

PETITIONS – QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. What is a petition?

A. A petition is a formal request for the council to consider a particular matter or to take a specified course of action. A petition can lend weight to a particular viewpoint and show that others share this view.

Q. What can a petition be about?

A. A petition must relate to something that the council does or for which it has a responsibility. Alternatively, it should be relevant to some matter of major significance or general concern affecting Huntingdonshire and can also relate to an item on the agenda for the council meeting at which the petition is to be submitted.

Q. Are there any issues which the council will not consider in a petition?

A. Yes, we will not accept a petition which:

- is vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate
- relates to an identifiable person
- is considered to be an abuse of the council's powers, responsibilities or obligations
- supports the personal or prejudicial interests of the petition organiser
- contains matters associated with political parties or organisations

- refers to a matter which is already the subject of legal proceedings
- is made under any specific enactment, such as calling for a referendum
- relates to a planning decision
- relates to a licensing decision or
- relates to an individual or entity in respect of which that individual or entity has a right of recourse to a review or right of appeal conferred by or under any enactment.

We will not consider a petition that duplicates a previous petition submitted within the previous 6 months.

Q. What information must be included within a petition?

A. Petitions submitted to us must:

- include a clear and concise statement about the subject of the petition and what action you would like us to take
- be addressed to the District Council
- include the name and contact details of the petition organiser, who should be a local person. A local person is anyone who lives, works or studies (including those under 18) or who owns or occupies commercial premises in the district. This will be the person we contact to explain how we will respond to the petition and to discuss matters of process
- in the case of paper petitions, contain the name, address and signature of each person who signed it. This must be in a legible format and

- in the case of electronic petitions, contain the name and address of each person who is party to it.

Q. How do I submit an electronic petition?

- A. You can submit an electronic petition via our [website](#). Once submitted, we will review your request before it is activated to ensure that it meets the requirements of the Scheme. If acceptable, we will email you confirmation of its activation period, which will be set at 90 days. Once the 90 days has passed, and provided that the petition bears at least 50 signatures, the petition will automatically be submitted to the council.

Q. How many signatures do I need?

- A. Obviously, the more signatures you can get the more weight it would lend to your request. However, it must bear at least 50 or more signatures before it is presented at a meeting of the Full Council, subject to it satisfying the criteria explained within this document.

Q. What happens to a petition which is not the responsibility of the council?

- A. These are petitions which:

- concern a matter that we do not have direct control over
- relate to the functions of another local authority or
- concern a matter delivered in partnership with any of our partner organisations.

These will be submitted to the Monitoring Officer who will determine what steps we should take. His/her decision is final. The petition organiser will be notified of any actions that have been taken.

Q. Where do I send paper Petitions to?

A. Please send paper petitions to the following address:

Monitoring Officer
Huntingdonshire District Council
Pathfinder House
St Mary's Street
Huntingdon
PE29 3TN

Q. When can I send my petition in?

A. You can send your petition in at any time that you wish. However, if the petition:

- relates to particular issue which appears on the agenda for a council meeting or
- qualifies as being raised on the agenda for a council meeting

then the petition must be with the Managing Director no later than noon on the tenth clear working day before that meeting. Council meetings take place five/six times a year and these dates are available on [our website](#).

A maximum of three petitions will be presented at any ordinary full council meeting and will be presented in the order in which they have been received.

Q. What happens when you receive my petition?

A. You will receive an acknowledgement in writing within ten clear working days of receipt of the petition. Online petitions will automatically be submitted to the council for acknowledgement once the petition has closed for signature. The

acknowledgement will indicate what steps we have taken or propose to take in response to the petition.

Q. Will you inform all the people who signed the petition of the next steps?

A. No. It would be too costly to send individual letters. We will only notify you, as petition organiser, of the next steps.

Q. Will I be asked to speak on the petition?

A. Yes. Petitions which qualify for submission to the council will be presented at the beginning of the meeting after the Chairman's announcements. If the petition relates to an item on the agenda for full council meeting, the presentation will be made at the beginning of that item. A summary of the wording of the petition will be incorporated on the agenda for the meeting.

Q. What happens if I can't attend the meeting to present the petition?

A. If you cannot attend the meeting to present your petition, then you will be asked to find a nominee who can stand in your place. If this fails to materialise and no one is able to present the petition, it will still be considered at that meeting.

Q. Can I say what I like?

A. Because time is limited, you should concentrate on getting the main issues across and avoid straying off the subject of the petition. You must also ensure that what you say is neither abusive nor libellous.

Q. How much time will be given at the meeting to speak about the petition?

A. You (or your nominee) can speak for up to 5 minutes in support of the petition. Councillors will then ask questions about the petition for another 5 minutes. The period for questions can be extended at the Chairman's discretion.

Q. Can I take part in the debate or discussions on the petition?

A. No. Once you have spoken about the petition and answered any questions that the councillors may have, you will not be able to participate in the debate or discussion of that item.

Q. What happens after the petition has been presented?

A. Following your presentation and any questions by councillors, the council will take the contents of the petition into account to discuss what course of action to take. This may be to refer it to the Cabinet, Committees or Overview and Scrutiny Panels etc of the council for debate.

Q. Who can I contact for advice on petitions?

A. Please contact the [Democratic Services Team](#) for further information about the petitions scheme.