

Wiltshire Council Petitions Scheme

Petitions

The council recognises that petitions are one way in which people can let us know their concerns. All petitions sent or presented to the council will receive an acknowledgement from the council **within 10 working days of receipt**. Anyone who signs a petition must meet the following **eligibility requirements**:

For a Petition to be presented to **Full Council**, signatories must be **aged 13 or above and live, work or study in Wiltshire**, or have a **direct connection to the service which is the subject of the petition**. For a petition to be noted at Full Council it requires a **minimum of 25 signatures**.

For a Petition to be presented to an **Area Board**, signatories must be **aged 13 or above and live, work or study within the relevant community area**. For a petition to be noted at a meeting of an Area Board, it requires a **minimum of 10 signatures**.

Any acknowledgement will set out what the council plan to do with the petition. The council will treat something as a petition if it is identified as such, or if it seems that it is intended to be a petition.

Paper petitions can be sent to

Democratic Services,
Wiltshire Council,
County Hall,
Bythesea Road,
Trowbridge,
BA14 8JN

Wiltshire Council welcomes petitions submitted electronically. To aid this process we have developed an e-Petitions facility which is available at <http://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/mgEPetitionListDisplay.aspx> or by following a link from the [Petitions Homepage](#). This facility allows e-Petitions to be created, signed and submitted online by registering with the council, using a valid email address. Electronic petitions hosted via other websites can be sent to committee@wiltshire.gov.uk for consideration by Democratic Services.

If your petition has been signed by a number equivalent to at least 1% of the total population of Wiltshire it will also be scheduled for a council debate, approximately 4700 people (more information is contained in the section below on **How will the council respond to petitions?**). If this is the case the council will let you know the date of the meeting of the council when it will be heard. These meetings take place at least four times a year, dates and times can be found [here](#). If you would like to present your petition to the council, or would like your councillor or someone else to present it on your behalf, please contact Democratic Services on 01225 718255/718220 or committee@wiltshire.gov.uk, at least 10 working days before the meeting and an officer will talk you through the process.

Alternatively if your petition does not have sufficient signatures to trigger a debate at full council you may wish to discuss what other options are available or referring the petition to a select committee. Please contact Democratic Services and they will talk you through your options.

Or if your issue is a local one and falls within the remit and powers of the area boards you may wish to present your petition at an [Area Board](#). See [Part 3 - Section 4.17](#) of the Wiltshire Council Constitution, for more information on the remit and powers of area boards. **The council has set a nominal threshold of 1% of the total population of the area covered by the area board to trigger a formal debate at a**

board. However any petition received for an area board will be discussed with the appropriate chairman and the appropriate action taken. A map showing [Area Boards Petition Thresholds](#) is available at Part 4B of the Constitution.

So no matter what size your petition is you will be kept informed of how the council proposes to deal with it and the action to be taken. The council remains convinced of the need for local discretion and flexibility in the way petitions are managed. Petitions that trigger the thresholds will of course be referred to council or to an area board.

There will however be local discretion and flexibility in dealing with any other petitions. Discussions will take place with the relevant cabinet member or the appropriate area board chairman to determine the most appropriate way of dealing with the petition. The options may include referring the matter to the cabinet or the appropriate area board, or any of those options listed in the section below on **How will the council respond to petitions?**

What are the Guidelines for Submitting a Petition?

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; and
- the name and address and signature of any person supporting the petition.

Petitions should be accompanied by contact details, including an address, for the petition organiser. This is the person the council will contact to explain how they 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, the council will contact the first named signatory to the petition to agree who should act as the petition organiser.

For further information see the [What information should my Petition contain?](#) and [What is not suitable for a Petition?](#) Information pages on the Wiltshire Council website.

Petitions which are considered to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate will not be accepted. In the period immediately before an election or referendum the council may need to deal with your petition differently – if this is the case the council 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, they will write to you to explain the reasons.

What will the Council do when it receives my Petition?

An acknowledgement will be sent to the petition organiser within 10 working days of receiving the petition. It will let them know what the council plan to do with the petition and when they can expect to hear from them again. It will also be published on our website.

If the council can do what your petition asks for, the acknowledgement may confirm that the council has taken the action requested and the petition will be closed. If the petition has enough signatures to trigger a debate, then it will be referred to a meeting of the council or an area board and the acknowledgment will confirm this and tell you when and where the meeting will take place. If the petition is dealt with in a different way or if the petition needs more investigation, the council will tell you the steps they plan to take.

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 on a matter where there is already an existing right of appeal, such as [council tax banding](#) and [non-domestic rates](#), other procedures apply. Further information on all these procedures and how you can express your views is available through the links above and the

[Wiltshire council website](#).

