

SECTION D6**PETITIONS SCHEME**

Petitions at Lincolnshire County Council

Lincolnshire County Council welcomes petitions and recognises that petitions are one way in which people can let us know their concerns. Anyone who lives, works or studies in Lincolnshire can organise or sign a petition which will be dealt with in accordance with this scheme. All petitions to Lincolnshire County Council are taken seriously, and will receive an appropriate response.

This Petition Scheme sets out how petitions should be presented to the Council and how the Council will deal with them.

Other ways to make your views known

Before considering whether or not to raise a petition to the Council, the petition organiser should consider whether a petition is the best form of engagement with the Council on a particular issue.

There are a number of other ways to resolve an issue or to make your views known including:

- Contacting your Local County Councillor who may be able to help with the issue or explain how to make representations on a particular subject to the right person at the County Council (more details can be found on the website <http://lincolnshire.moderngov.co.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?bcr=1>)
- Contacting the Customer Service Centre who may be able to offer advice on resolving the issue (Customer Service Centre can be contacted via:
 - Telephone: 01522 552222;
 - Email: customer_services@lincolnshire.gov.uk;
 - Post: County Offices, Newland, Lincoln, LN1 1YL).
- Logging the issue through the website (<https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/>)

If you wish to make a complaint or tell us what you think about a Council service, then you should instead use the Compliments, Comments and Complaints process by completing the online feedback form at www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/feedbackform or by contacting our Customer Service Centre.

How to submit a petition

Petitions can be submitted in the following ways:

- On paper via post to:

**The Chief Executive
Lincolnshire County Council
County Offices
Newland
Lincoln
LN1 1YL**

Or in person to: County Offices, Newland, Lincoln.

- Electronically through the council's ePetitions Portal at:
<http://lincolnshire.moderngov.co.uk/mgepetitionlistdisplay.aspx>

Or by e-mail to: DemocraticServices@lincolnshire.gov.uk. Petitions submitted by email must be scanned in full as an exact replica of the original copy and will be treated as a paper copy.

Guidelines for submitting a petition

For the purposes of this scheme, petitions are formal requests that:

- Ask the Council to either do something, or stop doing something;
- Relate to matters over which the Council has control or which it is able to influence;
- Are signed by at least 2 people who live, work or study in Lincolnshire;
- Are submitted either as a paper copy or via the Council's e-petition facility.

Petitions submitted to the County Council must include:

- A clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition;
- A statement of what action the petitioners wish the County Council to take, which must be set out in full on each sheet where signatures are asked for;
- The name, address and signature of any person supporting the petition (signatures which do not include the name and address of the signatory will be deemed not valid);

- The contact details, including an address and/or e-mail address for the petition organiser.

Petitioners are encouraged to use the Lincolnshire County Council petition template form which is available on the website (<https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/local-democracy/finding-your-views/petitions/> website currently in development) or by contacting the Democratic Services Team on 01522 552107.

Exceptions to the petitions scheme

The following will not be accepted as petitions within the scope of the scheme:

- Submissions which are considered to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate;
- Submissions in response to a public consultation being run by the council (such petitions will be acknowledged as part of that process and will be considered along with other consultation responses);
- Submissions relating to matters which would usually be dealt with through the corporate complaints system;
- Submissions that are the same as, or very similar to, a petition considered by the County Council within the last 6 months;
- Issues raised by staff related to employer/employee matters;
- Petitions relating to matters being handled through external agencies such as the Ombudsman or referring to a matter that is subject of legal proceedings;
- Petitions that are handled through alternative means or where other procedures apply, such as those referring to:
 - planning or licensing application;
 - parking policies;
 - a decision for which there is an existing right of appeal, such as Council tax banding and non-domestic rates;
 - statutory petitions (for example requesting a referendum on having an elected mayor).

Further information on these procedures and how you can express your views is available by contacting Democratic Services on 01522 552107.

Paper and online petitions

Paper petitions should be submitted as a final and complete document (once a petition has been submitted no further signatures can be added).

Petitioners are encouraged to use the Lincolnshire County Council petition template form which is available on the website or by contacting the Democratic Services team on 01522 552107.

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, full postal address and email address. The petition organiser will need to decide how long the petition will be open for signatures. The standard timeframe for a petition to run is 6 months but this can either be reduced or extended to a maximum of 12 months.

It may take up to 5 working days before the petition is published online as the Council has to check that the content of your petition is suitable before it is made available for signature. If we feel we cannot publish the petition for some reason, we will contact the petition organiser within this time to explain the reasons why. The petition organiser will then have 10 working days in which to change and resubmit their petition. Otherwise a summary of the petition and the reasons why it was not accepted will be published on the website.

When an e-petition has closed for signature it will be determined what the most appropriate way for it to be dealt with is and the petition organiser will be notified of this decision within 10 working days.

It is possible for an online petition and paper petition to be run at the same time to enable them to be considered together. The petition organiser must send the paper petition to the Council at the same time as the closing date of the online petition so all signatures can be counted together. Please advise the Democratic Services Team if you are intending to run a paper petition and e-petition concurrently so appropriate provision can be made.

Electronic petitions created via alternative systems (e.g. change.org) will be accepted subject to the petition satisfying the validation criteria and being presented to us in an appropriate format.

