

## PETITIONS AT GLOUCESTER

The Council welcomes petitions and recognises that petitions are one way in which people can convey their concerns. All petitions sent or presented to the Council will receive an acknowledgement within 10 days of receipt. This acknowledgement will set out the process for dealing with the petition.

### **Who Can Submit a Petition?**

Petitions can be initiated by people of any age, so long as they:

- Live in Gloucester **or**
- Work in Gloucester **or**
- Study in Gloucester (including under 18's)

If the content of the petition refers to a citywide matter, 50 signatories are required. If the matter relates to one Ward only, then 20 signatories are required.

Paper petitions should be sent to :

Democratic and Electoral Services Team, Gloucester City Council, PO Box 3252, Gloucester GL1 9FW.

e-petitions should be submitted to [democratic.services@gloucester.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@gloucester.gov.uk)

Petitions can also be presented to a meeting of the Council either by a Member of the Public or by a Councillor on their behalf. The Democratic and Electoral Services Team should be contacted **at least 5 days before the meeting** on 01452 396167 or by using the above email address

Details of the arrangements for Council Meetings can be found on the City Council's website.

### **What Can A Petition Be About?**

Petitions can be relative to matters where the City Council controls the relevant service and information relating to the services of the City Council is available on the website <http://www.gloucester.gov.uk/A-ZofServices.aspx?>

If the petition is about something over which the Council has no direct control, for example transport or health related matters, representations can be made 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 petitions. If this is not possible then the reasons will be explained to the lead petitioner.

If the subject of the petition relates to another Council then the petition will be

forwarded to that Council and the lead petitioner advised of this action.

There are some reasons why a petition would not be considered under this scheme. These are:

- 1 A similar petition has been received in the last 6 months
- 2 Contains false statements
- 3 Discloses information which is confidential or exempt (for clarity on this, please contact Democratic Services Team)
- 4 Makes criminal accusations
- 5 Contains advertising statements
- 6 Refers to an issue which is subject of a formal Council complaint, a complaint being handled by the Local Ombudsman or is the subject of legal proceedings
- 7 Relates to individual planning or licensing applications, which are subject to statutory processes (Democratic Services staff will provide advice on this issue if requested). However, whilst individual cases, applications and appeals cannot be the subject of a petition, overall policy in these areas can.

**Note** – Petitions on individual planning or licensing applications can still be handed in to the appropriate Committee at the time of consideration of the application. Please contact Democratic and Electoral Services team for further advice.

In addition, in the period immediately prior to an election certain topics may be deemed politically sensitive and petitions relating to such items may be dealt with differently.

### **Content of Petition**

All petitions 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.

**Paper petitions** must include the name, address and signature of any person supporting the petition.

**e-petitions** must include the name, postcode and a valid email address of each person supporting the petition. It must also state how long it will be open for signatures up to a maximum period of 12 months

**Each type of Petition should be accompanied by contact details, including an address, for the petition organiser. This is the person who will be contacted and given details of the response process.**

### **What Happens After The Petition Is Submitted?**

An acknowledgement will be sent to the petition organiser within 10 working days of receipt of the petition. This will also contain information regarding what action is being taken and when the organiser is likely to be contacted again. The details of the petition will also be published on the Council's website. No action will be taken on petitions deemed to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate and reasons for this would

be set out in the acknowledgement.

e-petitions created and submitted through the Council's website may take 5 working days before being published online to enable a check to be carried out for the suitability of the content prior to being made available for signature. If it is felt that there is a reason why the e-petition cannot be published, the creator will be contacted to allow for the details to be changed and the e-petition resubmitted. If this is not done within 10 working days, a summary of the petition and the reason(s) why it has not been accepted will be published on the "Rejected Petitions" section of the website. The creator of an e-petition will also be advised if the petition cannot be carried forward owing to insufficient signatories.

All petitions submitted will be drawn to the attention of the appropriate Ward Councillor(s) and to the relevant Cabinet Member.

### ***Who Can Sign a Petition?***

All signatories to the petition should live, work or study in Gloucester, and can be of any age and must provide their full name and address.

e-petitions require a valid email address. Any duplications or bogus signatories will be deleted from the list, and all details of valid respondents will be passed to the lead petitioner.

These details are required to confirm eligibility as a signatory but they will not be published on the website. Officers from the Council may contact signatories regarding the petition, but signatories can request that this does not happen.

### ***How Will The Council Respond To Petitions?***

The Council's response to a petition will depend on what it is requesting and the number of signatories but action taken 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
- Undertaking consultation
- Holding a meeting with petitioners
- Referring the petition to Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration
- Calling a referendum
- Writing to the petition organiser setting out views of the Council on the request contained in the petition.

### ***Council Debate***

If a petition's signatures number more than 1000, it would automatically trigger a debate to be held at full Council. A decision on the appropriate response should be

taken at that meeting (be that to approve the petition's request, decline it or commission further research).

### ***Request to Call an Officer to Account***

A senior officer from the City Council, nominated from the attached schedule, must to appear to give evidence before the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the subject of the petition if such a request is included in the petition and there are more than 500 signatories.

### ***Appeals Process***

If the lead petitioner is dissatisfied with the response to a petition, then they can ask for a review of the response. This must be submitted within 28 days. The review will be undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, who will rule on the complaint. Lead petitioners are asked to note that the rejection of their petition is not adequate grounds for appeal, it needs to be provable that the petition was handled improperly. The outcome of the review will be published on the Council's website. If the appeal relates to a petition which the Overview & Scrutiny Committee had considered then the review should be completed by a Task & Finish group of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee which was composed of non-executive Members not on the Committee.

For further assistance on this, contact Democratic Services.

by email ([democratic.services@gloucester.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@gloucester.gov.uk)) **or**

by letter (Democratic and Electoral Services, Gloucester City Council, PO Box 3252, Gloucester, GL1 9FW) **or**

by telephone (01452 396127)

## PETITIONS SCHEME

Relevant Officers who may be called to account at Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Managing Director  
Director of Policy and Resources  
Director of Communities