

Dear Mr Gordon Lennox

I find the contents of your email regarding the views of residents not being heard by EDDC extraordinary. To say that the petition has not been rejected is not accurate. The reality is residents' views on the car park charges will not be heard by Council.

The rejection of the petition does not in my opinion follow your own rules and guidance and it certainly does not follow the spirit of listening to residents.

You are agreeing that it is valid and have accepted the petition, but have found an excuse not to hear it. Nowhere does it say if Council have already made a decision a petition will not be heard. Often petitions are the vehicle to change a Council's decisions.

You have decided to call it an ordinary petition rather than a petition discussed at Council. I understand you are saying that you have considered the petitions and disregarded five hundred signatures sighting duplication and people living out of Sidmouth. When the two petitions were started, the form used asked for post codes. It is impossible to track using normal methods if signatories are working in East Devon. To achieve this would potentially break GDPR rules of data. You have decided to disregard five hundred signatures. Assuming people do not work in Sidmouth, and this is impossible to prove unless each person was contacted. I accept if some people signed twice then that is wrong but that is not or even anywhere near five hundred.

Other Councils use an online e-petition system which is much easier to complete monitor and control, is it not time to help listen to residents EDDC moved to this? You also agree that petitions do not have a landing page so EDDC can inform residents, this as you know is against your own rules.

I ask what methods have you ever used in the past to confirm that those signing a petition have the right to do so? Can you also confirm how many petitions EDDC have heard over the last ten years?

You say that elements of the words on the Council site do not relate to the constitution and will be changed. I suggest whatever is on the website is what people will follow. If you are going to change the policy, it is important that this goes through scrutiny prior to Council, and it includes an e-petition page to help residents make their views known.

According to your letter it is cabinet members who have agreed not to allow the petition to be heard, that is wrong and against your own rules.

You have acknowledged that the Council did not follow their own guidance on petition submissions, you cannot assume leaders know. It is also true to note that leaders would not know when the petition was being submitted.

Regarding your comments 'it is noted in passing that there has been a commitment to look at the position in relation to car parking charges later in the year following the summer period based upon the usual financial monitoring information that Members receive'

I am amazed that you are agreeing that this was not agreed at Council, so there is no certainty that this will take place so at the very least Cabinet at the next meeting should agree this will happen.

This letter outlines why this petition should have been heard and residents listened to.

I ask again that you reconsider your decision not to hear this petition. If you are of a mind not to, I ask this decision, be reviewed by Scrutiny.

Regards Mike Goodman