

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 be acknowledged. 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
Room 200B, Chief Executive's Department
County Hall, Glenfield
Leicestershire, LE3 8RA**

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

4. If you chose to use an alternative petition system other than the Council's own system e.g. Change.org, you will either need to print a copy of the petition statement and corresponding signatures and send it to us by post to the above address, or email a pdf copy to democracy@leics.gov.uk.

Other ways of making your views known

5. Leicestershire County Council values petitions and this document sets how we will respond to petitions received. Petitions are not, however, the only, or necessarily the quickest way to resolve an issue or make your views known. You could also:-
 - a) Contact the Council's Customer Service Centre raising a concern about a service provided by the Council; or
 - b) Raise the matter with your local County Councillor and ask him/her to take up the matter on your behalf.

What are the guidelines for submitting a petition?

6. Petitions submitted (whether by post or online) 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. These details will not be placed on the website;
 - have a minimum of 100 signatures;
 - be received by the Chief Executive's Department eight clear days before the relevant meeting at which it is to be presented, if it is to be considered at a meeting.
7. 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?

8. An acknowledgement will be sent to the lead petitioner 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.
9. Any petition which we consider to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate following consultation with the Monitoring Officer will be refused and the reasons for this will be notified to the lead petitioner.
10. To ensure that people know what we are doing in response to the petitions we receive, details of all the petitions submitted to us will be published on our website, except in cases where this would be inappropriate or where the petition does not qualify to be considered under this Scheme (i.e. a petition with under 100 signatures). 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>.
11. 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 here <http://www.leics.gov.uk/departments.htm>.

12. 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.

How will the Council respond to petitions?

13. 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 this is not possible 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:

Under 100 signatures

14. Whilst this will not qualify as a petition under this Scheme the relevant Service Director will be asked to consider the matter and provide a written response within 56 days (2 months) following acknowledgement of the petition. The matter will then be deemed to have been dealt with.

Standard Petitions - Over 100 signatures

15. The Service Director will be asked to consider the matter and provide a written response to the lead petitioner within 28 working days following acknowledgement of the petition. That response will be copied to the local County Councillor. If the lead petitioner and/or local County Councillor felt that the petition had not been dealt with properly they can ask for the matter to be referred to the relevant overview and scrutiny committee for consideration (see paragraphs 26 -28 below).

Standard Petition - Over 500 signatures

16. The lead petitioner will be consulted and offered the option of a response from the relevant Service Director, or to have the issue considered by the relevant overview and scrutiny committee or the Development Control and Regulatory Board (the Board), as appropriate.
17. If the lead petitioner asks for the matter to be referred to the relevant overview and scrutiny committee or the Board, the Service Director will prepare a report on the matter to be considered at the next meeting of that Committee or the Board. *(Note – if the next meeting of the relevant Committee or the Board is to be held within 28 days of receipt of the petition, the Service Director will present a report to the following meeting.)*

What happens at the Committee or Board meetings?

18. 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.
19. The overview and scrutiny committee or the Board will discuss the matter raised in the petition and, if they are of the view that they have all of the necessary information, will come to a view as to how this should be addressed.

Requiring a Senior Officer to give evidence

20. 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.
21. 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
 - Director of Law and Governance
 - Director of Corporate Resources
 - Director of Finance (as the Section 151 Officer)
 - Director of Children and Family Services
 - Director of Adults and Communities
 - Director of Environment and Transport
 - Director of Public Health

22. 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

23. 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 (see above). 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.

24. 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 lead petitioner will receive written confirmation of the Council's decision. This confirmation will also be published on our website.

Statutory Petitions and Consultations

25. If the petition applies to a planning application, is a statutory petition (for example requesting a referendum on having an elected mayor), relates to 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 this in the petition acknowledgement. Further information on different ways in which you can express your views is available via the Council's webpage:
<http://www.leics.gov.uk/haveyoursay>

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

26. If you feel that we have not dealt with your petition properly, the lead petitioner has the right to request that the Council's Scrutiny Commission review the steps that the Council has taken in response to your petition. The lead petitioner will be required to provide a short explanation of the reasons why the Council's response is not considered to be adequate.
27. The Scrutiny Commission will endeavour to consider the 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.
28. Once the appeal has been considered the lead petitioner and the local County Councillor will be informed of the results within 5 working days. The results of the review will also be published on our website.

