

Leicester City Council

Petitions Scheme

1) Introduction

The Council welcomes petitions and recognises that petitions are one way in which people can let us know their concerns. All petitions sent or presented to the Council will receive an acknowledgement within 10 working days of receipt. This will set out what we plan to do with the petition and when you can expect to hear from us again.

We will treat something as a petition if it is identified as being a petition, or if it seems to us that it is intended to be a petition and contains details and signatures of two or more people. The people who sign the petition must live, work or study in Leicester. However where a matter may impact significantly beyond the city boundary, the City Mayor may exercise discretion to take the views of stakeholders outside the city into account.. We categorise our petitions as follows – further details on these categories are explained in more detail later in this scheme:

Category	Signatory threshold	Description
Petition which triggers a debate	1,500	Any petition above this threshold will trigger a debate at Full Council
Petition which calls an officer to account	750 – 1499	Any petition above this threshold will summon a senior Council officer to give evidence at a public meeting
Standard petition	2- 749	A petition requesting action or response by the Council

2) How can I submit my petition?

Paper petitions must be sent to:

Democratic Support
City Hall
115 Charles Street
Leicester
LE1 1FZ

e-Petitions:

Petitions can be created, signed and submitted online via the Council's website.

In addition to submitting a hard copy petition or an e-petition you may also verbally present your petition at a relevant meeting of the Council or its committees. Meetings take place on a regular basis and dates and times are published on the Council's website. Where this happens the normal process is that the text of the petition is read out at the meeting following which, without any debate on the issues, the Committee asks the relevant officer to prepare a formal written response to the petition.

If you would like to present your petition to a Council meeting or would like your Councillor or someone else to present it on your behalf, please contact Democratic Support on 0116 454 6350 at least 10 working days before the meeting and they will talk you through the process.

3) How will the Council process my petition?

Once a petition is received it will be checked to see if it meets the criteria defined in the Scheme and the Appendices. If there are any concerns about the validity of a petition, for example where key information is missing, the Council's Monitoring Officer will be consulted and will determine if the petition is valid. We will inform you if we consider the petition to be invalid and the reason why.

Following the above, and within 10 working days of receiving the petition, an acknowledgement will be sent to the lead petitioner. Once the petition has been verified and acknowledged no further signatures can be added to the petition.

To ensure that people know what we are doing in response to the petitions we receive, details of petitions submitted to us will be published on our website, except in cases where this would be inappropriate. The name of the petition organiser will be placed on the website but not their contact details.

The key Council roles in addressing petitions are:

- **Executive** - Determining the course of action to be taken in light of a petition is the responsibility of the City Mayor and his Executive team (his Deputy and Assistant Mayors). Responses to valid petitions will be approved and signed off by the City Mayor or an appropriate Assistant Mayor.
- **Lead Officer** - Each petition is allocated a lead officer who will co-ordinate the response. Where a petition relates to a particular area or Ward in the city, information will also be shared with the relevant Ward Councillors, who will want to ensure their constituents receive a timely and thorough response
- **Scrutiny** - Information on all petitions is shared with the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Scrutiny Commissions who focus on whether petitions are being responded to in a timely and sufficiently clear and robust

manner. Scrutiny may also use petitions to identify where there may be issues in terms of Council policy or operational practice that they wish to review in more detail as part of their work programmes.

4) What are the guidelines for submitting a petition?

- 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
 - details of each person supporting the petition including:
 - their name
 - their signature and;
 - their qualifying address (the qualifying address will be an address in the City where they work, live or study).
- Petitions must be accompanied by full contact details, including an address, for the petition organiser. This is the person we will contact to explain how we will respond to the petition. The petition organiser should make clear that they live, study at an educational establishment or have a business address, within the city boundary. 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 will not be accepted. Please read our Terms and Conditions (Appendix A) before submitting a petition.
- In the period immediately before an election or referendum we may need to deal with your petition differently – if this is the case we will explain the reasons and discuss the revised timescale which will apply.
- If a petition does not follow the guidelines set out above, the Council may decide not to do anything further with it. In that case, we will write to you to explain the reasons.
- Before submitting a petition, you should first check with your local Councillor or with the City Council to see if action is already being taken in relation to your concerns and to determine if the Council is the most appropriate organisation to receive your petition.

5) How will the Council respond to petitions?

If we can do what your petition asks for, the acknowledgement may confirm that we have taken the action requested and the petition will be closed. If the petition has enough signatures to trigger a Council debate, or a senior officer giving evidence, then the acknowledgement will confirm this and tell you when and where the meeting will take place. If the petition needs more investigation, we will tell you the steps we plan to take.

Our response to a petition will depend on what a petition asks for and how many people have signed it. These responses can include:

- taking the action that is requested in the petition,
- undertaking further research into the matter,
- referring the petition for consideration by one of the Council's scrutiny committees,
- or consideration in some form of public meeting.

If your petition is about something over which the Council has no direct control (for example the local railway or hospital) we will consider making representations on behalf of the community to the relevant body. The Council works with a large number of local partners and where possible will work with these partners to respond to your petition. If we are not able to do this for any reason (for example if what the petition calls for conflicts with Council policy), then we will set out the reasons for this to you. You can find more information on the services for which the Council is responsible from the Council's website.

If your petition is about something that a different Council is responsible for we will give consideration to what the best method is for responding to it. This might consist of simply forwarding the petition to the other Council, but could involve other steps. In any event we will always notify you of the action we have taken.

Officer evidence

If a petition contains between 750 – 1499 valid signatures the lead petitioner may ask that the relevant senior officer be called to give evidence at a public meeting of the Council's Overview Select Committee. Senior staff that can be called to give evidence are the Chief Operating Officer and Strategic Directors. You should be aware that the Overview Select Committee may decide that it would be more appropriate for another officer to give evidence instead of the officer role referred to in the petition – for instance if the named officer has changed jobs. The process that will be followed is explained below, however it should be noted that, where appropriate, Scrutiny Committees will sometimes seek to approach matters in a less formal manner.

The Overview Select Committee will normally endeavour to consider the petition at its next meeting. The petition organiser will be given five minutes to present the petition at the meeting, following this there will be an opportunity for the Director to respond for a maximum of 5 minutes, with the petition then discussed by Councillors

for a maximum of 10 further minutes. The Overview Select Committee will then decide how to respond to the petition at the meeting and may:

- request the Executive to undertake the action the petition requests, or not, for reasons put forward in the debate, or
- recommend that further investigation is undertaken into the matter by the Executive.

As a scrutiny committee the Overview Select Committee has no power to make decisions on actions to be undertaken by the Council or Executive.

Full Council debates

If a petition contains 1,500 or more valid signatures the lead petitioner may ask that it be debated by the full Council (unless it is a petition asking for a senior council officer to give evidence at a public meeting). This means that the issue raised in the petition will be discussed at a meeting which all Councillors can attend. In such cases petitions must be received by the Council at least 10 working days before the date of the Council meeting.

The Council will normally endeavour to consider the petition at its next meeting, although where this is not possible, consideration will then take place at the following meeting. The petition organiser will be given five minutes to present the petition at the meeting and the petition will then be discussed by Councillors for a maximum of 15 further minutes. The Council will decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting. They may decide to take the action the petition requests, not to take the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate, or to commission further investigation into the matter, for example by a relevant committee. Where the issue is one on which the City Mayor is required to make the final decision, the Council may note the petition or make recommendations to the City Mayor. Council cannot make decisions where the subject matter of a petition falls to the Executive to decide.

6) E-petitions

What is an e-petition?

An e-petition is a petition which is submitted electronically to the City Council for consideration in relation to a particular issue or concern. It differs from a traditional paper based petition in that it is accessible to anyone who wishes to sign it through the Council's website. E-petitions must follow the same guidelines as paper petitions and will be dealt with in the same manner.

Who can submit an e-petition?

As with paper based petitions, to submit an e-petition to the City Council, you must live, work or study in the City. Therefore if you are not a resident of the city, please include your 'qualifying' address which will be an address in the City where you work, or study. We need full contact details of the person who is leading on the petition. Therefore you would need to register on the website. It is a straightforward process which requires you to provide us with a few details for when we need to contact you about the petition.

There is a limit of 28 days for the petition to be 'live' on the Council's website for signatures. When the 'live' period is over, the way in which the Council responds, as with paper petitions, will depend on how many signatures are submitted.

Who can sign an e-petition?

If you are signing an e-petition you will be required to provide us with basic personal information (an email address and an address including postcode). Each signatory must give a separate email address. Your name (but no other details) will be published on the e-petitions section of the website. We will only use the information you provide to validate your signature and that you live, work or study in the City.

You can only sign an e-petition once. The list of signatories will be checked by officers and any duplicate signatures or vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate content will be removed.

