

Schedule 1 - Part 4A Wiltshire Council Petitions Scheme

1. Petitions

- 1.1 A petition is any communication which is signed by or sent to the Council on behalf of a number of people. This includes both written and electronic petitions (“e-petitions”).
- 1.2 The Council has set up a [Petitions Homepage](#) to provide further information and guidance to Members and the public.

2. Receipt and Registration

- 2.1 In order to be received all petitions must:
- 2.1.1 contain the name and contact details of the petition organiser. Only the name of the organiser will be published;
 - 2.1.2 contain a clear and concise statement of the concern, and what action the petitioners wish the Council to take;
 - 2.1.3 be relevant to the role and responsibility of the Council;
 - 2.1.4 contain at least ten names or signatures, or at least 25 names or signatures to be reported or presented to Full Council;
 - 2.1.5 those names to be accompanied by a postcode and house number for paper petitions, and full address and email address for electronic petitions. Only the name and postcode will be displayed in any Council report;
 - 2.1.6 Not be defamatory, frivolous, offensive, vexatious, unlawful or otherwise improper;
 - 2.1.7 Not name or identify individual service users, members of staff or members of staff of partner agencies
- 2.2 Anyone who signs a petition must meet the following eligibility requirements:
- 2.2.1 For a petition to be presented to Full Council, signatories must be aged 13 or above, live, work or study in Wiltshire, or have a direct connection to the service which is the subject of the petition. For the petition to be noted at Full Council it requires a minimum of 25 signatures.
 - 2.2.2 For a petition to be presented to an Area Board, signatories must be aged 13 or above, live, work or study within the relevant community area. For the petition to be noted at a meeting of an Area Board, it requires a minimum of 10 signatures.
- 2.3 Petitions in respect of non-determined planning or licensing applications will not be covered by this petitions scheme, and will be referred to the relevant service as formal representations. Petitions in respect of statutory petitions or on matters with existing right of appeal such as Council tax banding and non-domestic rates, are covered by other procedures.

3. Submission and Acknowledgement

- 3.1 Paper petitions can be sent to: Democratic Services, Wiltshire Council, County Hall, Bythesea Road, Trowbridge, BA14 8JN.
- 3.2 A Wiltshire Council e-Petitions facility to allow the creating, signing and submission of e-petitions is available at [this link](#). This requires registration with the Council using a valid email address. The Council will review the content of the petition and approve it to go live within five working days.
- 3.3 The Council will accept e-petitions hosted on other sites, which can be sent to committee@wiltshire.gov.uk for consideration. The same eligibility requirements will apply.
- 3.4 All petitions provided to the Council will receive an acknowledgement within 2 working days of receipt, and a substantive response of how the Council will respond to the petition within 15 working days of receipt. If that is not possible, an explanation will be given as to the reason for the delay, what action is being taken, and when a response will be sent.
- 3.5 Any response will set out what the Council plans to do with the petition. The Council will treat something as a petition if it is identified as such, or it seems that it is intended to be a petition.
- 3.6 The local Members will be informed of any petition and response for a petition relating to matters within their Area Board.

4. Council Response

- 4.1 The Council's 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:
- 4.1.1 taking the action requested in the petition;
 - 4.1.2 referring the petition to the relevant Council department for consideration in consultation with the relevant cabinet member and/or local member;
 - 4.1.3 referring the petition to the relevant Area Board Chairman;
 - 4.1.4 referring the petition to Full Council, a Committee or the Cabinet;
 - 4.1.5 consider the petition as a consultation response if received during a consultation period;
 - 4.1.6 holding an inquiry into the matter;
 - 4.1.7 undertaking research into the matter;
 - 4.1.8 holding a public meeting;
 - 4.1.9 holding a consultation;
 - 4.1.10 holding a meeting with petitioners;
 - 4.1.11 calling a referendum;
 - 4.1.12 writing to the petition organiser setting out the Council's views about the request in the petition;
 - 4.1.13 other suitable action.

- 4.2 If more than one petition is received on a similar subject matter the Chairman may determine that they be considered by the Council as a single matter and taken together.
- 4.3 A petition will not normally be considered for presentation or debate where it is received within six months of another petition being considered by the Council on the same matter. In exceptional circumstances the Chairman, after consultation with the Monitoring Officer, may determine that the context of the matter has materially changed since the initial consideration and agree to reconsider the matter for presentation or debate.
- 4.4 If a petition is received immediately before an election or referendum it may be necessary to deal with the petition differently, in which case the petition organiser will be contacted to discuss the course of action.
- 4.5 Actions taken on any validly received petition will be reported to Full Council to note.

5. Presentation of Petitions

- 4.1 Petitions may be presented to Full Council provided they have received 25 signatures, if requested by the petition organiser.
- 4.2 Petitions may be presented to Cabinet or to a Committee, including Area Boards, if they have received ten signatures and are relevant to the remit of the Committee, and if requested by the petition organiser.
- 4.3 The petition organiser should submit their petition to Democratic Services at least ten clear working days before a meeting to ensure the petition is relevant to the remit of Council, or a Committee and to be registered.
- 4.4 Petitions submitted without notice at any meeting will be received by the Democratic Services Officer present to be registered and dealt with at the next meeting, if appropriate.
- 4.5 In these instances, the petition organiser will have up to three minutes to speak and the matter would not be debated. The petition will be taken as a public statement and recorded. Up to two other public speakers will be invited to speak for up to three minutes each.

6. Full Council Debates

- 6.1 If a petition has been signed by at least 5000 people and is validly received, upon request of the petition organiser it will also be scheduled for a Council debate.
- 6.2 Any petition which is to be debated must be submitted and acknowledged at least ten working days before the Full Council meeting at which it will be debated.
- 6.3 The petition organiser will be invited to speak for up to five minutes. Up to two other public speakers will be invited to speak for up to three minutes each.
- 6.4 The relevant Cabinet Member will then respond to the petition.

- 6.5 The Chairman of the Council will then move a motion relating to the petition for Full Council to debate.
- 6.6 The period for debate on any petition or grouped series of petitions will normally be 30 minutes, not including the contribution of the Cabinet Member in response or Group Leaders.
- 6.7 Members will be limited to contributions of three minutes each during a Full Council debate on a petition.

7. Area Board Debates

- 7.1 If relevant to the remit and powers of an Area Board a petition may be presented or debated at that Area Board.
- 7.2 Any petition with more than ten signatures may be considered for debate at an Area Board. This would be granted at the discretion of the Chairman of the Area Board if submitted and acknowledged at least ten working days before the meeting. Any valid petition with more than 50 signatures submitted and acknowledged at least ten working days before a meeting will be granted a debate if requested by a petition organiser.
- 7.3 The arrangements for a debate will be at the discretion of the Chairman of the Area Board, subject to consultation with the Monitoring Officer or their representatives and considering the remit and powers of the Area Board.

8. Complaints

- 8.1 If a petition organiser considers that their petition has not been dealt with properly, they may submit a complaint to the council's Complaints Service.
- 8.2 Any complaint should be made within twenty working days from the Council response to the petition organiser.
- 8.3 Any complaint must set out in what way it is considered that the petition has not been dealt with properly. Any review undertaken would consider whether the steps taken by the Council in response to the petition were adequate, not whether the decision on how to respond to the petition was correct.