

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

PETITION SCHEME GUIDANCE

Introduction

The Council welcomes petitions and recognises that petitions are one way in which people can let us know their concerns.

You have a choice in the way you submit petitions. It can be done in the traditional paper way or using our electronic petitions (e-petitions) system.

How to submit a Petition

Paper petitions can be sent to:

Assistant Director of Governance and Performance Management
Epping Forest District Council
Civic Offices
High Street
Epping
Essex CM16 4BZ

e-petitions can be submitted at:

www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/petitions

Who can submit or sign a petition?

A petition can be submitted or signed by a person who lives, works or studies in Epping Forest District.

What does a Petition need to be valid?

Petitions must relate to matters that directly affect the Council or Epping Forest, and about which the Council has powers to act or lobby. National and foreign issues are not valid subjects for petitions.

Petitions submitted to the Council must include:

- A clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition and on each page of the petition
- It should state what action the petitioners would like the Council to take
- The full name and contact details and the signature of the person leading the petition, and if submitted online via our e-petition system, a valid email address.

Petition types we don't accept under this scheme

- (a) Emailed petitions or petitions started on third party websites;
- (b) Petitions that are vexatious, abusive, anonymous or otherwise inappropriate or subject to legal proceedings;
- (c) Petitions about a planning application (these will be referred to the planning process)

(d) Petitions about a proposed licensing decision (these will be referred to the licensing section)

(e) Petitions made about a decision made about a person or entity where they have a separate right of review or appeal or where another formal consultation is being undertaken at the time (we will refer your petition to that process)

(f) Petitions that relate to a matter over which the Council's Standards Committee have jurisdiction (for example a complaint about a Councillor).

(g) Petitions that are a complaint about an employee. (these would be referred to the Council's complaints process)

What happens when I submit a petition?

All petitions sent or presented to the Council will receive an acknowledgement from the Council within 7 working days of receipt. This acknowledgement will set out how the Council will respond to petitions.

If you create an e-petition, we will check that the content is suitable and then make it available for electronic signature for a maximum period of three months.

Depending on how many signatures there are to support a petition it will be considered in different ways:

Petition type	Response
Correspondence with fewer than 20 signatures	This will normally be dealt with by the appropriate Directorate as ordinary correspondence, unless the Service Director concerned is of the opinion that the subject matter is sufficiently important or contentious to warrant referring the matter to the appropriate Portfolio Holder.
Petitions with more than 20 but fewer than 2400 signatures	These will be considered and dealt with by the relevant portfolio holder who may: (a) take action if he or she has delegated powers to act alone; (b) refer the matter to the Cabinet or a Sub-Committee of the Cabinet for decision.
Petition containing at least 1200 signatures requesting a Senior Officer addresses the petitions concerns.	The relevant Senior Officer will give evidence at a public meeting of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee or if appropriate one its Panels. This would be a public meeting to which you would be invited to participate.

Petition type	Response
2400 signatures or more	These large petitions will be scheduled for a council debate and if this is the case we will let you know whether this will happen and you will have the opportunity to address the meeting with your concerns.
e-petitions	When an e-petition has closed for signature, it will automatically be submitted to the relevant officer, portfolio holder or Council In the same way as a paper petition.

How Will the Council Respond to Petitions?

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.
- Not taking the action requested and responding with the reasons why.
- Considering the petition at a council meeting.
- Making enquiries to find out more about the matter.
- Referring the matter for review by a committee of the Council
- Holding a meeting with petitioners.
- Writing to the petition organiser setting out the Council's views about the request in the petition.

If you submit a petition after a decision has been made about the issue we will look to see if you are raising new matters before we decide how to respond to you. The petition organiser will always receive a written decision on their petition request.

What happens if the matter is referred to the Council for debate?

If a petition contains the required number of signatures, and you have requested that it is debated by Full Council; the issue raised in the petition will be discussed by councillors at the next available ordinary meeting,

At the 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 councillors 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 cabinet is required to make the final decision, the councillors will decide whether to make recommendations to inform that decision. The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of this decision.

{section regarding appeals/review required}