

PART 3.1 APPENDIX 1 – PETITIONS SCHEME

Introduction

The council welcomes petitions. We recognise that petitions are one way in which people can let us know their concerns.

Anyone who lives, works or studies in Swale may organise or sign a petition. This includes people under the age of 18.

You can either organise the petition yourself and submit a paper list of signatures to the council, or you can request the council to set up an e-petition, which collects signatures online.

All e-petitions normally remain open for new signatures for ten weeks from the go-live date, although this can be reduced in the event that the subject matter of the petition is urgent.

Before you submit your petition, please read our guidance in the next sections.

What should I include in my petition?

You must include a clear, concise statement covering the subject of the petition and what you want the council to do. The statement must relate to the functions, powers or duties of the council. Any action you request will only be considered if it would be lawful for the council to undertake.

The petition must also include the:

- name, address, telephone number and email address of the petition organiser; and
- name, address and signature of any person supporting the petition (these are collected automatically in the case of e-petitions).

We will not publish the petition organiser's or any signatories' contact details on the council's website but we will publish the petition.

It is important that you follow this guidance. The council may choose to take no action on a petition if important details are missing. In this case, we will write to you to explain the reasons and give you the opportunity to amend the petition.

What types of petitions are excluded?

We will not take action on any petition or requested e-petition that is:

- vexatious;
- abusive;
- otherwise inappropriate; or

- does not relate directly to the council's functions, responsibility or powers.

The proper officer will decide if a petition fits these categories. If we reject your petition for any of the above reasons, we will notify you in our acknowledgement letter.

This scheme does not apply to:

- petitions relating to a planning or licensing application, which will be referred to the relevant decision making body;
- statutory petitions (for example requesting a referendum on having a directly elected mayor), which will be dealt with in accordance with the relevant statutory scheme;
- petitions submitted as part of a consultation process being carried out by the council, in which case the petition will be considered by the relevant decision making body as part of the consultation; or
- petitions relating to matters where other review or appeal procedures exist, e.g. a review of council tax banding.

This scheme does not apply to petitions on the same or similar topic as ones addressed by the council in the last six months. In this case we will acknowledge receipt of your petition and include details of our response to similar petitions.

Where we are still considering a petition on the same or similar topic, we will amalgamate the petitions.

We will send details of excluded petitions that directly affect wards to the councillors representing those wards.

What the council will do with your petition

We will write to you to acknowledge your petition within 10 working days of receiving it. We will let you know what we plan to do with the petition and when you can expect to hear from us again. If the petition needs further investigation, we will tell you the steps we plan to take.

Your petition will be published on our website, except in cases where this would be inappropriate.

Where the subject matter of the petition affects particular wards, the councillors representing those wards will be notified.

The way in which your petition is considered by the council will depend on the number of signatories to the petition, as follows:

- Fewer than 200 signatories: Response from the relevant director.
- Between 200 and 1,499 signatories: Referred to a meeting of the most relevant service committee.

- More than 1,500 signatories: Referred to a meeting of the full council.

Our response to the petition will depend on what the petition asks and how many people have signed it. It may include one or more of the following:

- taking the action requested in the petition;
- considering the matter at a meeting of the council or a committee;
- holding a public meeting;
- holding a meeting with petitioners or the petition organiser;
- writing to the petition organiser setting out the council's views about the request in the petition;
- considering the matter as part of a consultation process; or
- taking no further action on the matter.

Considering a petition at a meeting

Where the petition is referred to the full council or to a service committee, the petition organiser (or any person authorised by them) will, if they so wish, be given a period not exceeding three minutes to present the petition at the meeting. The petition will then be discussed by councillors.

We will contact the petition organiser before the meeting to establish whether they wish to present the petition at the meeting in the manner described above.

In addition to these steps, the council will consider all the specific actions it can potentially take on the issues highlighted in a petition.

If a petition falling within the scheme contains 1,500 signatures or more, it will automatically be referred to the full council for debate. 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 next available meeting.

When a petition is to be considered by a committee or the full council, it will generally be accompanied by an officer report setting out any financial and non-financial implications arising from decisions which could be taken in the light of it. This report will not recommend a particular course of action.

Councillors will decide how to respond to the petition at the meeting. They may decide to support the action the petition requests, or not. A motion suggesting a formal response to the petition shall be proposed and seconded at the meeting and dealt with under the normal rules of debate, except that notice of motions and amendments will not be required. Any such motion must respond explicitly to the request in the petition i.e. that part of the petition which asks the council to take some form of action.

Alternatively, councillors may refer the matter to a different committee or an officer for further consideration. The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of this decision.

How to submit a petition

E-petitions

You can create, sign and submit petitions online.

If you would like to set up an online petition, please use our [e-Petition facility](#). This will ensure that your petition meets the requirements of our petition scheme, which can be found in [Part 3.1 Appendix 1](#) of the Council's Constitution.

We cannot accept e-Petitions hosted on external websites unless the following information for all signatories is supplied:

- name
- valid email address
- postal address and postcode.

When you create an e-Petition on our website, it may take 5 clear working days before it is published online. This is because we have to check the content is suitable before it is made available.

When an e-Petition has reached its deadline and has been closed, it will automatically be sent to Democratic Services.

Paper petitions

Paper petitions can be submitted to: The Petitions Officer, Swale Borough Council, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT, or to petitions@swale.gov.uk.

The Petitions Officer will ensure that your petition is acknowledged to the petition organiser and entered on the authority's petitions website ([Swale Petitions website](#)), and that the website is regularly up-dated with information on the progress of your petition. The Petitions Officer can also provide you with advice about how to petition the authority or the progress of your petition, at either of the above addresses or by telephone at 01795 417328.