

Guidance on How to Submit a Petition

Raising a Petition

These Terms and Conditions form the City Council Petitions Scheme which will be reviewed on an annual basis and may be amended from time to time.

Petitioning is one way that individuals, community groups and organisations can participate in the democratic process, by raising issues of public concern with the Council and allowing Councillors to consider the need for change either within the City or on a wider scale.

What can a petition achieve?

Petitions sent in to the Council can have positive outcomes that lead to change or inform debate.

For example, petitions can:

- bring an issue to the attention of the Council, for example, traffic calming measures, a new public swimming pool or the need for additional street lighting;
- show strong public approval or disapproval to something that the Council is doing.

What issues can a petition relate to?

Petitions should be relevant to a matter over which the Council has powers or duties. Refer to the constitution at www.birmingham.gov.uk/constitution.

Can I raise a petition?

To raise a petition you should be an interested party who either lives, works or studies in the authority's area.

Who is the lead petitioner?

The person who raises the petition is known as the lead petitioner and is often the first signatory to sign the petition.

Can I sign a petition?

People signing petitions (signatories) do not have to be residents in Birmingham, but should live, work or study in the authority's area.

How do I start a petition?

Petitions can be started via a paper copy for people to sign, or on one of the petition websites. Generally you and other key petitioners will gather signatures until a date you have decided in advance. You may wish to contact the Council to check if your petition's content is acceptable to present at a Council meeting.

What should my petition contain?

A petition should include a brief title and a short, clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition. It should clearly state what action the petitioner wishes the Council to take. The petition will be returned to you to explain further if it is unclear.

In order for the petition to be considered.

Petitions must clearly display:

- the title/subject of the petition;
- the lead petitioner's/organiser's contact address (which we will write to about the petition);
- the name, address and signature of anyone supporting the petition.

A petition must be submitted in good faith. **You must not include:**

- potentially libelous, false or defamatory statements;
- matters which are subject to prescribed statutory requirements, such as changes to governance arrangements e.g. an elected mayor;
- information protected by a court order (e.g. the identities of children in custody disputes); or in accordance with any other enactment;
- matters which are subject to appeal processes or legal actions (e.g. planning appeals, enforcement action or other legal actions in court etc.);
- material which is commercially sensitive, confidential or which may cause personal distress or loss;
- the names of individual officials of public bodies;
- the names of individuals, or information where they may be easily identified, in relation to criminal accusations.

Once the petition has been accepted it will become a public document accessible via the website. You should take care not to include any information or signatures that should not be made public.

Petitions that do not follow these guidelines will not be accepted. In these cases, you will be informed in writing of the reasons why a petition cannot be accepted. If you are not satisfied with the reason for your petition being rejected the matter can be further considered by the City Solicitor.

In the six weeks before an election local authorities cannot publish any material which may support any political party or a point of view which may be associated with any political party.

What happens once the signatures have been collected?

The lead petitioner should decide when he or she has collected sufficient names and submit it to the Council for consideration.

Lead petitioners may wish to set their petition's time limit to coincide with a particular City Council meeting. Council meeting pages at www.birmingham.gov.uk/democracy

What is the process for submitting the petition?

Lead petitioners may wish to set their petition's time limit so that it is finished in time for a particular Council meeting (e.g. Full Council, Ward Forum meeting).

The petition must be received by the Council before they can be submitted for consideration. Your petition should be sent to:

Democratic Services,
The Council Team - Petitions,
Room 331, Council House,
Victoria Square,
Birmingham, B1 1BB.

Email: CommitteeSupport@birmingham.gov.uk

Petitions can be presented by yourself Ward Forum or by a Councillor to a meeting of the City Council. Alternatively, petitions can be sent directly to the relevant Department.

Details of Council meetings at www.birmingham.gov.uk/democracy

How many names should be on the petition?

The lead petitioner should decide when he or she has collected sufficient names and submit it to the Council for consideration. The Council has a duty to respond to all petitions.

What happens after the petition is submitted?

Once the petition has been submitted to the Council, it will be referred on to the appropriate service for consideration.

How will the Council respond to my petition?

The 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 meeting of the authority
- holding an inquiry
- holding a public meeting
- commissioning research
- writing to the petition organiser setting out the authority's views on the request in the petition
- referring the petition to an Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Will the petition be debated at the full City Council meeting?

If the threshold of 20,000 signatures is achieved (subject to verification) this will automatically trigger a debate of the petition at City Council. The lead petitioner will be notified of the date of the meeting.

The lead petitioner will also be offered the option of reading their petition at the beginning of the debate or they may choose to request a local Councillor to present it on their behalf.

Can I refer a petition to an Overview and Scrutiny Committee?

If your petition achieves the threshold of 10,000 signatures (subject to verification) it will be referred to the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee for a Senior Officer to attend and answer questions about the delivering of public services. The final decision on which officer should attend, and the questions to be asked of him or her, rest with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Overview and Scrutiny Committees can decide that for the purposes of addressing the concerns raised in a petition it is more appropriate for another officer to be called to attend instead.

In addition, in the event that a petition with the number of signatures over 5,000, but below the above threshold trigger, is submitted, it will be considered by the Council Business Management Committee to determine whether an Overview and Scrutiny Committee or City Council should debate the petition, if relevant.

What happens if I feel the response to be inadequate?

If a lead petitioner feels that a response from the Council is inadequate then you can request a review to be carried out by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The results of the review will be published on the Council's website.

Your details will only be used by the Council for any petitions that you sign. Your details will not be used for any purposes other than the petition, unless you have expressly given permission otherwise.

Personal details will be automatically removed 2 years after the closing date of the petition.

How can I find out more information?

For more information, please contact:

Democratic Services
Birmingham City Council
Council House
Victoria Square
Birmingham B1 1BB

Email: CommitteeSupport@birmingham.gov.uk