

Part 4I

Petition Scheme

INTRODUCTION

Rugby Borough 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 will receive an acknowledgement within 14 days of receipt. This acknowledgement will set out what we plan to do with the petition. Paper petitions can be sent to the Communication, Consultation and Information Manager, Town Hall, Evreux Way, Rugby, CV21 2RR.

Petitions can also be created, signed and submitted on the council website.

Petitions can also be presented to a meeting of the Council. Dates and times can be found on our website. If you would like to present your petition to the council or would like your councillor to present it on your behalf, please contact the Legal, Democratic and Electoral Services Manager on (01788) 533521 at least 10 working days before the meeting and they will talk you through the process.

WHAT ARE THE GUIDELINES FOR SUBMITTING A PETITION?

Petitions submitted to Rugby Borough Council must include:

- A clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition. It should state what action the petitioners would like the council to take.
- The name, home 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 we will contact to explain how we will respond to the petition. The contact details of the petition organiser will not be published. If the petition does not identify a petition organiser, we will contact signatories to the petition to agree who should act as the petition organiser.

Anyone who lives, works or studies in Rugby can sign or organise a petition.

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, we may decide not to do anything further with it. In that case we will write to you to explain the reasons.

WHAT WILL THE COUNCIL DO WHEN IT RECEIVES MY PETITION?

We will send an acknowledgement to the petition organiser within 14 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 the council can do what your petition asks for, the acknowledgement may confirm that we have taken the action requested and the petition will be closed. If the petition has enough signatures to trigger a Council debate, or a senior officer giving evidence, then the acknowledgement will confirm this and tell you when and where

the meeting will take place. If the petition needs more investigation, we will tell you the steps we 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. If you require information on any of these matters you should in the first instance contact the Legal, Democratic and Electoral Services Manager, Town Hall, Evreux Way, Rugby, CV21 2RR or phone (01788) 533521.

We will not take any action on any petition which we consider to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate and will explain the reasons for this in our acknowledgement of the petition.

To ensure that people know what we are doing in response to the petitions we receive, the details of all the petitions submitted to us will be published on our website except in cases where this would be inappropriate. Whenever possible we will also publish all correspondence relating to the petition (with personal details removed). When you sign an e-petition you can elect to receive this information by email. We will not send you anything which is not relevant to the e-petition you have signed unless you request it.

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
- Considering the petition at a Council meeting
- Holding an enquiry 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 a relevant council committee
- Writing to the petition organiser setting out our views about the request in question

In addition to these steps we will consider other specific actions we may be able to take on the issues highlighted in a petition. If your petition is about something over which Rugby Borough Council has no direct control (for example the railway or hospital) we will aim to make representations on behalf of the community to the relevant body.

We work with a large number of local partners in a Local Strategic Partnership, and where appropriate will work with these partners to respond to your petition. If we are not able to do this for any reason (for example if what the petition calls for conflicts with council policy), then we will set out the reasons for this to you. You can find more information on the services for which Rugby Borough Council is responsible in the council A to Z on our website.

If your petition is about something that a different council is responsible for, we will give consideration to what the best method is for responding to it. It might consist of simply forwarding the petition to the other council, but could involve other steps. In any event we will always notify you of the action we have taken.

FULL COUNCIL DEBATES

If a petition contains more than 2,000 valid signatures it will be debated by the full Council unless it is a petition asking for a senior council officer to give evidence at a public meeting. This means that the issue raised in the petition will be discussed at a meeting which all councillors can attend. 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 Council will decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting. If it is within their remit, 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. If the matter relates to a decision which it is for the Cabinet to make, then the Council may ask the Cabinet to consider the matter or commission further investigation into the matter, for example by the relevant overview and scrutiny committee. The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of this decision. This confirmation will also be published on the Council's website.

OFFICER EVIDENCE

Your petition may ask for a senior council officer to give evidence at a public meeting about something for which the officer is responsible as part of their job. For example your petition may ask a senior council officer to explain progress on an issue or to explain the advice given to elected members to enable them to make a particular decision.

If your petition contains at least 500 valid signatures the relevant senior officer will give evidence at a public meeting of an overview and scrutiny committee. A list of the senior staff that can be called to give evidence can be found on our website. You should be aware that the committee may decide that it would be more appropriate for another officer on that list to give evidence instead of any officer named in the petition – for instance if the named officer has changed jobs or is not responsible for the action requested in the petition. Committee members will ask the questions at this meeting but you will be able to suggest questions to the committee chairman by contacting the Legal, Democratic and Electoral Services Manager up to five working days before the meeting.

PETITIONS WITH FEWER THAN 500 SIGNATURES

Petitions falling within this category will be considered in the first instance by the most appropriate head of service responsible for the subject of the petition.

The action taken will be notified to the relevant portfolio holder and any relevant ward councillors for information as well as the petition organiser and details will appear on the council's website.

E-PETITIONS

Rugby Borough Council welcomes e-petitions which are created and submitted through the council's website. E-petitions must follow the same guidelines as paper petitions. The petition organiser will need to provide us with their name, postal address, post code and email address. You will also need to decide how long you would like your petition to be open for signatures, up to a maximum of three months. Once an e-petition has closed we will deal with it as though it was a paper petition.

When you create an e-petition, it may take up to ten 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. We will check that your petition is relevant and appropriate, and is not too similar to another recent petition. However we will make every effort to ensure that your petition is published as soon as possible. If we feel we cannot publish your petition for some reason, we will contact you within this time to explain. You will be able to change and re-submit your petition if you wish. If you do not do this within 14 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 the Communication, Consultation and Information Manager. In the same way as a paper petition you will receive an acknowledgement within 14 days. If you would like to present your e-petition to a meeting of the Council please contact the Legal, Democratic and Electoral Services Manager (details above) within five days of the petition closing. A petition acknowledgement and response will be emailed to everyone who has signed the e-petition and elected to receive this information. The acknowledgement and response will also be published on the council website.

HOW DO I SIGN AN E-PETITION?

You can see all the e-petitions currently available for signature on our website. When you sign an e-petition you will be asked to provide your name, address, postcode and a valid email address. Once your "signature" has been validated it will be added to the petition. People visiting the e-petition will not be able to see that you have "signed" it.

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 an overview and scrutiny committee that did not deal with the petition review the steps that the council has taken in response to your petition. The petition organiser should submit their request to the Communication, Consultation and Information Manager within 28 days of being notified of how we dealt with their petition. The committee will consider the request at the first available meeting after receiving it. Should the committee determine that 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 recommendation to the

Cabinet and/or arranging for the matter to be considered at a meeting of the full Council.

Once the review has been concluded, the petition organiser will be informed of the results within seven days. The results of the review will also be published on our website.

RESUBMITTING A PETITION

Once we have accepted and dealt with a petition, we will not normally accept another petition on the same or a similar subject within 12 months. The Communication, Consultation and Information Manager can advise on recent petitions and help you to create a petition that we can accept.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information about Rugby Borough Council's petition scheme please contact the Communication, Consultation and Information Manager, Town Hall, Evreux Way, Rugby, CV21 2RR or call (01788) 533562.