in their area a notice which contains a statement—

- (a) that a petition has been received which has been determined to be an invalid petition;
- (b) of the reasons for that determination;
- (c) of the constitutional change sought or, as the case may be, treated as sought, by the petition;
- (d) of the petition date;
- (e) that the petition is available at the authority's principal office for inspection by members of the public at all reasonable times and free of charge; and
- (f) of the address of the authority's principal office.

(3) Where a petition is invalid only because it does not comply with regulation 9(1)(a), the notification under paragraph (1) and the statement to be published by the authority under paragraph (2) shall also include a statement that the invalid petition may be amalgamated with any subsequent petitions which are submitted to the authority.

Restrictions relating to publicity

15.—(1) An authority shall not incur any expenditure for the purpose of—

- (a) publishing any material which, in whole or in part, appears designed to influence local government electors in deciding whether or not to sign a petition under this Part;
- (b) assisting any person to publish any such material; or
- (c) influencing or assisting any person to influence, by any other means, local government electors in deciding whether or not to sign a petition under this Part.

(2) Nothing in paragraph (1) shall be taken to prevent an authority from incurring expenditure on publishing or otherwise providing to any person (whether or not in pursuance of any duty to do so) any factual information so far as it is presented fairly.

(3) In determining for the purposes of paragraph (2) whether any information is presented fairly, regard shall be had to any guidance for the time being issued by the Secretary of State under section 38.

Timing of referendum

16.—(1) Subject to paragraphs (2) and (3) and regulation 21, a referendum in consequence of a valid petition shall be held not later than—

- (a) the end of the period of six months beginning with the petition date; or
- (b) the end of the period of two months beginning with the date on which regulations under section 45 (with respect to the referendum) come into force,

whichever is the later.

(2) A referendum shall not be held before the end of the period of two months beginning with the date on which proposals are sent to the Secretary of State in accordance with regulation 17(9).

(3) Paragraph (1) shall not apply where the Secretary of State holds a referendum in exercise of the power conferred by regulation 25.

Action before referendum

- 17.—(1) Before the holding of a referendum under this Part, the authority shall—
- (a) where the petition does not specify, or is treated as not specifying, the form proposed for the authority’s executive—
 - (i) subject to paragraph (2), decide which form the executive is to take; and
 - (ii) decide the extent to which the functions specified in regulations under section 13(3)(b) are to be the responsibility of the executive; or
 - (b) where the petition specifies the form proposed for the authority’s executive, decide the extent to which the functions specified in regulations under section 13(3)(b) are to be the responsibility of the executive.
- (2) The form of executive determined under paragraph (1)(a)(i) must include an elected mayor.
- (3) Before the holding of a referendum under this Part, the authority shall also—
- (a) draw up proposals for the operation of executive arrangements; and
 - (b) draw up outline fall-back proposals.
- (4) Before drawing up proposals under paragraph (3)(a) and (b) the authority shall take reasonable steps to consult the local government electors for, and other interested persons in, the authority’s area.
- (5) The authority’s proposals under paragraph (3)(a) shall include—
- (a) such details of the executive arrangements as the Secretary of State may direct,
 - (b) a timetable with respect to the implementation of the proposals, and
 - (c) details of any transitional arrangements which are necessary for the implementation of the proposals.
- (6) In drawing up proposals under paragraph (3)(a) the authority shall consider the extent to which the proposals, if implemented, are likely to assist in securing continuous improvement in the way in which the authority’s functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- (7) The authority’s proposals under paragraph (3)(b)—
- (a) where the authority are not then operating executive arrangements or alternative arrangements—
 - (i) shall include such details of the executive arrangements or alternative arrangements to which they relate as the Secretary of State may direct;
 - (ii) shall include a timetable with respect to the implementation of detailed fall-back proposals which are based on the outline fall-back proposals in the event that the proposals that are to be the subject of the referendum are rejected; and
 - (iii) may include, as the authority’s outline fall-back proposals, any proposals under subsection (1) of section 28 (approval of outline fall-back proposals) approved by the Secretary of State;
 - (b) where the authority are then operating executive arrangements or alternative arrangements shall consist of a summary of those arrangements.
- (8) In drawing up proposals under paragraph (3)(a) and (b) the authority shall have regard to any guidance for the time being issued by the Secretary of State under section 38.
- (9) Not later than two months before the date on which the referendum is to be held, the authority shall send to the Secretary of State—
- (a) a copy of the proposals drawn up under paragraph (3)(a) and (b); and
 - (b) a statement which describes—

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- (i) the steps which the authority took to consult the local government electors for, and other interested persons in, the authority's area, and
 - (ii) the outcome of that consultation and the extent to which that outcome is reflected in the proposals.
- (10) The authority shall comply with any directions given by the Secretary of State for the purposes of this regulation.