

E-Petition Guidance (to be read in conjunction with the City Council's Scheme for Handling Petitions)

This Guidance is aimed at assisting members of the public with submitting an e-petition from the City Council's website and should be read in conjunction with the City Council's Petition Scheme ([link to guidelines](#)). Find out more about e-petitions by clicking on the links below or [click on e-petition](#) to take you to the page to submit an e-petition.

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The Council welcomes e-petitions which are created and submitted through our website ([link to submit an e-petition](#)). E-petitions must follow the same guidelines as paper petitions ([link to guidelines](#)). The petition organiser will need to provide us with their name, postal address and email address.

You will need to decide how long you would like your petition to be open for signatures. Most petitions run for three months but you can choose a longer or shorter timeframe, up to a maximum of six months.

When an e-petition is created it may take up to five working days before it is published online. This is because the content of the petition needs to be checked to ensure it is suitable before it is made available for signature. If we feel we cannot publish your e-petition for some reason, we will contact you within this time frame 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 e-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, you will no longer be able to sign it. The list of signatories will be collated by Democratic Services. In the same way as a paper petition, the promoter will receive an acknowledgement within 3 working days.

Contact details

For more information and advice, or to discuss a potential e-petition contact us at:-

Democratic Services, Southampton City Council, Civic Centre, Southampton, SO14 7LY.

Telephone 023 8083 2430 / Email: democratic.services@southampton.gov.uk

What issues can my e-petition relate to?

Any e-petition should be relevant to some issue on which the Council has powers or duties or on which it has shared delivery responsibilities. It should be submitted in good faith and be decent, honest and respectful.

Petitions which are considered to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate will not be accepted. If a petition does not follow the guidelines set out in the Council's Petitions Scheme it may decide not to do anything further with it. In that case, the Council will write to you to explain the reasons.

During politically sensitive periods, such as prior to an election, politically controversial material may need to be restricted.

The Council accepts no liability for the e-petitions on its web pages. The views expressed in the petitions do not necessarily reflect those of the Council.

Who can submit an e-petition?

An e-petition can be submitted by anyone of any age who lives, works or studies in the area of Southampton City Council.

To submit an e-petition you must register on the Council's website. In order to register you will need to provide the Council with a few details which including your name, address and a valid email address.

How do I start an e-petition?

Click on the Select a 'New e-Petition' option. You will be asked to enter a title which the system will automatically check against existing e-petitions to allow you to see if a similar one has been considered recently.

There will also be a drop down box which allows you to associate your e-petition with any existing issues on the City Council's Forward Plan, which details of decisions to be taken by the Council in the forthcoming months.

You will then be asked to complete an online form which will be submitted to Democratic Services. You may be contacted to discuss your e-petition before it goes live.

What information should my e-petition contain?

Your e-petition will need to include the following:

- a title;
- a statement setting out what action you would like the Council to take;
- any information that you feel is relevant to the e-petition and reasons why you consider the action requested to be necessary. You may include links to other relevant websites;
- you will need to choose a date for when your e-petition will go live on the website. Bearing in mind that it may take Democratic Services a couple of days to check your e-petition request and to contact you to

- discuss any issues arising please ensure that you submit your request a few days before you want the e-petition to go live;
- a date for when your e-petition will stop collecting signatures. In order to achieve the maximum impact, you may want to set this date to ensure that the e-petition will be submitted before a date on which a debate is to be held or a decision taken on the issue. We will host your e-petition for up to six months but would expect most to be shorter in length than this;
 - as the lead petitioner/promoter, your name will be displayed with your e-petition on the Council's website.

Should you experience problems with submitting an e-petition or would like further advice, assistance and information then please contact Democratic Services and they will be happy to assist you.

Who can sign an e-petition?

An e-petition can be signed by a person of any age who lives, works or studies in the area of Southampton City Council.

When you sign an e-petition you will be asked to provide your name, address, including postcode and a valid email address. When you have submitted this information you will be sent an email to the email address 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 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 but it will not include your contact details.

You can only sign an e-petition once. The list of signatures will be checked by officers and any duplicate signatures or obvious inappropriate responses will be removed.

Who promotes e-petitions?

Whilst the Council will host e-petitions on its website the Council will not promote individual e-petitions. It is for the lead petitioner to promote and publicise their e-petition in order to get as many people as possible to sign up. Raising awareness of a petition could be done in a number of ways such as promoting it on local community websites, discussion forums or newsletters. A brief explanation of the issue followed by directions to the Council's website to sign up would be sufficient detail to encourage people to take an interest in an issue. The Council will not promote or advertise paper petitions or allow copies to be left for signature on its premises although your Ward Councillor may be prepared to assist you to promote your petitions.

What happens when the e-petition is complete?

When the e-petition reaches its closing date, you will no longer be able to sign it online. The list of signatories will be collected and the Promoter will be contacted regarding the submission of the completed e-petition in accordance with the provisions of the Council's Petition Scheme.

What can e-petitions achieve?

When you submit an e-petition to the Council it can have positive outcomes that lead to change and inform debate. It can bring an issue to the attention of the Council and show strong public approval or disapproval for something which the Council is doing, and local Councillors will always be informed about e-petitions which affect their Wards. As a consequence the Council may decide, for example, to change or review a policy, hold a public meeting or run a public consultation to gather further views on the issue.

Can I still submit a paper petition?

Yes. A petition may also gather names and address in both forms – you can have a paper version and an online version, although repeat names will be removed. Both forms should run for the same period of time and must be submitted together. When submitting an e-petition request, please let us know if you are running a paper petition as well as this can be highlighted on the website.