

Bristol City Council Petitions Scheme

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The council welcomes petitions and recognises that petitions are one way in which people can let us know their concerns. All petitions sent or presented to the council will receive an acknowledgement from the council within 15 working days of receipt.
- 1.2. 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.
- 1.3. Paper petitions can be sent to:

Democratic Services
Bristol City Council,
City Hall,
PO Box 3176,
Bristol, BS3 9FS

Email: democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk

Or be created, signed and submitted online by following this link:
<https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/mgEPetitionListDisplay.aspx>

A petition template is available at Appendix 1 and this will help you to see what information we need in order to consider your petition under the terms of the council scheme.

- 1.4. Petitions can also be presented to a meeting of the council. These meetings take place approximately every 6 weeks, dates and times can be found here <https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/mgCalendarMonthView.aspx>
- 1.5. 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 Democratic Services on democratic.servics@bristol.gov.uk at least 10 working days before the meeting and they will let you know the process.
- 1.6. If your petition has received **3,500** signatories or more from people who

live, work or study in Bristol it can then trigger a full council debate [see page 5] and if this is the case we will discuss with the lead petitioner the options for enabling this to take place.

- 1.7. You can also submit petitions to the Cabinet and committees (including scrutiny commissions). Details of when these meetings take place can also be found on the [Council's website](#).

2. Petitions that cannot be dealt with through this Scheme – Planning and licensing decisions

2.1 The following matters are excluded from this petitions scheme

- Any matter relating to a planning decision, including about a development plan document or community infrastructure levy (*a new local levy that authorities can choose to introduce to help fund infrastructure in their area.*)
- Any matter relating to an alcohol, gambling or sex establishment licensing decision.*
- Any matter where there is an appeals procedure in place

However, a petition that alleges a systematic failure to deliver services in the above areas is within the scope of this Scheme (e.g. while a petition on an individual planning application could not be taken, a petition about the council's failure to deliver an effective service for planning applications would be within the scope of this scheme).

2.2 If you wish to submit a petition on a planning or licensing matter, the arrangements are as follows:

* A 'Licensing Decision' is:

Any decision in relation to an application for the grant, variation or review of any authorisation under Part 3 or 4 of the Licensing Act 2003 (premises licenses and club premises licenses) or any hearing or appeal in respect of any such application.

Any decision in relation to the application for the grant, renewal or transfer of a license under Schedule 3 to the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 (control of sex establishments), a request for the variation of any term, condition or restriction contained in such a license or the revocation of such a license.

Any decision in relation to any application for a license, permit or registration under the Gambling Act 2005, a request for a variation of any term, condition or restriction associated with any such license, permit or registration or the revocation of any such license, permit or registration.

- Petitions relating to **licensing decisions** should be e-mailed to democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk or sent to the Democratic Services Manager, Bristol City Council, City Hall, PO Box 3176, Bristol, BS3 9FS.

Further information on how to submit a review to a licensed premise is available through this link

<http://www.bristol.gov.uk/node/4811>

- Petitions relating to **planning decisions** should be e-mailed to development.management@bristol.gov.uk or sent to the Development Management Team of the council at the following address;

Development Management, City Hall, Bristol City Council, PO Box 3176, Bristol, BS3 9FS. Further information on how to have your say on planning applications is available through following this link

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/planning-and-building-regulations/comment-on-a-planning-application>

3. What are the guidelines for submitting a petition

3.1. Petitions may be submitted to the full Council, the Cabinet or Committees and Sub-Committees of the Council. Under the terms of this scheme they 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 (*you are deemed to have 'signed' the petition if you have added your name and address to it.*)
- A minimum of 20 signatures of people who live, work or study in the Bristol local authority area

3.2. Petitions should be accompanied by contact details, including an address, for the petition organiser who must also live, work or study in the Bristol local authority area. 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.

3.3. If your petition does not reach the minimum requirement of 20

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. A petition with fewer than 20 names will be considered if the signatories comprise a majority of the residents and/or stakeholders affected by the issue raised.

- 3.4. A short form is available to download here (see Appendix 2), which enables you to easily set out the main summary information we require when you submit your petition.
- 3.5. If you want to submit a petition to a specific meeting of the council, Cabinet or any committee meeting (including scrutiny commissions) then you need to ensure that we receive a completed petitions submission form or at the very least, provide us with details of the petition subject matter, number of signatures and your contact details by **no later than 12.00 noon on the working day before that meeting** to enable it to be submitted there.
- 3.6. Please note petitions submitted by the petitioner to meetings of the council will not be discussed in detail at that point, unless there is an agenda item specifically relating to that issue. Petitions received in this way will be passed to the appropriate councillor, officer or forum for proper consideration.
- 3.7. 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.
- 3.8. 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.

4. What will the council do when it receives my petition?

- 4.1. An acknowledgement will be sent to the petition organiser within 15 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 and on our e-petitions site where all petitions received will be registered.
- 4.2. 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 some other action is proposed or intended, the

acknowledgement will explain this. If the petition has enough signatories to trigger a council debate, 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.

