

Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council

Petition Scheme

1. The Council welcomes petitions and recognises that petitions are one way in which people can let us know their concerns. Any person who lives, works or studies in the local authority area (including people who are under 18 years of age) can organise and sign a petition. All petitions sent or presented to the Council will receive an acknowledgement from the Council within 10 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, with a minimum of 50 signatures.

Paper petitions should be sent to:

**Democratic Services
Doncaster Council
Floor 2
Civic Office
Waterdale
Doncaster
DN1 3BU**

Or they can be scanned and emailed to Democratic.Services@doncaster.gov.uk

If your petition has less than 50 signatures, you should send your petition to the Complaints Co-ordinator at the address shown below and it will be treated as a corporate complaint.

Please note that all petitions will be treated as public documents available for inspection by the press and public.

**Complaints Officer
Finance and Corporate Services
Customer Services and ICT
Doncaster Council
Civic Office
Waterdale
Doncaster
DN1 3BU**

You can also make a complaint either by telephone, email, the website or e-form.

By **Telephone:** 01302 736000

By **Email:** comments&complaints@doncaster.gov.uk

2. If your petition has received 10,000 signatures or more, it will be scheduled for a Council debate (please refer to paragraph 18 below). If this is the case, we will let you know the date of the Council meeting when your petition will be discussed. Petitions with signatures falling below the threshold of 10,000 can still be presented to a meeting of the Council for referral without discussion to the appropriate Executive Member, Committee or Sub-Committee. Meetings of the Full Council generally take place on a 6 weekly basis. If you would like to present your petition to the Council, or would like your Councillor or someone else to present it on your behalf, please contact the Democratic Services Team on 01302 736712 at least 10 working days before the meeting and they will talk you through the process.

What are the guidelines for submitting a petition?

3. Petitions must be relevant to matters in relation to which the authority has functions, or which affect the area of the authority or part of it, or the inhabitants of the area or some of them.
4. 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.
5. Petitions must be accompanied by contact details, including an address and a valid email address for the petition organiser. This is the person we will contact to explain how we will respond to the petition. The telephone/email contact details of the petition organiser will not be made public, unless the petition organiser agrees.
6. No individual or group may submit a petition that is similar to and/or overlaps with an existing petition.

7. Petitions which are considered to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate, will not be accepted. 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 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, we will write to you to explain the reasons.

What will the Council do when it receives my petition?

8. An acknowledgement will be sent to the petition organiser within 10 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.
9. If we 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 acknowledgment 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.
10. If the petition applies to a planning or licensing application, is a statutory petition (for example requesting a referendum), 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 how to access these procedures is available from Customer Services on 01302 736000.
11. We will not take 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.

How will the Council respond to petitions?

12. 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 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 by the Council's overview and scrutiny committee*

- calling a referendum
 - writing to the petition organiser setting out our views about the request in the petition
 - refer the issue to the Mayor/relevant Cabinet Member for consideration
13. *Overview and Scrutiny Committees are Committees of Councillors who are responsible for scrutinising the work of the Council – in other words, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has the power to hold the Council’s decision makers to account. Any decision for Overview and Scrutiny to undertake an investigation will be discussed with the Chair/Vice Chair of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel/Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee in advance and ultimately determined by the Panel taking account of its workload, priorities and available resources.
 14. In addition to these steps, the Council will consider all the specific actions it can potentially take on the issues highlighted in a petition.
 15. If your petition is about something over which the Council has no direct control (for example the local railway or hospital) we 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. 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 the Council is responsible on the Council’s website.
 16. 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. This 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.
 17. The costs associated with dealing with the petition when it has been dealt with will be published on the Council’s website.

Presenting of Petitions at Full Council Meetings

18. A member of the public or Member wishing to present a petition shall give notice by contacting the Council’s Democratic Services Team at least 10 working days before the meeting.

The presentation of a petition by a member of the public or a Member on their behalf shall be limited to no more than 5 minutes and shall be confined to reading out, or summarising the substance of the petition, indicating the number and description of the signatories and making relevant further supporting remarks.

If presented at a meeting of the Council, the petition shall immediately be referred without discussion to the appropriate Executive Member, Committee or Sub-Committee.

Full Council debates

19. If a petition contains more than 10,000 signatures, it will be debated by the full Council. This means that the issue raised in the petition will be discussed at a meeting which all Councillors can attend. The Council will endeavour to consider the petition at its next meeting, although on some occasions, this may not be possible (e.g. the Annual Council Meeting) and consideration will then take place at the following meeting. 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. 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. Where the issue is one on which the Council's Executive is required to make the final decision, the Council will decide whether to make recommendations to inform that decision. The Council cannot overrule a decision of the Executive. The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of this decision. This confirmation will also be published on our website. Democratic Services will provide guidance on those issues that can be determined by Council/other bodies and the Executive so there is clarity over who is responsible for taking any action if this is recommended.

Officer evidence

20. 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.
21. If your petition contains at least 2,500 signatures, the relevant Senior Officer (a Director of the Council) will give evidence at a public meeting of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee. A list of the senior staff that can be called to give evidence can be found on the Council's website. You should be aware that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may decide that it would be more appropriate for another Officer to give evidence instead of any Officer named in the petition – for instance if the named Officer has changed jobs. The Committee may also decide to call the relevant Councillor to attend the meeting. Committee members will ask the questions at this meeting, but you will be able to suggest questions to the Chair of the Committee by contacting the Scrutiny Manager (telephone 01302 734354) up to three working days before the meeting.

What can I do if I feel my petition has not been dealt with properly?

22. If you feel that we have not dealt with your petition properly, the petition organiser has the right to request that the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee review the steps that the Council has taken in response to your petition. The petition organiser **must** give a short explanation of the reasons why the Council's response is not considered to be adequate.
23. The Overview and Scrutiny 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. Overview and Scrutiny has no powers to overturn a decision but may investigate and make recommendations to decision makers. A list of meeting dates are available on the Council Chamber website, or you can contact the Democratic Services Team for this information (telephone 01302 736712).
24. 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.