

UPDATE

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL PETITIONS SCHEME

Petitions Scheme

Redditch Borough Council welcomes petitions and recognises that petitions are one way in which people can let us know their concerns. Petitions submitted should be clearly identified as such and should ideally use a copy of the attached petitions form (available electronically at <http://redditch.whub.org.uk/cms/council-and-democracy/petitions.aspx> (a hard copy of the form can be supplied upon request).

If you wish to send a petition to the Council, it should be sent in writing to:

The Monitoring Officer
C/o Democratic Services
Redditch Borough Council
Town Hall
Walter Stranz Square
Redditch B98 8AH.

Petitions can also be created, signed and submitted online by following the link on the petitions webpage:

<http://redditch.whub.org.uk/cms/council-and-democracy/petitions.aspx>

Petitions which have received 1,000 signatures or more will be presented to a meeting of the Council.

The dates and times of Council meetings can be found at <http://www.redditchbc.gov.uk/democracy/ieDocHome.aspx>.

All petitions sent or presented to the Council will receive an acknowledgement from the Council within 10 working days of receipt. This acknowledgement will set out what we plan to do with the petition.

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 01527 64252 extension 3269 at least 10 working days before the meeting and they will talk you through the process.

For further information about petitioning Redditch Borough Council please contact 01527 64252 ext 3269

(e.mail: democratic@bromsgroveandredditchbc.gov.uk)

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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 clearly state what action the petitioners wish the Council to take;
- the printed name and **Postcode** address and signature of any person supporting the petition.

Petitions should be accompanied by contact details, including an address, for the petition organiser ('Lead Petitioner'). This is the person we will contact to explain how we will respond to the petition. The contact details of the Lead Petitioner will not be placed on the website. If the petition does not identify a Lead Petitioner, we will attempt to contact signatories to the petition to try and identify who should act as the Lead Petitioner.

Petitions can either request that the Council support a particular course of action or can request that **an appropriate member of the Council Councillor** or senior Officer of the Council be required to give evidence at a Committee meeting. The petition should relate to matters within the ~~jurisdiction~~ **powers** of the Borough Council.

Please note that petitions which relate to a regulatory matter, such as a planning application or licensing issue **must follow separate processes and** will not be eligible for consideration under this Petitions Scheme. Petitions received on 'regulatory matters' will be forwarded by the Monitoring Officer to the relevant Council Department or Committee and be considered as part of the regulatory application to which they relate. **Similarly, petitions relating to the preparation, revision or adoption of a development plan document will follow the separate process established for that purpose.**

Petitions regarding individual circumstances and/or involving private / confidential or personal information will not follow this process and will be referred directly to relevant Officers for receipt and action.

For legal reasons, 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.

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What the Council will do

An acknowledgement will be sent to the petition organiser within 10 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.

Copies of the petition will be forwarded to all relevant Councillors and Officers without delay, with a request that Officers respond to the petition as soon as possible, if only to provide a holding reply.

If the petition has enough signatures to trigger a Council debate, or call a senior Officer **or Councillor** to give evidence, then the acknowledgment will confirm this and tell you when and where the meeting will take place. If the petition requires further investigation, we will tell you the steps we plan to take.

The Monitoring Officer will determine how the petition will best be dealt with, in accordance with the following:

Petitions which have received 1,000 signatures or more will be presented to a meeting of the Council and will be scheduled for Council debate (OR alternatively, if calling a Senior Officer or Councillor to give evidence, will be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee).

For petitions containing between 1,000 and 50 signatures, an informal discussion will be arranged between the Lead Petitioner(s) and relevant Councillors – Ward Councillors and/or relevant Service lead Councillors (called ‘Portfolio Holder(s)’) together with relevant Service Officers. This will enable issues to be explored face to face, with a minimum of delay.

Petitions containing fewer than 50 signatures will be referred for action / response by relevant Officers.

However, in every case relevant Councillors (Ward Members and relevant Lead Councillors) and Officers will receive copies of the petition, as soon as it is received – for information or for action, as appropriate.

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

[* Repeat Petitions: any petition presented within 12 months which has, in the judgement of the Monitoring Officer, substantially the same aims as one previously submitted / considered.]

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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.

Responding 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:

- taking the action requested in the petition
- considering the petition at a Council meeting
- holding an inquiry into the matter
- undertaking research into the matter
- holding a public meeting
- holding a consultation
- holding a meeting with petitioners
- referring the matter for consideration by the Executive Committee
- referring the matter for consideration by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee¹
- writing to the petition organiser setting out our views about the request in the petition.