Guidance for E-Petitions

[Note: the following Guidance for E-Petitions was formally approved by the County Council when adopting the Petitions Scheme for Leicestershire County Council for the first time. Future amendments to these instructions will be made by the Chief Executive in accordance with the agreement made by the Constitution Committee on 10 September 2010. Although, unlike the Constitution itself, this Guidance does not require formal approval of the County Council, it is nevertheless included here for the sake of completeness and will be updated as necessary, to reflect any amendments made.]

Who can submit an e-petition?

If you live, work or study in Leicestershire and/or receive a service provided by the County Council you can organise an e-petition and the County Council will consider the matter.

What issues can my e-petition relate to?

A petition should involve a call for action and be relevant to some question over which the Council has authority, relates to a service provided by NHS Leicestershire County and Rutland, or which otherwise affects the County.

Who can sign an e-petition?

Anyone who lives, works or studies in Leicestershire and/or receives a County Council service can sign an e-petition. You will need to be a registered user of the County Council's online Political Management System and provide your name, residential/work/study address, and valid email address for verification purposes.

How do I start an e-petition?

When starting an e-petition, access the County Council's e-petitions homepage (<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/mgepetitionlistdisplay.aspx>) and select the 'Submit a new e-petition' option.

You will then be prompted to do one of the following:

- register as a new user by submitting your contact details and creating a user name and password. In order that we can ascertain you are a 'real user' you will be required to enter a validation code of letters/numbers at the bottom of the registration form and, having submitted your details, be requested to validate your account via a link sent to your registered email address;
- if you are an existing user, simply type in your user name and password.

Then enter a title and the system will automatically check against existing e-petitions to allow you to see if a similar one has been received recently. You will then need to fill in the online form.

PLEASE NOTE: *If you chose to use an alternative petition system other than the Council's own system e.g. Change.org, you will either need to print a copy of the petition statement and corresponding signatures and send it to us by post, or email a pdf copy to democracy@leics.gov.uk.*

What information should my e-petition contain?

Your e-petition will need to include the following:

- Subject matter;
- A statement setting out what action you would like the Council to take;
- A short name, in order to generate a direct weblink to the e-petition – e.g. by typing 'road' this would generate politics.leics.gov.uk/road as a weblink.

Your petition will then be submitted to the Democratic Services Section of the Chief Executive's Department. A member of staff will then contact you prior to the petition being signed off and going live on the system. Your local County Councillor and the Director of the relevant Department concerned will be notified of the details of the petition.

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

An officer from the Democratic Services Section will contact the lead petitioner to discuss when you wish your e-petition to go live on the website and also the appropriate time for when you wish to stop collecting signatures. Following the end date for signatories the e-petition will be dealt with in accordance with the County Council's Petition Scheme.

Can I still submit a paper petition?

Yes, paper petitions can still be submitted via your local County Councillor or directly to the Chief Executive (see contact details below).

Petitioners can gather names both on paper and via the online form, although repeat names will be removed. Where a dual exercise occurs, both forms of petition should be run for the same period of time and must be submitted together. Please inform Democratic Services if you intend to do this.

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 homepage (<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/mgepetitionlistdisplay.aspx>).

Unless you are already a user and can log on to 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 'real 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.

Data Protection

The details you give us are needed to validate your support for the e-petition and is the same information you would be required to give for a paper petition, but these details will not be published on the Council's website. The Council will not contact you unless you are the lead petitioner, or it needs to clarify matters regarding the specific petition you have submitted/signed. Your details will not be passed on to any third party.

Contact Details

In order to discuss submitting an e-petition or for further general information and advice, you can contact the Democratic Services Section via:

- email: democracy@leics.gov.uk;
- or
- telephone: 0116 305 6036
- or
- write to:

Head of Democratic Services
Room 200B, Chief Executive's Department
County Hall, Glenfield
Leicestershire,
LE3 8RA

NOTE

1. The Council reserves the right to refuse to accept any e-petition that is considered to be frivolous, vexatious, discriminatory or otherwise inappropriate. However, the Democratic Services Section will, where possible, suggest to the lead petitioner an amended form of words that is considered acceptable.
2. The Council accepts no liability for the content of petitions on the Council's webpages. The views expressed should not be considered as those of the Council.

[end of Guidance for E-Petitions]