

Petitions Scheme for the London Borough of Enfield

Agreed by Council – 19 September 2012

1.

Petitions

The Council welcomes all petitions. The Council 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.

Paper petitions can be sent to:

Corporate Scrutiny & Community Outreach Team

Finance, Resources & Customer Services Department

London Borough of Enfield

PO Box 54

Civic Centre

Silver Street

Enfield

Middlesex

EN1 3XF

Tel: 020 8379 6151

The Council will acknowledge receipt of a petition within ten working days. In all cases the appropriate senior officer will be informed. The appropriate partner authority will also be informed of any petitions affecting them and with whom the Council will work in partnership with to respond to your petition and the Council would expect a response to be available within twenty eight working days.

2. 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. It should state what action the petitioners wish the council to take
- the name and address and signature of any person supporting the petition.

Petitions should be accompanied by 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 signatories to the petition to agree who should act as the petition organiser.

Petitions which are considered to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate will not be accepted. 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.

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

An acknowledgement will be sent to the petition organiser within ten 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.

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, or a senior officer giving evidence, 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.

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 please contact the Corporate Scrutiny & Community Outreach Team.

We will not take action on any petition which we consider to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate and will explain the reasons for this in our acknowledgement of the petition.

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. Whenever possible we will also publish all correspondence relating to the petition (all personal details will be removed). When you sign an e-petition you can elect to receive this information by email. We will not send you anything which is not relevant to the e-petition you have signed, unless you choose to receive other emails from us.

4. 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:

- considering the petition at a council meeting
- holding an inquiry into the matter

taking the action requested in the petition

- undertaking research into the matter
- holding a public meeting
- holding a consultation
- holding a meeting with petitioners
- referring the petition for consideration by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee (see note)
- calling a referendum
- writing to the petition organiser setting out our views about the request in the petition

Note: Overview and Scrutiny committees are committees of councillors who are responsible for scrutinising the work of the council – in other words, the Overview and Scrutiny committee has 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 consider making representations on behalf of the community to the relevant body. The Council works with a large number of local partners and where possible will work with these partners to respond to your petition. If we are not able to do this for any reason (for example if what the petition calls for conflicts with council policy), then we will set out the reasons for this to you.

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. This might consist of simply forwarding the petition to the other Council, but could involve other steps. In any event we will always notify you of the action we have taken. For further information please contact the Corporate Scrutiny & Community Outreach Team.

5. Full Council debates

If the petition contains at least 1% of the assessed population figure from the 2011 Census (3,124) as published by the Office of National Statistics it will be debated by the full Council unless it is a petition asking for a senior council officer to give evidence at a public meeting. This means that the issue raised in the petition will be discussed at a meeting which all councillors can attend. The petition organiser will be advised of the date for full Council and the time allowed for presentation of the petition. The petition organiser will be contacted by the Head of Corporate Scrutiny & Community Outreach to clarify what remedy is being

sought and to advise of the option of having their Councillor present their petition. The Head of Corporate Scrutiny & Community Outreach will prepare a report detailing the subject of the petition and what action the Council and/or partners is being asked to take and arrange for this issue to be placed on the appropriate Council agenda to suit all parties.

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 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 fifteen minutes. 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. Where the issue is one on which the council executive 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.

6. Officer evidence

Your petition may ask for a senior council officer to give evidence at a public meeting about something for which the officer is responsible as part of their job. For example, your petition may ask a senior council officer to explain progress on an issue, or to explain the advice given to elected members to enable them to make a particular decision.

If the petition contains at least 0.5% of the assessed population figure from the 2011 Census (1,562) as published by the Office of National Statistics the relevant senior officer will give evidence at a public meeting of the council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The petition organiser will be contacted by the Head of Corporate Scrutiny to clarify what remedy is being sought and to advise of the option of having their Councillor present their petition. The Head of Corporate Scrutiny will prepare a report detailing the subject of the petition and what action the Council and/or partners is being asked to take and arrange for this issue to be placed on the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee agenda to suit all parties.

A list of the senior staff that can be called to give evidence is attached to this scheme. You should be aware that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may decide that it would be more appropriate for another officer to give evidence instead of any officer named in the petition – for instance if the named officer has changed jobs. The committee may also decide to call the relevant councillor to attend the meeting. Committee members will ask the questions at this meeting, but you will be able to suggest questions to the chair of the committee by contacting the Head of Scrutiny & Community Outreach up to three working days before the meeting.

7. 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 has the right to request that the Council's Overview and Scrutiny committee review the steps that the Council has taken in response to your petition. It is helpful to everyone, and can improve the prospects for a review if the petition organiser gives a short explanation of the reasons why the Council's response is not considered to be adequate.

The committee will endeavour to consider your request at its next meeting, although on some occasions this may not be possible and consideration will take place at the following meeting. 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 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 five working days. The results of the review will also be published on our website.

8. Privacy policy

The details you give us are needed to validate your support and your details will not be published on the website. This is generally the same information required for a paper petition. The Council may contact you in relation to any petitions you have signed, unless you have requested not to be contacted when signing the e-Petition.

London Borough of Enfield is the data controller for personal information collected in respect of both the Council's E-petition facility and for paper petitions. Personal details will automatically be removed 4 years after the closing date of the petition. However, should you wish your name to be removed before this time please contact the Corporate Scrutiny & Community Outreach Team via scrutiny@enfield.gov.uk