



Petitions Scheme for Leicestershire County Council

1. Leicestershire County Council welcomes petitions and recognises that petitions are one way in which people can let us know their concerns. Anyone who lives, works or studies in the local authority area and/or is a recipient of County Council services and is associated with the petition, including under 18's, can sign or organise a petition.
2. All petitions sent or presented to the Council will receive an acknowledgement from the Council within 10 working days of receipt. This acknowledgement will set out what we plan to do with the petition. 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.

3. Paper petitions can be sent to:

**Head of Democratic Services and Administration
Room 213, Chief Executive's Department
County Hall, Glenfield
Leicestershire,
LE3 8RA**

Or be created, signed and submitted online as an 'e-petition' by following this weblink: <http://politics.leics.gov.uk>

4. Depending on the nature of your petition, it can be submitted to meetings of the Scrutiny Commission, Scrutiny Committees, the Development Control and Regulatory Board, Highways Forums, or directly to Chief Officers. Petitions cannot be submitted to either the Cabinet or full Council unless they relate to a matter already before those bodies, or support is so significant they have amassed over 10,000 signatures – which then triggers a debate at full Council.
5. Meetings of those bodies which receive petitions take place on a regular basis, dates and times of which can be found via the weblink above.
6. If you would like to present your petition to the Council, or would like your councillor or someone else to present it on your behalf, please contact Democratic Services on 0116 305 6036 at least 10 working days before the meeting and they will talk you through the process.

What are the guidelines for submitting a petition?

7. Petitions submitted to the Council must:

- have a clear and concise statement setting out the issue of concern, and what action the County Council is being asked to take in response to the petition;
- contain the name and address (residential, work, or study, as applicable) of any person supporting the petition. E-petitions submitted via the County Council's online Political Management System (politics.leics.gov.uk) should also include signatories' email addresses;
- include the contact details for a 'lead petitioner', including an address, with whom the County Council can communicate on behalf of all the signatories. Those details will not be placed on the website;
- be received by the Chief Executive's Department 6 working days before the relevant meeting at which it is to be presented, if it is to be considered at that meeting.

8. Petitions which are considered to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate will not be accepted. 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.

What will the Council do when it receives my petition?

9. An acknowledgement will be sent to the petition organiser within 10 working days of receiving the petition. It will let them know what we plan to do with the petition and when they can expect to hear from us again. It will also be published on our website.
10. 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 acknowledgment 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.
11. We will not take action on any petition which we consider to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate and will explain the reasons for this in our acknowledgement of the petition.

12. To ensure that people know what we are doing in response to the petitions we receive the details of all the petitions submitted to us will be published on our website, except in cases where this would be inappropriate. Whenever possible we will also publish any information which relates to the petition (all personal details will be removed). When you sign an e-petition we may send all signatories this information by email. However, we will not send you anything which is not relevant to the e-petition you have signed, unless you choose to receive other information from us such as through our 'Subscribe to updates' facility via <http://politics.leics.gov.uk>

How will the Council respond to petitions?

13. Our response to a petition will depend on what a petition asks for and how many people have signed it, but may include one or more of the following:

- 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 one of the Council's overview and scrutiny committees¹, or highways forums²
- writing to the petition organiser setting out our views about the request in the petition

14. 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 <http://www.leicestershiretogether.org> 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 here <http://www.leics.gov.uk/departments.htm>.

¹ Overview and scrutiny committees are committees of councillors who are responsible for scrutinising the work of the council – in other words, the overview and scrutiny committee has the power to hold the council's decision makers to account.

² Local Highways Forums comprise of seven district/borough area joint discussion forums involving County and District Councillors which look at strategic highway matters in a local context, consider petitions relating to local highway issues and which receives updates on all planned highway works.

15. 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.

Standard Petitions

16. These are petitions that do not meet the requirements for a full Council debate or to call a senior officer to account. They have no minimum threshold and can be submitted to the Scrutiny Commission, Scrutiny Committees, the Development Control and Regulatory Board or Highways Forums, depending on their nature. Alternatively you may send petitions directly to the Chief Officer of the relevant Department. In such cases appropriate action will be taken and you will receive a written response to the issues raised.