- 4.3. We reserve the right to verify signatories as required. Please ensure you include a valid address and postcode that relates to your home address (if you live or study in Bristol) or work address (if you work or run a business in Bristol). These details will be taken into account when identifying if there are enough signatories from people who live, work or study in Bristol to trigger a full council debate.
- 4.4. Any petition that is a duplicate or near duplicate of another petition that the council has already received will not normally be considered within a 12 month period although officers will exercise their discretion in individual cases. You are advised to check the details of previous petitions on our e-petitions site or contact us for advice at the start of your petition.
- 4.5. 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 including those pending action will be published on our website, except in cases where this would be inappropriate.

5. Full council debates

- 5.1. If a petition contains more than **3,500** signatures from people who live, work or study in the city it will trigger the right to 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.
- 5.2. If the petition organiser wishes to take up this opportunity, they will be given five minutes to present the petition at the next available meeting of the full Council. The petition will then be discussed by councillors for up to 15 minutes. *(NB: The Lord Mayor may, with the consent of Council, increase this time limit)*. Full council will decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting.
- 5.3. The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of the outcome of the full Council debate, of the Council's decision and any explanation in the event of Council not being able to take the action which has been requested. This information will also be published on our e-petitions website.

6. E-petitions

- 6.1. The council welcomes e-petitions which are created and submitted through our website www.bristol.gov.uk/petitions E-petitions must follow the same guidelines as paper petitions.
- 6.2. 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 signatories . Most petitions run for six months, but you can choose a shorter or longer timeframe. You may wish to time the ending of the petition to coincide with a relevant meeting or decision. It may be helpful to discuss this with our petition administrator. If so, please contact us via email at democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk
- 6.3. When you create 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.
- 6.4. If we feel we cannot publish your petition for some reason, we will contact you within this time to explain. You will be able to change and resubmit your petition if you wish. If you do not do this 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.
- 6.5. When an e-petition has closed for signature, it will automatically be submitted to Democratic Services. In the same way as a paper petition, you will receive an acknowledgement within 15 working days. If you would like to present your e-petition to a meeting of the council, please contact Richard Jones, Democratic Services Team Leader within 10 working days of your receipt of the acknowledgement.
- 6.6. A petition acknowledgement and response will be emailed to everyone who has signed the e-petition and elected to receive this information. The acknowledgment and response will also be published on this website.

7. How do I 'sign' an e-petition?

- 7.1.1. You can see all the e-petitions currently available for signature here <https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/mgEPetitionListDisplay.aspx>
- 7.2. When you sign an e-petition you will be asked to provide your name, your postcode and a valid email address. When you have submitted this information you will be sent an email to the email address you have provided. This email will include a link which you must click on in order to confirm the email address is valid. Once this step is complete you will have been added as a signatory to the petition. People visiting the e-

petition will be able to see your name and the ward to where your postcode relates in the list of those who have signed it, but your contact details will not be visible.

8.0 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, please contact the Democratic Services Manager who will review your complaint and will advise you of the action which is intended. Please provide a short explanation of the reasons in your communication with us.

9.0 Other ways to have your say

- 9.1 Bristol City Council is always interested in your feedback on our services or how we can work together better with our partners to improve things in our city.
- 9.2 There are a wide range of ways you can get involved and have your say, from submitting individual comments on specific issues to participating in groups that regularly input to shaping our local services.
- 9.3 You can get involved by writing to us, attending meetings and events or participating online.
- 9.4 To find out more visit our website www.bristol.gov.uk or go to <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/council-and-mayor/consultations-and-petitions> where you can subscribe to the ASK Bristol e-bulletin.
- 9.5 If you have a complaint about the council, we would like to ensure this is sorted out as soon as possible. If you have a problem with a council service please try and talk to a member of staff, as they may be able to resolve it straight away.
- 9.6 If it is not possible for you to talk to a member of staff or you prefer to contact us in a different way, please see the details below.
- 9.7 Contact us:

By web: <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/complaints-and-feedback>

By e-mail. You can email us at complaints.feedback@bristol.gov.uk

By letter. You can write to the department or service concerned. If you send your letter direct you will need to use a stamp. However, you can

also use our Freepost address:

Customer Relations (100 TS)
PO Box 3176
Bristol
BS3 9FS

**Bristol City Council
Petition Template**

Guidance notes:

Please use this suggested template alongside the petitions submission form (appendix 2 of the petitions scheme) for any paper petitions you wish to submit to the Council. Additional pages should also include the petition subject at the top of the page.

The Petition organiser must live, work/own a business or study in the City.

If you wish to ‘sign’ this petition, please put down your Bristol address if you live, work (or own a business) or study in the City as this will count towards any threshold for debate at full Council meetings (where all Bristol City Councillors attend).

Other signatories will be taken into consideration in respect of the issue being raised, but will not count towards the numbers required for formal debates under the scheme.

