

Petitions

The Council welcomes petitions and recognises them as a way in which people can let us know their concerns or the strength of public feeling.

Petitions may be submitted regarding any matter which relates to an improvement in the economic, social or environmental well-being of the authority's area and/or to which its partner authorities could contribute.

The following issues are excluded and outside the scope of petitions as defined above:

- matters under any other enactments e.g. petitions requesting and elected Mayor
- any matter relating to a planning decision, including about a development plan document or the community infrastructure levy
- any matter relating to an alcohol, gambling or sex establishment licensing decision
- any matter relating to an individual or entity in respect of which that individual or entity has a right of recourse to review or right of appeal conferred by or under any enactment.

The council will publish a petitions scheme setting out guidance for petitioners and the procedure which will be used for dealing with petitions.

Petitions submitted to the council must include:

- a clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition. It should state what action the petitioners wish the council to take
- the name and address and signature of any person supporting the petition

Petitions should be accompanied by the contact details including an address, for the petition organiser. If the petition does not identify a petition organiser, we will contact signatories to the petition to agree who should act as the petition organiser.

Petitions which are considered to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate by the Monitoring Officer will not be accepted.

The Monitoring Officer shall determine whether a petition is valid,

The Monitoring Officer or full council may at their discretion decide to instruct officers to verify the signatures on a petition, in order to ensure that they are genuine.

In the period immediately before an election or referendum the Monitoring Officer may decide that petitions will be dealt with differently in order to comply with guidance on purdah.

The council will acknowledge receipt of a petition to the petition organiser within 10 working days and details of received petitions will be published on the council's website. The council will inform the petition organiser if the council can do or has done what is request or what steps the council plans to take.

Full Council Debates and Officer Evidence

Petitions that have 1500 or more signatures will trigger a debate at full council. This will normally take place at the first available meeting. Petition organisers will be given 5 minutes to present their petition and the petition will be discussed by council for a maximum of 15 minutes. Council may decide:

- to take the action as set out in the petition
- not to take the action for the reasons put forward in the debate
- to commission a further investigation
- to make recommendations to the Executive

Petition organisers will receive written confirmation of decisions which will also be published on the council website.

Petitions that request a senior officer (Service Heads, Strategic Director and Chief Executive) to give evidence to a scrutiny committee must receive 750 or more signatures. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee may decide to ask a more appropriate officer as well as a relevant councillor to attend. Petition organisers may up to three working days before the meeting submit questions to the Chairman of the meeting.

Right of Review

The petition organiser has the right to request the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review the way the council has dealt with a petition if they feel this has not been appropriate. In the case of the petition having been presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board will carry out this function. This review will normally take place at the first available meeting.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee may decide to:

- take no further action
- instigate an investigation
- make recommendations to the Executive
- refer the issue to Council for consideration

The petition organiser will be informed of the results within 5 working days.

Presenting Petitions to meetings

Petitions may be presented to all Council meetings except Appeals, Planning, Licensing and Standards Committees.

A request to present a petition must be received by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services at least 10 working days before the meeting.

Any question as to the relevance of any petition shall be determined by the Chairman of the meeting without debate.

When petitions are presented the presenter shall have the right to briefly announce the subject of the petition (5 minutes).

If the petition is directly relevant to an item before the meeting or that is due to come before the meeting it shall be referred without debate for consideration to a relevant council meeting or officer, who shall respond to the petition and report back to the referring body:

- taking the action requested in the petition
- considering the petition at a Council meeting.
- holding an inquiry into the matter
- undertaking research into the matter
- holding a public meeting
- holding a consultation
- holding a meeting with petitioners
- referring the petition for consideration by the council's overview and scrutiny committee
- calling a referendum (where legislation permits)
- writing to the petition organiser setting out our views about the request in the petition.

In the case of referral to another council meeting the person who presented the petition shall be able to address the meeting when the matter referred to in the petition is considered.