Officer evidence

17. Your petition may ask for a senior council officer to give evidence at a public meeting about something for which the officer is responsible as part of their job. For example, your petition may ask a senior council officer to explain progress on an issue, or to explain the advice given to elected members to enable them to make a particular decision.
18. If your petition has been signed by at least 2000 persons living, working or studying in the Authority area, the relevant senior officer will give evidence at a public meeting of one of the Council's standing overview and scrutiny committees. The following senior officers can be called to give evidence:

Chief Executive
County Solicitor
Director of Corporate Resources
Director of Children and Young People's Service
Director of Adults and Communities
Director of Environment and Transport

19. You should be aware that the relevant overview and scrutiny committee may decide that it would be more appropriate for another officer to give evidence instead of any officer named in the petition – for instance if the named officer has changed jobs. The committee may also decide to call the relevant Lead Member of the Cabinet with responsibility for the service area to attend the meeting.

Full Council debates

20. If a petition has been signed by at least 10,000 persons, living, working or studying in the Authority area or if a County Council body decides it is appropriate, the petition will 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. The Council will endeavour to consider the petition at its next meeting, although on some occasions this may not be possible and consideration will then take place at the following meeting.
21. Councillors will discuss the petition and the Council will decide how to respond to it 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 scrutiny committee. Where the issue is one on which the Council executive (the Cabinet) is required to make the final decision, the Council will decide whether to make recommendations to inform that decision. The Cabinet itself may propose a response to the Council when the petition is considered. The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of the Council's decision. This confirmation will also be published on our website.

Statutory Petitions and Consultations

22. If the petition applies to a planning application, is a statutory petition (for example requesting a referendum on having an elected mayor), on a matter which is currently the subject of a formal County Council consultation or where there is already an existing right of appeal, other procedures may apply but the County Council will always try to ensure that your petition is addressed in some way. Should this be the case, you will be notified of them in the petition acknowledgement. Further information on different ways in which you can express your views is available via the Council webpage: <http://www.leics.gov.uk/haveyoursay>

What happens at the meetings?

23. When presenting a petition at a meeting, you or your County Councillor (if you would prefer) will be asked to read the wording of the petition and state the number of signatories. The Chairman of the meeting has discretion to invite you to explain the background to the issue where he/she believes it would be helpful to do so. Please note that you will not be able to join in the subsequent debate at the meeting.

24. The process for consideration of 'full council debates' and 'officer evidence' petitions is described above, but in the case of 'standard petitions', Members may:

- discuss the issues raised in the petition there and then and come to a view as to how they should be addressed;
or
- ask the relevant Chief Officer to respond in writing to you;
or
- refer the petition to another body or to a Chief Officer and request a report back on the matter.

E-petitions

25. The Council welcomes e-petitions which are created and submitted through our online Political Management System (<http://politics.leics.gov.uk>).

26. E-petitions must follow the same guidelines as paper petitions described in paragraph 7 above. The petition organiser will need to provide us with their name, postal address and email address. You will also need to discuss with an officer how long you would like your petition to be open for signatures.

27. When you create an e-petition, it may take up to five working days before it is published online. This is because we have to check that the content of your petition is suitable before it is made available for signature.

28. If we feel we cannot publish your petition for some reason, we will contact you within this time to explain. You will be able to change and resubmit your petition if you wish.

29. Further detailed guidance on the process for submitting, signing and processing an e-petition (which does not form part of the Petitions Scheme) is attached, as an appendix to the Scheme.

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

30. If you feel that we have not dealt with your petition properly, the petition organiser has the right to request that the Council's Scrutiny Commission review the steps that the Council has taken in response to your petition. It is helpful to everyone, and can improve the prospects for a review if the petition organiser gives a short explanation of the reasons why the Council's response is not considered to be adequate.

31. The Scrutiny Commission will endeavour to consider your request at its next meeting, although on some occasions this may not be possible and consideration will take place at the following meeting. Should the Scrutiny

Commission determine we have not dealt with your petition adequately, it may use any of its powers to deal with the matter. These powers include instigating an investigation and making recommendations to the Council's Cabinet or full Council..

32. Once the appeal has been considered the petition organiser will be informed of the results within 5 working days. The results of the review will also be published on our website.

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