

PART J - LOCAL PETITIONS SCHEME

Petitions

1. The Council welcomes petitions and recognises that petitions are one way in which people can let us know their concerns. All petitions containing a minimum of 50 signatories 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. The Council will treat something as a petition if it is identified as being a petition or if it seems to the Council that it is intended to be a petition.
2. Paper petitions can be sent to the Head of Democratic Services, Trinity Road, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 1PX or submitted electronically to nigel.adams@cotswold.gov.uk
3. If you would like to present your petition to Council, or would like your Councillor or someone else to present it on your behalf, please contact Nigel Adams, Head of Democratic Services, on 01285 623202 or nigel.adams@cotswold.gov.uk at least ten working days prior to the meeting and he will talk you through the process. If your petition has received 850 signatures or more, it will be scheduled for Council debate and, if this is the case, we will let you know whether this will happen at the same meeting or at a later meeting of the Council.

What are the guidelines for submitting a petition?

4. Petitions submitted to the Council must include:-
 - a clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition. It should state what action the petitioners wish the Council to take.
 - the name and address and signature of any person supporting the petition. This may be an address where the signatory lives, works or studies.
5. Petitions should be accompanied by contact details, including an address, for the petition organiser. This is the person we will contact to explain how we will respond to the petition. The contact details of the petition organiser will not be placed on the website. If the petition does not identify a petition organiser, we will contact signatories to the petition to agree who should act as the petition organiser.
6. Petitions which are considered to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate will not be accepted. We will explain the reasons for this in our acknowledgement of the petition. 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?

7. An acknowledgement will be sent to the petition organiser within 10 working days of receiving the petition. It will let the organiser know what we plan to do with the petition and when the organiser can expect to hear from us again. It will also be published on our website. 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 (850), or a Senior Officer giving evidence (425), then the acknowledgment will confirm this and tell the organiser when and where the meeting will take place. If the petition needs more investigation, the organiser will be told of the planned steps.

8. If the petition applies to a planning or licensing application, is a statutory petition (for example requesting a referendum on having an Elected Mayor), or is on a matter where there is already an existing right of appeal, such as council tax banding and non-domestic rates, other procedures apply and this Scheme is not relevant.

9. 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 all correspondence relating to the petition (all personal details will be removed).

How will the Council respond to petitions?

10. The Council's 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 the Council's Audit and Scrutiny Committee*
- calling a referendum
- writing to the petition organiser setting out our views about the request in the petition

* The Audit and Scrutiny Committee is a Committee of Councillors which is responsible for scrutinising the work of the Council - in other words, the Audit and Scrutiny Committee has the power to hold the Council's decision-makers to account. Cotswold District Council's Audit and Scrutiny Committee consists of 13 Members of the Council who are tasked with scrutinising the work of the Cabinet and holding the Members of the Cabinet to account.

11. In addition to these steps, the Council will consider all the specific actions it can potentially take on the issues highlighted in a petition. The table below gives some examples.

Petition Subject	Appropriate Steps
Alcohol Related Crime and Disorder	If your petition is about crime or disorder linked to alcohol consumption, the Council will, among other measures, consider the case for placing restrictions on public drinking in the area by establishing a Designated Public Place Order or, as a last resort, imposing an Alcohol Disorder Zone. When an Alcohol Disorder Zone is established the licensed premises in the area

	<p>where alcohol related trouble is being caused is required to contribute to the costs of extra policing in that area. The Council's response to your petition will set out the steps we intend to take and the reasons for taking this approach.</p>
<p>Anti-social behaviour (ASB)</p>	<p>As the elected representatives of your local area, and the Licensing Authority, the Council has a significant role to play in tackling anti-social behaviour. The Council, in conjunction with its partners in the local Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership, has set out minimum service standards for responding to issues of anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>When responding to petitions on ASB, the Council may consider, in consultation with our local partners, all the options available including the powers and mechanisms to intervene as part of its role as Licensing Authority. For example, the Council will work with the Neighbourhood Policing Team in the affected area to identify what action might be taken including what role CCTV might play, consider identifying a dedicated contact within the Council to liaise with the community and neighbourhood partners on issues of ASB in the area in question and, where appropriate, the Council will alert the Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership and the Audit and Scrutiny Committee to the issues highlighted in the petition.</p>
<p>Under-Performing Health Services</p>	<p>The Council will work with local health partners to consider the matter raised in the petition including, where appropriate, exploring what role the Local Involvement Network (LINK) might have in reviewing and feeding back on the issue (the LINK is run by local individuals and community groups and independently supported - their role is to find out what people want in terms of local health services, monitor those services and to use their powers to hold them to account). The County Council's Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee will also be alerted to the petition and, where the matter is sufficiently or potentially serious, the issue will be referred to that Committee to consider for review.</p>

12. If your petition is about something over which the Council has no direct control (for example the local railway or hospital), 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 work with these partners to respond to your petition. If the Council is not able to do this for any reason, then the petition organiser will be advised accordingly.

13. More information on the services for which the Council is responsible can be found on the Council's website at <http://www.cotswold.gov.uk>. If your petition is about something that a different Council is responsible for, we will give consideration as 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, the petition organiser will be notified of what action has been taken.

Full Council Debates

14. If a petition contains more than 850 signatures, it 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. The petition organiser will be given five minutes to present the petition at the Meeting and the petition will then be discussed by Councillors for a maximum of 15 minutes. The Council will decide how to respond to the petition at this Meeting. The Council 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 Committee. Where the issue is one on which the Council's Executive (Cabinet) is required to make the final decision, the Council will decide whether to make recommendations to inform that decision. The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of this decision. This confirmation will also be published on the Council's Website.

Officer Evidence

15. A petition may ask for a Senior Officer (Chief Executive, Strategic Directors and Heads of Service) to give evidence at a public meeting about something for which the Officer is responsible as part of their job. For example, the petition may ask a Senior Officer to explain progress on an issue, or to explain the advice given to elected Members to enable them to make a particular decision. If your petition contains at least 425 signatures, the relevant Senior Officer will give evidence at a public meeting of the Council's Audit and Scrutiny Committee. You should be aware that the Audit 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 to attend the Meeting. Members of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee will ask the questions at this Meeting, but the petition organiser will be able to suggest questions to the Chairman of the Committee by contacting the Head of Democratic Services on 01285 623202 up to three working days before the date of the Meeting.

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

16. Should the petition organiser feel that the Council has not dealt with the petition properly, the petition organiser has the right to request that the Council's Audit and Scrutiny Committee reviews 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.

17. The Audit and Scrutiny Committee 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 Committee determine that the Council has not dealt with the petition adequately, it may use any of its powers to deal with the matter. These powers include instigating an investigation, making recommendations to the Cabinet (the Council's Executive) and arranging for the matter to be considered at a Meeting of the Council.

18. Once the review 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 the Council's Website.

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