

Petitions - Scheme

The Council welcomes petitions and recognises that petitions are one way in which people can let the Council know their concerns. People have the right to submit a petition to the Council about issues that we have responsibility for, or that are of major significance or general concern affecting the city.

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.

Petitions which are considered to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate will not be accepted. If a petition does not follow these guidelines, the Council may decide not to do anything further with it. In that case, we will write to you to explain the reasons.

Paper petitions can be sent to:

Democratic Services Manager
Exeter City Council
Civic Centre
Paris Street
Exeter
EX1 1JN

E-petitions can be created, signed and submitted online by following this link: [e-petitions](#).

Petitions can also be presented to a meeting of the Council. These meetings take place on a regular basis, dates and times can be found on the [Committee Calendar](#).

If you would like to present your petition to the Council yourself, please contact the Democratic Services Manager, email: committee.services@exeter.gov.uk.

If you would like your Councillor to present it on your behalf, please contact your Local Councillor direct ([contact details](#)) at least 5 working days before the meeting and they will talk you through the process.

What are the guidelines for submitting a petition?

Petitions submitted to the Council must include:

- A clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition;
What action the petitioners wish the council to take
- The name and address and signature of any person supporting the petition

Petitions should also include the 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 the first signatory on the petition to act as the petition organiser.

Who can sign a petition?

A petition can be signed by a person of any age who lives, works or studies in Exeter, including under-18's. The petition can only be signed once. The list of signatures will be checked by officers and any duplicate signatures or obviously frivolous responses will be removed.

Petition signatories must identify through the tick box facility on the petition form, which of the eligibility criteria of they live, work or study in Exeter, they are relying upon in signing the petition. Any signatories which do not so indicate, will not be included in those signatures which are accepted.

What will the Council do when it receives my petition?

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 [petition page](#) on the Council website.

If we can do what your petition asks for, the acknowledgment 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 (see below), or a Portfolio Holder or senior officer to speak on the matter at Council or Scrutiny Committee, 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.

All petition organisers will be given the opportunity to speak for up to five minutes on their petition, when it is considered at any appropriate Council body to which it has been referred. For clarity, this includes the provision for organisers of petitions of over 2,000 signatures, to do so at the appropriate Council body to which it has been referred, as well as the ability to address the full Council when initially submitting the petition.

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, those other procedures will apply.

To ensure that people know what we are doing in response to the petitions received the details of all the petitions submitted to us will be published on our website, except in cases where this would be inappropriate.

How many names should be on the Petition?

There is no maximum number of names on a petition. On average the Council would expect the minimum to be 20, however this depends on the particular issue. If less than 20 names are on a petition, the petition will be treated as a letter and you will receive a response within 10 working days.

If a petition with between 20 and 750 signatures is submitted to the Council this will be referred to the relevant committee.

If the petition contains at least 750 signatures, the relevant Portfolio Holder or relevant senior officer will address a meeting of the council's relevant committee which is open to the public. Committee members will ask the questions at this meeting, but you will be able to suggest questions to the chair of this committee or a committee member by contacting democratic services on 01392 265275 or committee.services@exeter.gov.uk up to three working days before the meeting.

If the petition contains more than 2,000 signatures it will be debated by the full Council, unless it's a petition asking for a Portfolio Holder or senior council officer to give evidence at a meeting open to the public. This means that the issue raised in the petition will be discussed at a council meeting which all Councillors can attend. The petition organiser will be given five minutes to present the petition at the council meeting and the petition will then be discussed by councillors for a maximum of 15 minutes. We will decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting. We 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 scrutiny committee. The petition organiser will receive confirmation of this decision. This confirmation will also be published on our website.

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
- Holding a meeting open to the public
- Commissioning research
- A written response to the petition organiser setting out the Council's views on the request in the petition
- Referring the petition to the Council's scrutiny committees*
- Referring the petition to another organisation/partner

*Scrutiny Committees are committees of Councillors who are responsible for scrutinising the work of the Executive – in other words, the Scrutiny Committees have the power to hold the Council's decision-makers to account.

If your petition is about something over which the Council has no direct control (for example the local railway or hospital) we will aim to pass the views expressed on to the relevant body. If the Council wish to comment on a petition, a scrutiny committee may decide to debate the issue and forward their comments to the relevant body.

The council works with a large number of local partners through the [Exeter Vision Partnership](#) and where possible we will work with these partners to respond to your petition. If we are not able to do this for any reason (for example if the action called for by the petition conflicts with council policy), then we will set out the reasons for this to you. More information on the services for which the council is responsible can be found on the [Council Website](#).

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. It might consist of simply forwarding the petition to the other council. In any event we will always notify you of the action we have taken.

(Amended June 2023)

E-petitions

The council welcomes e-petitions, which collect signatures online. An e-petition can be created and submitted through the [e-petition](#) page on the council website. E-petitions must follow the same [guidelines](#) as paper petitions. The petition organiser will need to provide the council with their name, postal address and email address. The petition organiser will also need to decide how long the petition will be open for signatures. This may range from a few weeks to a maximum of 12 months.

After creation of an e-petition, it may take five working days before it is published online. This is because we have 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 petition organiser will be able to change and resubmit the petition if they wish. If this is not done within 10 working days, a summary of the petition and the reason why it has not been accepted will be published under the 'rejected petitions' section of the website.

When an e-petition has closed for signature, it will automatically be submitted to the Democratic Services Manager. In the same way as a paper petition and an acknowledgement will be received within 14 days. If the petition organiser would like to present the e-petition to a meeting of the Council they should please contact the Democratic Services Manager by emailing committee.services@exeter.gov.uk or tel: 01392 265106, within five days of the petition closing.

A petition acknowledgement and response will be emailed to everyone who has signed the e-petition and elected to receive this information. The response will also be published on the council's website.

How do I 'sign' an e-petition?

All the e-petitions currently available for signature can be viewed on the [Council e-petition webpage](#).

When an e-petition is signed the person will be asked to provide his/her name, postcode and a valid email address. Once this information is submitted an email will be sent to the email address. This email will include a link which must be clicked on in order to confirm the email address is valid. Once this step is complete the signature will be added to the petition. People visiting the e-petition will be able to see the name in the list of those who have signed it, but the contact details will not be visible.

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

If you feel that the Council has not dealt with your petition properly, the petition organiser has the right to request that a relevant scrutiny committee review the steps that the Council has taken in response to your petition.

The committee will consider your request at its next meeting which will normally be within three months of receiving it. 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's 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 seven days. The results of the review will also be published on our website.