

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/mgePetitionListDisplay.aspx?bcr=1>.

(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.
5. Further information on the information contained within the Petitions Schemes is available from Democratic Services, (telephone 0116 305 2583) or by emailing democracy@leics.gov.uk.

Other ways of making your views known

6. Petitions are not 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 (see <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/about-the-council/contact-us/opening-times-and-contact-information> for more information); or
 - b) Raise the matter with your local County Councillor and ask him/her to take up the matter on your behalf (more details are at <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/about-the-council/how-the-council-works/councillors-and-conduct/find-your-county-councillor>).

What are the guidelines for submitting a petition?

7. Petitions submitted (whether by post or online) to the Council must:
- have a clear and concise statement setting out the subject of the petition and the action the County Council is being asked to take in response (i.e. either do something, or stop doing something);
 - contain the name and address (residential, work, or study (as applicable)) of any person supporting the petition. E-petitions should also include signatories' email addresses;
 - include the address and contact details for a 'lead petitioner', 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.

Exceptions to the Petitions Scheme

8. The following will not be accepted as petitions within the scope of the scheme:
- Submissions which are vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate;
 - Submissions relating to matters which would usually be dealt with through the corporate complaints process;
 - Submissions that are substantially similar to a petition considered by the County Council within the last six months;
 - Issues raised by staff related to their employment;
 - Petitions that are handled through alternative means or where other procedures apply, such as those referring to:
 - i. Planning Applications;
 - ii. Parking Policies;
 - iii. Decisions for where there is an existing right of appeal;
 - iv. Statutory petitions (for example requesting a referendum on having an elected mayor).
9. 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?

10. An acknowledgement will be sent to the lead petitioner within 10 working days of receiving the petition. It will confirm whether the petition has been accepted or the reasons for not accepting it, let them know what we plan to do with the petition and when they can expect to hear from us again.
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 many 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 <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/>
12. If your petition is about something that a different council is responsible for we will consider the best method for responding to it. This might be to simply forward the petition to the other council but could involve other steps. 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 it asks for and how many people have signed it, but may include one or more of the following:

Response from the Service Director

14. The Service Director, following consultation with the relevant Cabinet Lead Member and Local Member, will respond to the Lead Petitioner in the circumstances outlined below:
 - If the petition has less than 100 signatures, a written response will be provided within 56 days (2 months) following acknowledgement of the petition. As petitions of this size do not qualify under this Scheme, the matter will then be deemed to be dealt with.

If the petition has more than 100 signatures and relates to an issue in a single electoral division, where possible a written response will be provided within 28 working days following acknowledgement of the petition. If it is not possible to respond in that timeframe, the lead petitioner will be notified of the reasons for this. The response will be copied to the Chairman and Spokesmen of the relevant Scrutiny Committee. If the lead petitioner and/or one or more of the relevant elected members feel that the petition has not been dealt with properly

they can ask for the matter to be referred to the relevant overview and scrutiny committee for consideration.

Referral to an Overview and Scrutiny Committee

15. Petitions with more than 1000 signatures and affecting two or more electoral divisions can be considered by the relevant overview and scrutiny committee. The Lead Petitioner can, however, choose to have the petition dealt with by the Service Director, following consultation with the Cabinet Lead Member and Local Member, should they prefer.
16. Petitions relating to an issue that affects a single electoral division will not be considered at an overview and scrutiny committee meeting unless they have 10,000 or more signatures, in which case the overview and scrutiny committee will be asked for its views prior to the matter being considered by the full Council (see paragraph 21 below).
17. If the lead petitioner chooses for the matter to be referred to the relevant overview and scrutiny committee, it will be considered at the next available meeting (where that meeting is more than 10 working days from the date the petition is received). Alternatively, if the matter of the petition is already on the work programme of an overview and scrutiny committee, the Lead Petitioner will be invited to the meeting to submit representations about their petition under the agenda item it relates to.
18. When presenting a petition at a meeting, the Lead Petitioner, or their local County Councillor (if preferred) will be asked to read the wording of the petition and state the number of signatories. The Chairman of the meeting can invite the Lead Petitioner 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 will discuss the matter raised in the petition. If the meeting is more than 28 days following receipt of the petition, the Service Director will present a report responding to the petition. Otherwise, the overview and scrutiny committee can request a report outlining the response to be submitted to the next meeting. Once the overview and scrutiny committee has all the necessary information, it will come to a view as to how the petition should be addressed.
20. A maximum of two petitions can be submitted to any one overview and scrutiny committee at one time.

Referral to full Council

21. 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. This means that the issue raised in the petition will be discussed at a meeting which all councillors can attend. The Council will 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.

22. 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 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.

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

23. 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.
24. 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.
25. 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.

[end of Part 10]

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, 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?bcr=1>) 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, 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 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?bcr=1>).

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

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 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]