Please also refer to the petitions scheme available on our council website www.bristol.gov.uk for further information about how we deal with petitions at the Council.

Petition subject:		
By adding our contact details below we ask that:		
Name	Address (incl. postcode if possible)	Email address (if possible)

Bristol City Council Petitions Submission Form

Please complete the summary details on this form to assist us in directing your petition to the right place and include it with your petition.

Please note contact details for the petition organiser will not be made public other than name and postcode.

Petition subject		
Action requested by the petitioners		
Number of signatures <i>(please give overall number if combination of paper and e-petition)</i>		
<p>Any eligible petition with 20 signatures or over will be automatically be considered by the Council. However if you prefer the petition can be presented for submission at a relevant public meeting of the council, prior to consideration of the issue raised. Please advise if you wish to submit your petition in this way.</p> <p>Yes/No <i>(please circle)</i></p>		
Name of Councillor submitting petition on behalf of petitioners <i>(if appropriate)</i>		
Contact details of petition organiser	Name:	
	Address:	
	Tel:	
	Email:	

Council use only
Date petition received:

Bristol City Council Petitions Scheme

Guidance for councillors

Introduction and background

This guidance has been produced to help councillors and officers understand the revised petitions scheme and their role in supporting it.

This could be through:

- **Representing your Ward by:**
 - Presenting a Petition at a Public Meeting on behalf of a Ward Member (an individual may not be confident enough to present the issue themselves)
 - Acting as Lead Petitioner on a topic that you know your community is concerned about.
- **Being asked to consider the topic of petition at a meeting**, gather evidence and views on the issue and then draw your conclusions and make recommendations (or make a decision if the issue is referred to you as the relevant Executive Member).

The Scheme gives local people a right to a public response if they sign an eligible petition (provided the petition is not of a vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate nature).

Bristol City Council already has a well regarded and widely used e-petition system and so it was agreed to use this system to record all petitions that we receive and where eligible publish the response and any relating information to it.

What do I need to do?

Democratic Services are responsible for the management of the Petitions Scheme overall and so if you have any queries that cannot be answered by reading this guidance or the Petitions scheme itself, please contact them for assistance.

Currently support to the petitions process is provided by officers in Democratic Services (for paper petitions) and Insight and Design (Corporate Communications) (for e-petitions).

Representing your Ward

Setting up a Petition yourself

If you decide to set up a petition on behalf of your Ward (as Lead Petitioner) or are advising someone else about it there are a few things you will need to consider first, such as whether the issue has already been considered in the last 12 months, is the wording factually accurate etc?

Please see the scheme for help in the first instance.

Receiving a Petition & submitting it on behalf of your ward member or group

Democratic Services (DS) need to be aware of all petitions we receive as an organisation. Therefore, if you receive one directly this needs to be registered with Democratic Services along with some key basic information.

All new petitions received now need to have a summary sheet (submission form) attached (see Appendix 2 on the scheme) to assist with management and tracking of the petition. If you are handed/receive a petition by the public please ensure some basic contact information is taken in order that we can follow up on these details.

Under the scheme, a petition can be directly submitted to Democratic Services and officers will register the petition and get agreement about how it should be considered/actioned and then process it accordingly. This is helpful in ensuring the issue is addressed promptly without the delay of waiting for a meeting to present it.

However, the Lead Petitioner may prefer to submit a petition to a public meeting of the Council, which can have a more democratic value placed upon the action.

The Lead Petitioner themselves can submit the petition or (if not you), you can be asked to submit and present the petition on their behalf if they are unable to attend the meeting or feel uncomfortable with public speaking.

If you are asked to undertake this, please ensure the petition is submitted to Democratic Services no later than 12.00 noon on the working day before that meeting.

The process for dealing with the petition once submitted

When a petition is first received, the council needs to respond within 15 working days to advise the Lead Petitioner (and others online through the e-petition system) what we plan to do with the petition.

Depending on the nature of the issue raised, a Democratic Services Officer may ask for information about any related forthcoming forums/meetings/work activity where the issue could be considered.

Once this dialogue has taken place with all relevant Officers and Members (co-ordinated by DS Officers) an approach will be agreed and the Lead Petitioner notified.

Next steps

The DS Officer will then put in place any arrangements for consideration at a meeting etc and normal reporting timescales will apply where a relevant Officer may be asked to provide a report on the issue in question.

If the issue can be considered by an Executive Member or Officer in the normal course of their duty, then the DS Officer will make that request and they will have 1 month to respond.

Following the conclusion of these activities, the outcome will be passed to the Lead Petitioner and published on our website (under the e-petition tracking system.) to enable others to see the Council response as laid out within our petitions scheme unless an exception is explicitly made by Council

We are keen to ensure that even where the council cannot do what the petitioner asks for, that the response given explains the reasoning behind it to aid understanding and where feasible suggests other options for support in getting the issue resolved.

Who do I contact if I have a query?

If the Petitions Scheme itself doesn't have the answer, please contact Democratic Services.

If the query relates to an e-petition matter, please contact Democratic Services.