

RUTLAND COUNTY COUNCIL DISTRICT COUNCIL CONSTITUTION

PART 5 – CODES AND PROTOCOLS

PETITIONS GUIDANCE

1. What is a petition?

A petition is a formal written request, typically one signed by many people, appealing to an organisation, such as the Council or public service, in respect of a particular cause, concern, or issue.

2. Thinking of starting a petition?

The Council welcomes petitions and recognises that petitions are one way in which people can let us know their concerns. The Council will address and respond to petitions about matters over which it exercises some control or influence.

It might be helpful if you contact the Council to discuss your petition before starting to collect signatories.

Email: democraticservices@rutland.gov.uk
Tel: 01572 720993

3. Who can create and sign a petition?

Anyone who lives, works or studies in Rutland can create or sign a petition about a local issue and submit it to the council.

Petition signatories should be over 18, though there may be exceptional circumstances, where a separate, supplementary petition from those under 18 will be accepted in support of the substantive petition.

4. What are the guidelines for the format and submission of a petition?

- Petitions submitted to the Council must include:
 - i. A clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition. It should state what action the petitioner wishes the Council to take and include any request that the petition be considered at a Committee, Scrutiny Committee or Full Council Meeting.
 - ii. This statement should be printed on each page so it is clear that every signatory has assented to their inclusion and is fully aware of what they are supporting.
 - iii. The name, address, postal code and signature of each person supporting the petition; a minimum of 50 signatures of people who live, work or study in the Rutland area.
 - iv. The contact details address and name of the lead petitioner, who must live,

work or study in the Rutland area. This is the person we will contact to explain how we handle the petition. In the absence of a clear contact point, we will contact signatories to the petition to agree who should act as the petition organiser.

- Petitions should be submitted to the Democratic Services Manager at:

Email: democraticservices@rutland.gov.uk

Tel: 01572 720993

Democratic Services Team
Rutland County Council
Catmose
Oakham
Rutland
LE15 6HP

- If you would like to present your petition to a Committee, Scrutiny or Full Council meeting, or would like your councillor or someone else to present it on your behalf, please contact the Democratic Services Team (Contact details above) **as soon as possible before the meeting** and they will talk you through the process.
- If you want to submit a petition to a specific meeting of the Council, or any Scrutiny or Committee meeting you must give notice in writing to the Democratic Services Team providing details of the subject matter and number of signatures by no later than midday pm on the tenth working day before that meeting (e.g. for a meeting on a Monday, by midday on the second preceding Monday). The person submitting the petition must also indicate who will present the petition to the meeting.
- There are a wide range of issues that can be addressed by petitions, as such the Strategic Director for Law and Governance will identify the most appropriate way of dealing with the petition having regards to all relevant factors. See Section 6 “How Will the Council Respond to Petitions” below.

5. What will happen to my Petition?

All petitions sent or presented to the Council will receive an acknowledgement from the Council sent to the petition organiser no later than 10 days after receipt of the petition (Where notice has been given to submit the petition to a particular meeting, the acknowledgement will be sent in advance of the deadline for submission of petitions to that meeting (See above).

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.

If your petition does not reach the minimum requirement of 50 signatures, particularly where the issue relates to a small locality, we will seek to advise you of other ways in

which your views could be considered. It will also be passed to the relevant service area.

Petitions which are considered to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate will not be accepted. We will explain the reasons for this in our acknowledgement of the petition.

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.

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, 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. Further information on all these procedures and how you can express your views is available from the Democratic Services Team.

We reserve the right to verify signatures as required. Please ensure you include a valid address and postcode that relates to your home address (if you live or study in Rutland) or work address (if you work or run a business in Rutland). These details will be taken into account when identifying if there are enough signatories from people who live, work or study in Rutland to trigger a full Council debate.

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.

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 inquiry into the matter
- Undertaking research into the matter
- Holding a public meeting
- Holding a consultation
- Holding a meeting with petitioners
- Calling a referendum
- Writing to the petition organiser setting out our views about the request in the petition.

If your petition is about something over which the Council has no direct control (for example the local railway or hospital) the Council may, with the consent of the lead petitioner, forward it to the most relevant body.

6. Full Council debates

If a petition contains more than 1500 signatures from people who live, work or study in Rutland, 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 (for example due to the need to verify signatures) 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. Members may wish to ask the petition organiser questions as part of this time limit. 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 or sub-committee.

Where the issue is one on which the Council's Executive (Cabinet) 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.

7. E-petitions

The Council welcomes e-petitions. E-petitions must follow the same guidelines as paper petitions. They can be emailed to democraticservices@rutland.gov.uk. The petition organiser will need to provide us with their name, postal address and email address. You will also need to decide how long you would like your petition to be open for signatures. Most petitions run for six months, but you can choose a shorter or longer timeframe, up to a maximum of 12 months.

8. 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 should follow the [Rutland County Council Complaints Procedure](#).

This guidance should be read in conjunction with Procedure Rules for the relevant Council meeting contained within the [RCC Constitution](#)