Online petition systems outside of the Council's own ePetition system do not automatically notify us when a petition has been submitted and therefore the Council will treat these in the same way as paper petitions. In these cases, the petition organiser will need to print a copy of the petition statement and the corresponding

signatures (including full name, address details) and submit these to us either via post, in person or via e-mail. Hyperlinks will not be accepted.

How will the Council respond to petitions?

The Council will determine the validity of each petition and decide the most appropriate way for a petition to be dealt with in discussion with the petitioner.

When responding to a petition the Council will give consideration to the issue highlighted in a petition and the level of support. The Council's response will ultimately be guided by what is most appropriate for the issue.

Generally petitions will be dealt with in one of the following ways:

- Referred directly to an appropriate service area and the relevant Executive Councillor for a response;
- Referred to the most relevant Scrutiny Committee;
- Referred to a meeting of the County Council.

Each petition will be assessed on its own merits, but as a general principal, a petition relating to an issue which affects one electoral division will be sent directly to the relevant service area and Executive Councillor. If the petition relates to an issue affecting two or more electoral divisions it may be referred to the relevant scrutiny committee. In some circumstances, if the petition relates to a countywide issue and has sufficient support it may be referred to a meeting of the County Council.

An acknowledgement will be sent to the petition organiser within 10 working days of receiving the petition. It will let them know how the Council plan to deal with the petition and when they can expect to be contacted again.

If the Council can do what the petition asks for, the acknowledgement may confirm that the action requested has been taken and the petition will be closed.

Where a petition is about something over which the Council has no direct control (for example the local railway, hospital or something which is the responsibility of the district council) consideration will be given to what is the best method for responding to it. This may consist of simply forwarding the petition to the most appropriate body. The petition organiser will be notified of the action which has been taken.

In the period immediately before an election or referendum the Council will need to deal with petitions differently, the reasons for this will be explained to the petition organiser along with the revised timescales which will apply.

Petitions will be presented at relevant meetings in the order they were received.

Petitions Referred to a Service Area and Executive Councillor

Where a petition is referred to the relevant service area and Executive Councillor for a response, the service area in consultation with the Executive Councillor will decide how best to respond to the issues raised. The petition organiser will receive a response within 15 working days.

Petitions Referred to a meeting of the County Council

When a petition is referred to a meeting of the County Council it will be referred to the next meeting of the County Council (where that meeting is more than 10 working days from the date that the petition is received).

Council meetings take place approximately four times a year and the dates can be obtained by contacting the Democratic Services Team or by visiting the Council's website.

The petition organiser, or their spokesperson, will have a maximum of 5 minutes to speak to the meeting on the subject of the petition. The relevant Executive Councillor will then be allowed a maximum of 5 minutes to respond to the petition.

Following the meeting a petition organiser will receive a written confirmation of any further action within 15 working days.

Petitions Referred to a Scrutiny Committee

If a petition is to be considered by a Scrutiny Committee it will be referred to the next meeting of the most relevant Scrutiny Committee (where that meeting is more than 10 working days from the date the petition is received), depending on what the subject matter of the petition is. Alternatively, if the matter of the petition is already on the work programme of a Scrutiny Committee, the petition organiser will be invited to the meeting to submit representations about their petition under the agenda item it relates to.

The petition organiser, or their spokesperson, will have a maximum of 5 minutes to speak to the meeting on the subject of the petition. The relevant Executive Councillor or senior officer will then be able to respond to the petition. The petition will then be debated by the Scrutiny Committee. At the end of the debate, the Scrutiny Committee will decide how best to respond to the petition. Any deviation from this process will be at the discretion of the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee.

The petition organiser will be informed of the date of the meeting at which the petition will be considered. If the petition organiser is unable to attend and cannot

nominate a spokesperson, the petition may still be considered in their absence. Any deferrals would be at the discretion of the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee.

Following the meeting a petition organiser will receive a written confirmation of any further action within 15 working days.

A maximum of 2 petitions can be submitted to any one Scrutiny Committee at one time.

Multiple and Repeat Petitions

Where multiple petitions on the same issue or substantially similar issues are received the Council may deal with them differently. If the Council chooses to refer the petition to a scrutiny committee for consideration, only one petitioner will be invited to speak (ordinarily it is the petitioner from the first petition to be received, however, petitioners are permitted to choose which of them will address the committee and to confer on the content of the speech prior to the start of the meeting if they so choose). The response given by the Council to any additional petitions may be the same as given to the first.

Petitions will not normally be considered within 6 months of another petition on the same matter. Petitions which are the same or substantially the same as petitions which have been closed in the previous 6 months will be dealt with having regard to the outcome of the earlier petition. This may result in the Council deciding to not take any action on the later petition. It will be for the Council to determine whether a petition is the same or substantially the same as an earlier petition.

Petition Reviews

If the petition organiser feels unhappy with the way their petition was handled he/she can request that the Council review the steps taken in response to the petition. The petition organiser should contact Democratic Services and provide an explanation of the reasons why the way the petition has been dealt with is not considered to be adequate. The Council will consider the request and respond accordingly within 10 working days.

Contact us

For more information and advice or to discuss a potential petition, please contact Democratic Services:

Telephone: 01522 552107

Email: democraticservices@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Post: Democratic Services
Lincolnshire County Council
Newland
Lincoln
LN1 1YL

Further information, including templates and guidance documents are available at (<https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/local-democracy/finding-your-views/petitions/> website currently in development).