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What are the guidelines for submitting a petition?

What you must include

A concise statement

- Petitions submitted to the council must include a concise statement covering the subject of the petition.
- It should state what action the petitioners wish the council to take and the name, address and signature of any person supporting the petition.

Contact details

- 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 placed on the website.
- 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.

Please note

Petitions which are considered by the council's Monitoring Officer to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate will not be accepted.

In the period immediately before an election or referendum we may be required by law 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?

We will acknowledge your petition

- An acknowledgement will be sent to the petition organiser within 10 working days of the council 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.

What action do we take

- 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.
- 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.

Further information on all these procedures and how you can express your views can be obtained by contacting the council directly.

Inappropriate petitions

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

Keeping people informed

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 (all personal details will be 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 choose to receive other emails from us.

How will the council respond to petitions?

Our response

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 function
- calling a referendum
- writing to the petition organiser setting out our views about the request in the petition

Out of our jurisdiction

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.

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.

Full council debates

If a petition contains signatures totalling more than 2.5% of the resident population of Northamptonshire, as stated in the current census statistics (2001) 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 (see below).

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 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.
- The council will decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting.
- They 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 executive are required to make the final decision, the council will decide whether to make recommendations to inform that decision.
- The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of this decision. This confirmation will also be published on our 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 2,000 signatures, the relevant senior officer (member of CMT) will give evidence at a public meeting of the council's overview and scrutiny committee.



- A list of the senior staff (member of CMT) 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 a 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 Democratic Services up to three working days before the meeting.

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

You can appeal

- 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 function 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.

How is your appeal dealt with?

- 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.