

Annex 6.1 - Petition Scheme

1. Introduction

1.1. The council welcomes petitions and recognises that petitions are one way in which people can let the council know their concerns. All petitions sent or presented to the council will receive an acknowledgement within 10 working days of receipt. This acknowledgement will set out how the petition will be administered.

1.2. Paper petitions can be sent to:

Democratic Services
Epsom and Ewell Borough Council
The Town Hall
The Parade
Epsom
Surrey
KT18 5BY

1.3. Petitions can also be submitted online through the online portal.

1.4. Petitions which satisfy the requirements of the Petition Scheme, will be presented to either an ordinary meeting of (full) Council (excluding the Annual Meeting), or to a meeting of a relevant policy committee.

2. What are petitions?

2.1. A petition is a communication that is signed by, or sent to the council on behalf of, a number of people and can be submitted by a person of any age who lives, works or studies in the Borough. The list of signatories will be checked for any duplicate signatures or obviously frivolous responses. There are different types of petitions:

(a) **Ordinary Petitions:** These are petitions that relate to the day-to-day services or facilities provided by the council. Such petitions must be signed by at least 20 signatories.

(b) **Petitions for debate:** If a petition calls for something to be reported to and discussed at a meeting of the Full Council or at a policy committee, it must contain at least 1,500 signatures.

3. Petitions not covered by this Scheme

3.1. The following petitions will not be accepted:

(a) The subject matter of the petition is deemed likely to cause distress, disruption or irritation without any proper or justified cause.

- (b) Petitions which are considered to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate.
- (c) The subject matter of the petition relates to a matter upon which legal proceedings are possible.
- (d) The petition relates to an individual member of the community, or the personal circumstances of councillors or council officers, or makes criminal accusations.
- (e) The subject matter of the petition is about something for which this council is not responsible or cannot influence.
- (f) Petitions relating to planning or licensing matters. Please refer to the relevant planning and licensing protocols (see [Council Operating Framework](#), Annex 4.8 and Annex 4.7 respectively).
- (g) The petition discloses confidential or exempt information, including information protected by court order or government department.
- (h) The petition contains advertising statements.
- (i) The petition refers to an issue which is currently the subject of a formal council complaint, Local Ombudsman complaint or any legal proceedings.
- (j) If a petition is covered by specific legislation, for example a request for a referendum about how the council is governed, the scheme does not apply as the petition has to comply with the relevant legislation.
- (k) A petition will not normally be considered if it is received within six months of another petition on the same matter.
- (l) If two or more petitions on the same subject are received at the same time, each will be treated as a separate petition but only the organiser of the first petition received will be invited to address the relevant meeting.

4. Guidelines for submission

4.1. A petition submitted to the council must include:

- (a) A clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition.
- (b) What action the petitioners would like the council to take.
- (c) The name, address and signature of any person supporting the petition.

4.2. Petitions must be accompanied by contact details, including an address for the petition organiser with whom the Council will correspond.

- 4.3. If the petition does not identify a petition organiser, the council will contact signatories to the petition to agree who should act as the petition organiser.
- 4.4. The period immediately before an election or referendum may require the presentation of a petition to Council or a Council meeting to be delayed.
- 4.5. If a petition does not follow the guidelines set out above, the council will not process the petition but will advise the petition organiser accordingly.
- 4.6. If the Monitoring Officer decides on behalf of the council that a petition does not fall within this scheme, the petition organiser will be informed and given the reason why it is not being accepted.

5. Actions on receipt of valid petition

- 5.1. An acknowledgement will be sent to the petition organiser within 10 working days of receiving the petition, with an explanation of the next steps. The petition will also be published on the council's website. The council will also publish all correspondence relating to the petition (with personal details removed). Signatories to an e-petition can elect to receive this information by email.
- 5.2. If the action requested by the petition can be taken, confirmation of such will be sent and the petition will be marked as completed and closed. If the petition has enough signatures to trigger a council debate, then the acknowledgement will confirm this, and details of the meeting will be sent to the petition organiser.
- 5.3. If a petition seeks something for which a different council or body is responsible, the council will consider what the best method is for responding to it, in light of its data protection policy. In any event, the council will always notify the petition organiser of the action taken.

6. Council and Committee debates

- 6.1. If a petition contains the requisite number of signatures (see Section 2), it will be debated by the Full council or by the relevant policy committee.
- 6.2. This means that the issue raised in the petition will be discussed either at a Full Council meeting, which all councillors can attend, or by the relevant policy committee. The petition organiser will be given five minutes to present the petition at the meeting and must confine their remarks to matters relevant to the petition. The Full Council or the policy committee 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 for reasons put forward in the debate, or to commission further investigation into the matter. The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of this decision and it will also be published on the council's website.

7. E-petitions

- 7.1. Petitions can also be created and submitted through the council's website. E-petitions must follow the same guidelines as paper petitions. The petition organiser will need to provide their name, postal address and e-mail address. The petition organiser will also need to decide how long they would like their petition to be open for signatures. Most petitions run for six months but a shorter or longer timeframe can be chosen, up to a maximum of twelve months.
- 7.2. When an e-petition is created, it may take five working days before it is published online, to enable the Democratic Services to check that the content of the petition is suitable before it is made available for signature. If the petition cannot be published the petition organiser will be advised as to the reasons. The petition organiser will be able to change or re-submit their petition if they wish. The council will, within 10 working days of rejecting a petition, publish a summary of the petition and the reason why it has not been accepted. The publication will be located in the "rejected petitions" section of the website.
- 7.3. If an e-petition is accepted, the petition organiser will receive an acknowledgment within 10 working days.
- 7.4. A petition acknowledgement and response will be emailed to everyone who has signed the e-petition and elected to receive this information. The acknowledgement will also be published on this website.