

PART 4.10 - PETITIONS SCHEME

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Council welcomes petitions and recognises that these are one way in which people who live, work or study in Bristol can let us know their concerns. 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.
- 1.2. In this scheme there are 4 types of petitions:
 - (a) Petitions that trigger the right to a Full Council debate - these must be signed by at least 3,500 signatories.
 - (b) Petitions that trigger the right to a Policy Committee debate – these must be signed by at least 1,500 signatories .
 - (c) Petitions that trigger the right to an Area Committee debate – these must be signed by at least 200 signatories.
 - (d) Ordinary petitions (which can be submitted to any committee meeting via the public forum process) - must be signed by at least 20 signatories.
- 1.3. Paper petitions can be sent via email to democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk or by post to Democratic Services, Bristol City Council, City Hall, PO Box 3176, Bristol, BS3 9FS
- 1.4. E-petitions can be created, submitted and signed online by following this link: [Bristol City Council's E-Petitions site](#) (see section 7 below)
- 1.5. There are other websites which offer e-petitions such as 38 Degrees and Change.Org. In this case, details of the e-petition should be sent to the email address above, once the closing date for the e-petition has passed.
- 1.6. If you would like to present your petition to a committee meeting, or would like your Councillor to present it on your behalf, please contact Democratic Services via democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk at least 10 working days before the meeting date and they will let you know the process and deadlines for this.
- 1.7. You can also submit petitions to committee meetings with 48 hours notice by following the public forum guidance and deadlines as set out in the published meeting agenda. Details of when these meetings take place can be found on the [Council's Website](#).

2. Petitions that are excluded from this Scheme

Planning and Licensing decisions

- 2.1. The following matters are excluded from this petitions scheme:

- a. Any matter relating to a planning decision, including about a development plan document or community infrastructure levy (*a local levy that authorities can use to help fund infrastructure in their area.*)
 - b. Any matter relating to an alcohol, gambling or sex establishment licensing decision.
- 2.2. However, a petition that alleges a 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).

3. Petitions that can be rejected under this scheme

- 3.1. Petitions can be rejected based on the following grounds;
- a. Contains defamatory, frivolous, or vexatious language.
 - b. Is identical or too similar to a petition submitted in the past 6 months.
 - c. Discloses confidential or exempt information, including information protected by court order or government department.
 - d. Discloses material which is otherwise commercially sensitive.
 - e. Refers to an issue which is currently the subject of a formal Council complaint, Local Ombudsman complaint or any legal proceedings.
 - f. Provides information relating to the personal and private lives of individual officers of public bodies or makes criminal accusations.
 - g. Contains advertising statements.
 - h. Relates to a specific issue where there is already a right of appeal.
 - i. Relates to a specific and individual planning or licensing decision. Such 'petitions' will be referred to the relevant Officer or Regulatory Committee in accordance with existing procedures for representations.
 - j. Does not relate to something which is the responsibility of the authority, or over which the authority has some influence.

Duplicate Petitions

- 3.2. Where more than one petition is received in time for a particular meeting, each supporting the same outcome on one matter, the petition organisers will be asked to combine the petitions and for one petition organiser to address the meeting. If this is unacceptable to the petition organisers, the Monitoring Officer will determine which should proceed and who should be invited to address the relevant meeting.

4. What are the guidelines for submitting a petition

- 4.1. Under the terms of this scheme a petition must include:
- a. A clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition. It should state what action the petitioners wish the Council to take.

- b. The contact details and postcode of the petition organiser who must also live, work or study in the Bristol local authority area.
 - c. The name and postcode and signature of any person supporting the petition (you are deemed to have 'signed' the petition if you have added your name and postcode to it.)
 - d. A minimum of 20 signatures of people who live, work or study in the Bristol local authority area.
- 4.2. 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.

5. What will the Council do when it receives my petition?

- 5.1. An acknowledgement will be sent to the petition organiser within 15 working days of receiving the petition. It will let them know what options are available for the petition to be heard at a public meeting. It will also be published on our e-petitions site where all petitions received will be registered.
- 5.2. If you wish to submit your petition to a committee meeting it will follow the process as set out in the committee meeting agenda. .
- 5.3. If the petition has enough signatories to trigger a Council debate, a Policy Committee or an Area Committee debate, then the acknowledgment will confirm this and tell you when and where the meeting will take place.
- 5.4. We reserve the right to verify signatories as required. Please ensure you include a valid postcode that relates to your home address (if you live or study in Bristol) or work postcode (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 or a debate at a Policy Committee or Area Committee.

6. Full Council, Policy Committee and Area Committee debates

- 6.1. If a petition contains enough signatories (See 1.2 above) from people who live, work or study in Bristol it can then trigger the right to request a debate at Full Council (or at the relevant Policy Committee or Area Committee). This means that the issue raised in the petition will be discussed at a public meeting which Councillors attend.
- 6.2. If the petition organiser wishes to take up this opportunity, they will be given five minutes to present the petition at the next suitable meeting of the Full Council, which will be determined by the Lord Mayor, or at the next suitable meeting of the relevant Policy Committee or Area Committee, which will be determined by the relevant Chair of that Committee. The petition will then be discussed by Councillors for up to 15 minutes. Full Council, or the relevant Policy Committee or Area Committee, will decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting.

- 6.3. The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of the outcome of the Full Council debate or the debate at the relevant Policy Committee, 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.

7. E-petitions

- 7.1. E-petitions must follow the same guidelines as paper petitions.
- 7.2. You will also need to decide how long you would like your petition to remain open. 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
- 7.3. When you create an e-petition, it may take up to ten working days before it is published online. This is because we have to check that the content of your petition is suitable for publication before it is made available for signature.
- 7.4. If 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 sent to you.
- 7.5. When an e-petition has closed for signature, Democratic Services will be notified. At this stage you must let us know if you would like to present your e-petition to a committee meeting please contact democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk within 10 working days of your receipt of the acknowledgement.

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

- 8.1. You can see all the e-petitions currently available for signature on [Bristol City Council's E-Petitions website](#)
- 8.2. 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.

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

- 9.1. If you feel that the Council has not dealt with your petition properly, please contact the Democratic Services Manager at democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk with a short explanation of the reasons and the action you would like us to take.