

# Schedule 1 – Part 4A Wiltshire Council Petitions Scheme

## 1. Petitions

- 1.1 The council recognises that petitions are one way in which the people can let it know their concerns. All petitions sent or presented to the council will receive an acknowledgement from the council **within 10 working days of receipt.**
- 1.2 Anyone who signs a petition must meet the following eligibility requirements:
  - 1.2.1 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**.
  - 1.2.2 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**.
- 1.3 Any acknowledgement 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.
- 1.4 Paper petitions can be sent to: **Democratic Services, Wiltshire Council, County Hall, Bythesea Road, Trowbridge, BA14 8JN.**
- 1.5 Wiltshire Council welcomes petitions submitted electronically. To aid this process an e-Petitions facility is available at <https://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/mgEPetitionListDisplay.aspx> or by following a link from the [Petitions Homepage](#).
- 1.6 This facility allows e-Petitions to be created, signed and submitted only by registering with the council, using a valid email address. Electronic petitions hosted via other websites can be sent to [committee@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:committee@wiltshire.gov.uk) for consideration by Democratic Services.
- 1.7 **If your petition has been signed by a number equivalent to at least 1% (approximately 4,700 people) of the total population of Wiltshire it will also be scheduled for a Council debate** (more information is contained in the section below on [How will the council respond to petitions?](#))
- 1.8 If this is the case the council will let you know the date of the meeting when it will be heard. These meetings take place at least four times a year. Dates and times can be found [here](#).

- 1.9 If you would like to present your petition to the council, or would like your local Member or someone else to present it on your behalf, please contact Democratic Services on 01225 718214/01722 434560, or [committee@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:committee@wiltshire.gov.uk), at least ten working days before the meeting and an officer will talk you through the process.
- 1.10 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 refer the petition to a select committee. Please contact Democratic Services and they will talk you through your options.
- 1.11 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 of Wiltshire Council's 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 an Area Board.** However, any petition received for an Area Board will be discussed with the appropriate Chairman and the appropriate action taken.
- 1.12 A map showing Area Board Petition Thresholds is available at Part 4 Schedule 2 of the Constitution
- 1.13 So, no matter the nature or number of signatories to your petition, 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 be referred to Full Council or to an Area Board as appropriate.
- 1.14 There will, however, be local discretion and flexibility in dealing with any other petitions. Discussions will take place with the relevant Cabinet member or 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?

## 2. What are the Guidelines for Submitting a Petition?

- 2.1 Petitions submitted to the council must include:
- 2.1.1 a clear and concise statement covering the subject of the Petition. It should state what action the petitions wish to take; and
- 2.1.2 the name, address and signature of any person supporting the petition.
- 2.2 Petitions should be accompanied by contact details, including an address of the Petition organiser. This is the person the council will contact to explain how they will respond to the petition.
- 2.3 The contact details of the petition organiser will not be placed on the council's 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.

- 2.4 For further information see the [What information should my Petition contain?](#) and [What is not suitable for a Petition?](#) information pages on Wiltshire Council's website.
- 2.5 Petitions which are considered to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate will not be accepted. In the period immediately before and after 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.

### 3. What will the Council do when it receives my Petition?

- 3.1 An acknowledgement will be sent to the petition organiser within ten 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 the council's website.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 If the petition has enough signatures to trigger a debate, then it will be referred to a meeting of Full Council or an Area Board and the acknowledgement will confirm this and tell you when and where the meeting will take place.
- 3.4 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.
- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 Further information on all these procedures and how you can express your views is available through the links above and [Wiltshire Council's Website](#).
- 3.7 To ensure that people know what the council is doing in response to petitions received, the details of all 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).
- 3.8 When you sign an e-petition you can elect to receive this information by email. The council will not send you anything that 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 718214/ 01722 434560, or [committee@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:committee@wiltshire.gov.uk).

#### **4. How will the Council respond to Petitions?**

- 4.1 The council's response to a petition will depend on what a petition asks for and how many people have signed it, but many include one or more of the following:
- 4.1.1 taking the action requested in the petition;
  - 4.1.2 considering the petition at a Full Council meeting;
  - 4.1.3 holding an inquiry into the matter;
  - 4.1.4 undertaking research into the matter;
  - 4.1.5 holding a public meeting;
  - 4.1.6 holding a consultation;
  - 4.1.7 holding a meeting with the petitioners;
  - 4.1.8 referring the petition for consideration by one of the council's select committees\*
  - 4.1.9 calling a referendum
  - 4.1.10 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 with the council where Members are responsible for scrutinising the work of the council – in other words, the select committee has the power to hold council's decision makers to account.)