If your petition is about something over which the Council has no direct control (for example the local railway services or hospital / health care issues) it may 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. You can find more information on the services for which the Council is responsible on our website www.redditchbc.gov.uk.

If your petition is about something that a different Council is responsible for we will give consideration to 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.

¹ *The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is a Committee 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.*

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Full Council Debates

If a petition contains ***more than 1,000 signatures***, it will be presented to the full Council for debate, unless it is a petition asking for ***a Councillor*** or 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 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 a future meeting.

The Lead Petitioner will be given up to 5 minutes to present the petition at the meeting, with a maximum of 15 minutes being allowed for the consideration of each petition, and the petition will then be discussed by Councillors.

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 Executive Committee is required to make the final decision, the Council will decide whether to make recommendations to inform that decision. The Lead Petitioner will receive written confirmation of this decision. This confirmation will also be published on our website.

Requesting Attendance before a Public Meeting

Your petition may ask for an appropriate ***Councillor or*** senior Council Officer to give evidence at a public meeting about something for which they are responsible. 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 your petition contains ***at least 1,000 signatures, the relevant Councillor or*** senior Officer will give evidence at a public meeting of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee. You should be aware that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may decide that it would be more appropriate for another Councillor or Officer to give evidence instead of any Officer named in the petition. The Committee may also decide to call relevant Councillor(s) to attend the meeting. Committee members will ask questions at this meeting, but you will be able to suggest questions to the Chair of the Committee by contacting democratic@redditchbc.gov.uk up to 5 working days before the meeting, or by ringing (01527) 54252 ext 3269.

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Electronic Petitions (E-Petitions)

The Council welcomes e-petitions which are created and submitted through our website <http://redditch.whub.org.uk/cms/council-and-democracy/petitions.aspx>. E-petitions must follow the same guidelines as paper petitions.

The Lead Petitioner 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 signatures. Most petitions run for six months, but you can choose a shorter or longer timeframe, up to a maximum of 12 months.

When you create an e-petition, it may take 5 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.

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.

When an e-petition has closed for signature, it will automatically be submitted to the Monitoring Officer. In the same way as a paper petition, you will receive an acknowledgement within 10 working days. If it contains the qualifying number of signatures, it may be presented to full Council. If you would like to present your e-petition to a meeting of the Council, please contact democratic@redditchbc.gov.uk within 10 working days of receipt of the acknowledgement.

'Signing' an e-Petition

You can see all the e-petitions currently available for signature via the link on the <http://redditch.whub.org.uk/cms/council-and-democracy/petitions.aspx> web page. 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, which also validates your 'signature'. Once this step is complete your 'signature' will be added to the petition. People visiting the e-petition will be able to see your name in the list of those who have signed it, but your contact details will not be visible and, in any event, will not be kept or used by the Borough Council.

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If you feel that we have not dealt with your petition properly, the Lead Petitioner has the right to request the Council's Overview and Scrutiny ('O&S') Committee to 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 Lead Petitioner gives a short explanation of the reasons why the Council's response is not considered to be adequate.

The Overview and Scrutiny 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 a later meeting.

Should the Committee determine that your petition has not been dealt with adequately, it may use any of its powers to deal with the matter. These powers include instigating an investigation, making recommendations to the Executive Committee and / or to the full Council.

Once the review has been considered, the Lead Petitioner will be informed of the results within 5 working days. The results will also be published on the Council's website.

Other arrangements for Public Involvement

Other arrangements offer opportunities for public involvement at meetings of the full Council and at other Council meetings. These include opportunities for Deputations and 'Questions on Notice' ~~to the Leader of~~ **to senior Members of** the Council; Public Speaking at Planning Committee, etc: separate provisions in the Council's Constitution apply.

Attachments: Sample forms

END.

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Petition to Redditch Borough Council

Statement to be completed by the petition organiser(s) (Lead Petitioner(s)) when the petition is submitted to the Monitoring Officer.

Name and address of the petition organiser(s):

Name: _____ Address _____ _____ _____ Postal Code: _____ Telephone: _____ E Mail: _____	Name: _____ Address _____ _____ _____ Postal Code: _____ Telephone: _____ E Mail: _____
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Please describe briefly what the petition is about / what action is sought:

Date petition started: _____

Date petition submitted: _____

Please return to:

The Monitoring Officer
 C/o Democratic Services
 Redditch Borough Council
 Town Hall, Walter Stranz Square
 Redditch B98 8AH.

For further information about petitioning Redditch Borough Council please contact 01527 64252 ext 3269
 (e.mail democratic@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk .)