

9.4 Petition Scheme

~~The Council 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 it meets the criteria set out below.~~

Anyone living, working or studying in the Council's area who wishes to raise an issue or have their views heard on a council matter can create or submit a petition. Petitions are accepted via the Council's website, in paper form, or by a combination of these.

Electronic petitions will also be accepted provided they are:

- submitted using the **Council's free** ePetitions facility; or
- submitted as one document, containing ~~either all the local persons' individual e-mails received by the organiser on a specific date – these must include the individual names and addresses in order to be valid, or if a standard template e-mail has been used,~~ the list of names, postal addresses and e-mail addresses of those supporting the petition. These petitions should be sent to: DemocraticServices@cambridgeshire.gov.uk.

Paper petitions can be sent to:

The Petitions Officer
Cambridgeshire County Council
Box Number SH1102
Shire Hall
Castle Hill
Cambridge
CB3 0AP

~~When a petition is received the Council may consider undertaking one, or more of the following actions:~~

- ~~taking action as requested in the petition~~
- ~~meeting with petitioners~~
- ~~referring the petition to Full Council or one of the Council's Committees~~
- ~~calling a referendum [A referendum on constitutional change could be triggered with a petition submitted by 5% of the local government electors registered in the local authority's area.]~~

~~Petitions will not be referred to extraordinary or special meetings of Full Council, or to the first annual meeting of a new Council.~~

Once a petition has been received, it the ~~Petition Officer~~ will **be assigned** the ~~petition~~ to a Democratic Services Officer, who will be responsible for advising the Petition Organiser on the action to be taken by the authority. A ~~Democratic Services Officer~~ will acknowledge and advise the ~~Petition Organiser~~ within 10 working days.

Petition Guidelines – Types of Petition

Ordinary Petitions

The petition must relate to functions for which the Council has powers or duties [more information on council structure is available in the 'Your council' section of www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk], or to improvements in the economic, social or environmental welfare of Cambridgeshire, to which ~~it the Council, or any of its partners,~~ can contribute.

Format of Petitions

Petitions submitted to the Council must include **a clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition. It should state:** ~~the following:~~

- ~~• A clear statement of your concerns and i.e. what they you want the Council to do.~~
 - what action the petitioners wish the Council to take
 - ~~t~~The name and contact details (**either postal address or e-mail**) of the Petition Organiser, who should be a local person*. ~~This may be either a postal address or e-mail. This is the person we will contact to explain how we will respond to the petition and to discuss matters of process.~~
 - ~~t~~The name (preferably in block capitals) and full address of each local person* who signs it. ~~This will help the Council assess the extent to which the views expressed represent a particular locality. Where the petition is in paper form, this should include an actual signature. Where the petition is submitted in electronic form a list of the names and addresses will suffice.~~

* *A 'local person' is anyone who lives, owns a business, or works in the area (business address to be recorded where appropriate), or who attends a school or college in the area at the time the petition is submitted (**business, school or college to be recorded where appropriate as addresses not within the Council's area will not be counted**).*

How will the Council responds to petitions

The Council's response will depend on what the petition asks for, but it will include one or more of the following: ~~When a petition is received the Council may consider undertaking one, or more of the following actions:~~

- take action as requested in the petition
- meet with petitioners
- refer the petition to Full Council or one of the Council's Committees
- call a referendum [A referendum on constitutional change could be triggered with a petition submitted by 5% of the local government electors registered in the local authority's area.]

Petitions will not be referred to extraordinary or special meetings of Full Council, or to the first annual meeting of a new Council.

Speaking at Council/Committee Meetings

The Petition Organiser, or their nominee** will be able to speak at the meeting providing the following conditions are met:

- The petition must relate to the powers and duties of that committee / body.
- The petition must be signed by at least 50 'local people' *** who have an interest in the subject of the petition - the addresses of the signatories must be included for this purpose. **Petitions with fewer than 50 signatures will still be considered but there is no right to speak.**
- The petition must be received by no later than 9.00 a.m. five working days before the meeting.
- The petition must be accepted by the Chairman/woman of the Committee for presentation at the meeting. This is likely to be agreed unless there are exceptional circumstances.

** *County Councillors will not usually be allowed to speak to petitions under this procedure as they have other opportunities to make their views known. This may however be allowed where the Councillor has a prejudicial interest preventing them from speaking to a report, or where the Petition Organiser or other representative of the petitioners is unable to attend the meeting. In these circumstances the Chairman/woman of the meeting concerned will be consulted and asked to exercise their discretion to allow a County Councillor to present the petition.*

*** *A 'local person' is anyone who lives, owns a business, or works in the area (~~business address to be recorded where appropriate~~), or who attends a school or college in the area at the time the petition is submitted (**business, school or college address to be recorded where appropriate**).*

Process at the Meeting

Time for presenting a petition will be limited to three minutes. If there is an item / report on the agenda which relates to the petition, the Petition Organiser will usually be asked to make their presentation at the beginning of that item. **If there is no relevant item on the agenda, petitions will usually be heard at the start of the meeting.** ~~The meeting will take into account the views expressed in the petition when reaching a decision on the issue. Time for presenting a petition will be limited to three minutes. The Chairman/woman of the meeting may extend the time allowed, but only in exceptional circumstances.~~ Once they have spoken to the meeting, Councillors may wish to ask them questions about the petition. The person presenting the petition will not be allowed to take part in the subsequent debate. ~~on the petition unless the Chairman/woman considers it appropriate with the agreement of the Committee.~~

~~However the petition will be considered informally by the relevant officer and Councillors following the meeting. This could involve a report being made to a future meeting of the Committee.~~

Petition Organisers will either receive a **written response** from the Chairman/woman of the meeting ~~a written confirmation of the outcome of their petition within ten working days of the meeting, or where the outcome is not yet known, will within ten working days of the meeting receive an update on the action proposed, and written confirmation of the outcome from the Chairman/woman as soon as reasonably possible.~~

~~If your petition is about something over which the Council has no direct control, the Council 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 liaise with these partners to respond to your petition. If the Council is not able to do this for any reason (for example if what the petition calls for conflicts with Council policy), then it will set out the reasons for this in the Council's response to the Petition Organiser.~~

Petitions for Debate at Council

If a petition contains at least 3,000 signatures, the Petition Organiser can ask for it to be debated at a meeting of Full Council. ~~This means that the issue raised in the petition will be discussed at a public meeting which all Councillors can attend. The Council will endeavour to consider the petition at its next meeting, although on some occasions this may not be possible and consideration will be deferred to the following meeting.~~

~~The Petition Organiser, or nominee, may speak to a petition presented at the Council meeting provided that the above conditions are met.~~

The Petition Organiser, or nominee, will be given five minutes to present the petition at the meeting and the petition may be discussed by Councillors for a maximum of up to 15 minutes.

The Council will decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting. It 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 the relevant committee. Where the Petition Organiser does not attend the meeting, they will receive written confirmation of this decision within ten working days of the meeting.

Exclusions

Certain petitions are not covered by this Scheme and are dealt with under separate processes. These are:

- Petitions relating to planning applications. These are considered by the Council's Planning Committee. You can find further details on how to make your views known to the Committee on the Planning pages of the Council's website, or ask the Democratic Services team for information.
- Petitions relating to traffic regulation orders. These are considered by the Assistant Director, Highways in consultation with the Local Members for all districts except Cambridge City.
- Petitions in response to consultation on a specific issue or proposal. These should be sent to the return address as detailed in the relevant consultation document.
- Statutory petitions (for example requesting a referendum on having an elected mayor)
- A matter whether there is an existing right of appeal

The Council will not consider:

- Petitions that do not follow the guidelines set out in this Petition Scheme.

- Petitions that do not relate **to a matter for which the local authority has a responsibility, or which affects the County and is something the Council is able to** ~~of the authority, or over which the authority has some influence.~~
- Petitions disclosing matters that are personal or confidential.
- Petitions which are in the opinion of the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the relevant committee Chairman/woman, to be libellous, rude, offensive, vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate, or which are in breach of the Council's statutory duties in respect of equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Petitions from, or submitted on behalf of a business, or person, where the main purpose of the petition is to influence a forthcoming commercial decision of the Council, or the terms and conditions of a commercial transaction.
- Duplicate petitions. Where more than one petition is received in time for a particular meeting, each supporting the same outcome, each Petition Organiser will be treated as an independent Petition Organiser, but only the organiser of the first petition to be received will be invited to address the relevant meeting.
- Repeat petitions. Petitions will not normally be considered within six months of another petition on the same matter having been considered by Full Council, or a committee of the Council.
- Where any of the above applies, the Council's Petitions Officer will contact the Petition Organiser to explain the reasons behind the decision.

Informal Review

If the petitioner believes the petition has not been dealt with in accordance with this scheme. The lead petitioner should seek an informal review by the Monitoring Officer, who will inform them of any decision arising from the review within ten working days.

General Data Protection Regulation

People signing a petition are consenting to Cambridgeshire County Council holding and processing their personal data. All personal information will be kept safe and secure for a period of four years. It is the responsibility of the petition organiser to ensure that people signing the petition are consenting to this and they are aware how Cambridgeshire County Council will be holding their personal data.