Further details in relation to e-Petitions is given in Appendix B.

7) What can I do if I feel my petition has not been dealt with properly?

If you feel that we have not dealt with your petition properly you may write to the Council's Monitoring Officer at the address below:

Kamal Adatia
City Barrister & Head of Standards
Leicester City Council
City Hall
Leicester
LE1 1FZ

8) How else can I have my say?

The Council offers a range of ways in which members of the public can make their voice heard. These include:

- Contacting your local Councillor –

- contact details and regular surgeries are available at:
<http://www.cabinet.leicester.gov.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?GL=1&bcr=1>
- Regular 'Meet the Mayor' sessions – details are available on the Council's website at <http://citymayor.leicester.gov.uk/welcome/contact-me/>
- An opportunity to raise concerns at your local Ward Community Meeting – details can be found on the Council's website at <http://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-council/decisions-meetings-and-minutes/community-meetings>

Details of the above can also be accessed by contacting:

Democratic & Member Support
Leicester City Council
City Hall
115 Charles Street
Leicester LE1 1FZ.
0116 454 6350

Director of Delivery, Communications & Political Governance
Leicester City Council

Terms and Conditions

Petitioners may freely disagree with the Council or call for changes of policy. We will not attempt to exclude critical views and decisions to accept or reject will not be made on a party political basis. However, to protect this service from abuse, petitions should meet some basic criteria:

The Council shall only receive petitions which comply with this Rule.

No petition from a Councillor or member of the public shall be accepted

- (a) which contains abusive, defamatory or offensive language or relates to a specific and identifiable person;
- (b) at the Annual Meeting of the Council, a Special Meeting of the Council, or at any meeting of the Council summoned for the purposes of considering the budget;
- (c) in relation to an individual's particular circumstances;
- (d) about any matter where there is a right of appeal to the courts, a tribunal or to a government minister or on any matter which, in the opinion of the Monitoring Officer, is of a quasi-judicial nature;
- (e) about any matter which has been the subject of an issue raised by a petition or of a decision of Council or the Executive within the previous six months.

No petition from a member of the public shall be accepted:-

- (a) from or on behalf of a political party or organisation or in connection with the activities and aims of such a party or organisation, or from a staff group, which instead should use the proper procedures, such as through management and trades union representatives; or
- (b) if the petition applies to a planning or licensing application, is a statutory petition (ie petition relating to a change in Council governance), or on a matter where there is already an existing right of appeal, such as council tax banding and non-domestic rates, as other procedures apply and the petition will not be dealt with under this Scheme. The petition organiser will be informed where this is the case and what steps they should take.

Further Information in relation to e-Petitions

How do I start an e-petition?

On the Active E-Petitions homepage (link), select the 'Submit a new ePetition' option. You will be prompted to enter a title which the system will automatically check against ePetitions to allow you to see if a similar one has been considered recently.

You will then need to fill in the online form. There are various stages to this, if it is your first petition, you will need to register, by way of entering a validation code of letters / numbers at the bottom of the registration form and validate your registration when you receive an email. The petition will be submitted to the Democratic Support Team, they will check over the petition and contact you if there are any queries. Please note that it may take up to five working days before it is published online. If you are already registered on the system, you just need to type in your user name and password.

You will then need to fill in the details in the boxes on the screen with details of the petition, i.e. what you are asking, a 'call for action'. There is also a space for further supporting details.

A short name is also needed for your petition in order to generate the weblink to the e-petition.

What happens to an e-petition which has been submitted?

Following auto receipt by the system it will be checked over for its validity. You will then be contacted to discuss making the petition live on the website.

How do I sign an active e-petition?

Anyone wishing to sign an e-petition has to click on a link on one of the Active Petitions via the e-petitions homepage.

Unless you are already a user and can log onto the system with your existing user name and password, you will be prompted to register as a new user with your contact details (and, so we can ascertain you are a valid user, enter a validation code of letters / numbers at the bottom of the registration form). As a new user, you will then be requested to validate your account via a link sent to your registered email address before being able to sign the petition. You will only be allowed one signatory per email address to ensure that the process is not abused. Where people share the same email address the second or further signatories are invited to indicate in writing (contact details below) that they support the petition.

If you are not a city resident please use the name and address of your workplace or educational establishment for registration purposes.

Privacy Policy

The details you give us are needed to validate your petitions but will not be published on the website. This is equivalent to the process for a paper petition. On completion of the e-petition, your details will be forwarded to the lead petitioner.