- 4.2 In addition to these steps, the council will consider all the specific actions it can potentially take on the issues highlighted in the petition.
- 4.3 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.
- 4.4 If the council is 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 in writing. 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.
- 4.5 You can find more information on the services for which the council is responsible for on the Council's Website. If your petition is about something that a different council is responsible for the council will consider what the best method for responding is. This might consist of simply forwarding the petition on to the relevant council, but could involve other steps. In any event the council will always notify you of the action they have taken.

#### **5. Full Council Debates**

- 5.1 If the petition is of sufficient size to trigger a debate at Full Council the issue raised in the petition will be discussed at a meeting which all Members can attend. The

council will endeavour to consider the petition at its next schedule meeting, although on some occasions this may not be possible and consideration will then take place at the following meeting.

- 5.2 The petition organiser will be given five minutes to present the petition at the meeting and the petition will then be discussed by the Members for a maximum of 15 minutes. In addition to your petition the council may also consider the view of Cabinet or Cabinet Member. If you would like you also have the opportunity to answer questions or clarify issues for the Members.
- 5.3 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 reason put forward in the debate or to commission further investigations into the matter, for example by a relevant committee.
- 5.4 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.
- 5.5 The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of the decision. This confirmation will also be published on the council's website.
- 5.6 Alternatively, and if timing permits, the petition may be referred to the Cabinet for its views so that at the Full Council meeting those views can be considered alongside the petition and a final decision made.

## **6. E-Petitions**

- 6.1 Wiltshire Council welcomes petitions submitted electronically. To aid this process the council has developed an e-Petitions facility which is available at <https://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/mqEPetitionListDisplay.aspx> or by following a link from the Petitions Homepage.
- 6.2 This facility allows e-Petitions to be created, signed and submitted only by registering with the council, using a valid email address.
- 6.3 Electronic petitions hosted via other websites can be sent to [committee@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:committee@wiltshire.gov.uk) for consideration by Democratic Services.
- 6.4 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 twelve months.
- 6.5 When you create an e-petition, it may take up to five working days before it is published online. This is because the council must check that the content of your petition is suitable before it is made available for signature.

- 6.6 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 ten 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.
- 6.7 When an e-petition has closed for signature, it will automatically be submitted to Democratic Services. In the same way as a paper submission, you will receive an acknowledgement within ten working days.
- 6.8 If you would like to represent your e-petition to a meeting of Full Council, please contact Democratic Services on 01225 718214/ 01722 434560, or [committee@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:committee@wiltshire.gov.uk) within ten working days of receipt of the acknowledgement.
- 6.9 A petition acknowledgment and responses 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.
- 6.10 Petitions submitted electronically but not through the e-petition facility will be dealt with in accordance with the provisions for paper petitions.

## **7. How do I 'sign' an E-Petitions**

- 7.1 You will see all the e-petitions currently available for signature at the e-Petitions page.
- 7.2 When you sign an e-petition you will be asked to provide your name, postcode and a valid email address. When you have submitted this information, you will be sent an email to the address provided.
- 7.3 This email will include a link which you must click to confirm the email address is valid.
- 7.4 Once this step has been completed your 'signature' will be added to the petition.
- 7.5 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.

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

- 8.1 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 the council has taken in response to your petition.
- 8.2 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.

- 8.3 It is important to emphasise here that the review process is concerned with whether the steps taken by the council in its response to the petition were adequate – that is, did the council follow the correct procedure to reach its decision, not it is not the response wanted.
- 8.4 The committee will endeavour to consider you request at its next meeting, although on some occasions this may not be possible and consideration will take place at the following meeting.
- 8.5 Should the committee determine that the council has not dealt with you petition adequately, it may use any of its powers to deal with the matter. These powers include an investigation, making recommendations to Cabinet and arranging for the matter to be considered at a Full Council meeting.
- 8.6 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 different committee to deal with your request.
- 8.7 Once the appeal has been considered the petition organiser will be informed of the results within five working days. The results will also be published on the council's website.

EXISTING PETITIONS SCHEME

# Schedule 2 – Part 4B Area Board Petition Thresholds

