



## PETITION SCHEME

### Petitions

The Council welcomes petitions and recognises that petitions are one way in which people can let us know their concerns. All petitions sent or presented to the Council, or initiated on its e-petition facility, will receive an acknowledgement from the Council within 15 working days of receipt. This acknowledgement will set out what we plan to do with the petition. We will treat something as a petition if it is identified as being a petition, or if it seems to us that it is intended to be a petition, and it is signed by **50** or more people who live, work or study in the Borough.

Paper petitions can be sent to:-

Head of Law and Administration  
Civic Centre  
Riverside  
Stafford  
ST16 3AQ

Petitions can also be presented at a meeting of the Council or the Cabinet, where it will be received. The petition must be presented by a member of the Council and must be signed by at least 50 local residents. On presentation of the petition the member may read out or summarise the prayer of the petition, indicate the number and description of signatories but may not otherwise speak. Such petitions will then be reported to Cabinet for consideration.

## **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.
- the name and address and signature of any person supporting the petition, and if they do not live in the Borough the address of their place of work or study.

Petitions should be accompanied by contact details, including a full postal 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 Council's website.

Petitions which are considered to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate will not be accepted. If a petition does not follow the guidelines set out above, the Council will not do anything further with it. In either case, we will write to the petition organiser to explain the reasons. 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 may give a revised timescale which will apply.

## **What will the Council do when it receives a petition?**

An acknowledgement will be sent to the petition organiser within 15 working days of receiving the petition. It will let them know what we plan to do with the petition and when they can expect to hear from us again. It will also be published on our website.

If we can and are willing to do what the petition asks for, the acknowledgement may confirm that we have taken the action requested and the petition will be closed.

If the petition relates 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 any of these matters is available from Democratic Services on 01785 619212.

If a petition applies to a consultation process which is being carried out by the Council, the petition will be forwarded to the relevant officer to be considered as part of the consultation process and not as part of the petition scheme.

We will only accept petitions which relate to the functions of the Council, or on matters which the Council can offer a remedy. We will not take action on any petition which we consider to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate (including petitions relating to national government policy, matters of a party political nature or matters relating to the powers, functions, or actions of other public bodies over which the Council has no control).and will explain the reasons for this in our acknowledgment.

We will not take action on any petition which is the same or similar to any petition considered by the Council within the previous 12 months.

To ensure that people know what we are doing in response to the petitions we receive, details of all the petitions submitted to us and the action taken will be published on our website, except in cases where this would be inappropriate.

### **How will the Council respond to petitions?**

Our response to a petition will depend on what a petition asks, but may include one or more of the following:-

- taking the action requested in the petition
- 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 at a Council or Cabinet meeting, or by one of the Council's Scrutiny Committees\*
- calling a referendum
- writing to the petition organiser setting out our views about the request in the petition

\*Scrutiny Committees are Committees of Councillors who are responsible for scrutinising the work of the Council – they hold the Council's decision makers to account.

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

### **E-petitions**

The Council welcomes e-petitions which are created and submitted through our website. E-petitions must follow the same guidelines as paper petitions. The petition organiser will need to provide us with their name, postal address and email address. You will need to decide how long you would like your petition to be open for signatures. Most petitions run for six weeks, but you can choose a shorter or longer timeframe, up to six months.

E-petitions which have not been created through our website cannot be verified and therefore will not be accepted as a valid petition. They will however be forwarded to the relevant service for information.

When you create an e-petition, it may take 15 working days before it is published online. This is because we have to check that the content of your petition is suitable before it is made available for signature.

If we feel we cannot publish your petition for some reason, we will contact you within this time to explain. You may be able to change and resubmit your petition if you wish. When an e-petition has closed for signature, it will be forwarded to relevant officers. In the same way as a paper petition, you will receive an acknowledgment within 15 working days.

If your e-petition relates to a consultation process which is being carried out by the Council, we will host your e-petition on the Council's website once it has been confirmed as acceptable. The e-petition will collect signatures and will run until the end of the consultation period, following which it will then be forwarded to the relevant officer to be considered as part of the consultation process and not as part of the petition scheme.

### **What can I do if I feel 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 a Scrutiny Committee 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.

Reviews will be carried out by the Resources and Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee, unless the Council's Chief Executive considers that another Scrutiny Committee would be more appropriate.

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 we have 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 Executive and arranging for the matter to be considered at a meeting of the full Council.

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.