To ensure that people know what the council are doing in response to the petitions received, the details of all the petitions submitted will be published on the council's website, except in cases where this would be inappropriate. Whenever possible the council will also publish all correspondence relating to the petition (all personal details will be removed).

When you sign an e-petition you can elect to receive this information by email. The council will not send you anything which is not relevant to the e-petition you have signed, unless you choose to receive other emails from us. You can change what information you receive, and keep in touch with the progress of a petition at any time by contacting Democratic Services on 01225 [718255/718220], or committee@wiltshire.gov.uk.

How will the Council respond to Petitions?

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 one of the council's select committees*
- calling a referendum
- writing to the petition organiser setting out the council's views about the request in the petition (*The council's [Select Committees](#) perform the overview and scrutiny function within the council where councillors are responsible for scrutinising the work of the council – in other words, the select committee has the power to hold the council's decision makers to account.)

In addition to these steps, the council will consider all the specific actions it can potentially take on the issues highlighted in a petition.

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. See the [Wiltshire Family of Partnerships](#) page for more details on our partnership working arrangements.

If the council are not able to do this for any reason (for example if what the petition calls for conflicts with council policy), then they will set out the reasons for this by writing to you. If the petition is of a sufficient size to trigger a debate at a full Council meeting then a representative of the partner organisation will be invited to attend the meeting to assist with the debate.

You can find more information on the services for which the council is responsible through the [Wiltshire Council](#) website. If your petition is about something that a different council is responsible for the council 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 the council will always notify you of the

action they have taken.

Full Council Debates

If the petition is of a sufficient size to trigger a debate at the full council 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. In addition to your petition the council may also consider the views of the cabinet or cabinet member. If you would like you may also have the opportunity to answer questions or clarify issues for the councillors.

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 cabinet are 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. Alternatively and if timing permits the petition may be referred to the cabinet for its views so that at the council meeting the views can be considered alongside the petition and a final decision made.

e-Petitions

Wiltshire Council welcomes petitions submitted electronically. To aid this process we have developed an e-Petitions facility which is available at <http://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/mgEPetitionListDisplay.aspx> or by following a link from the [Petitions Homepage](#). This facility allows e-Petitions to be created, signed and submitted online by registering with the council, using a valid email address. Acceptance of electronic petitions hosted via other websites is subject to the website being approved by Democratic Services.

e-Petitions are subject to the same guidelines as paper petitions.

The petition organiser will need to provide the council with their name, postal address and email address. You will also need to decide how long you would like your petition to be open for signatures. Most petitions run for six months, but you can choose a shorter or longer timeframe, up to a maximum of 12 months.

When you create an e-petition, it may take five working days before it is published online. This is because the council has to check that the content of your petition is suitable before it is made available for signature. If the council feels they cannot publish your petition for some reason, they will contact you within this time to explain. You will be able to change and resubmit your petition if you wish. If you do not do this within 10 working days, a summary of the petition and the reason why it has not been accepted will be published under the 'rejected petitions' section of the website.

When an e-petition has closed for signature, it will automatically be submitted to Democratic Services. In the same way as a paper petition, you will receive an acknowledgement within 10 working days. If you would like to present your e-petition to a meeting of the council, please contact Democratic Services on 01225 718255/718220 or committee@wiltshire.gov.uk within 10 working days of receipt of the acknowledgement.

A petition acknowledgement and response will be emailed to everyone who has signed the e-petition and elected to receive this information. The acknowledgment and response will also be published on this

website.

Petitions submitted electronically but not through the e-petition facility will be dealt with in accordance with the provisions for paper petitions.

How do I 'sign' an e-Petition

You will see all the e-petitions currently available for signature at the e-Petitions page. When you sign an e-petition you will be asked to provide your name, your postcode and a valid email address. When you have submitted this information you will be sent an email to the email address you have provided. This email will include a link which you must click on in order to confirm the email address is valid. Once this step is complete your 'signature' will be added to the petition. People visiting the e-petition will be able to see your name in the list of those who have signed it but your contact details will not be visible.

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

If you feel that we have not dealt with your petition properly, the petition organiser has the right to request that one of the council's [Select Committees](#) review 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.

It is important to emphasise here that the review process is concerned with whether the steps taken by the council in response to the petition were adequate – it is not about whether the decision in responding to the petition was correct.

The committee will endeavour to consider your 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 the council has not dealt with your petition adequately, it may use any of its powers to deal with the matter. These powers include instigating an investigation, making recommendations to the council's cabinet and arranging for the matter to be considered at a meeting of the full council.

If the select committee feels that it may have a conflict of interest by virtue of any previous involvement in the petition in question, the council can arrange for a differently constituted select committee to deal with your request.

Once the appeal 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 our website.