

Kent County Council - Petition Scheme

1. All petitions under this scheme should relate to the work, functions or responsibilities of the Council, including the Executive. It excludes the following as other procedures apply:
 - (a) petitions relating to a planning application,
 - (b) matters where there is already an existing right of appeal (such as Council tax banding or non-domestic rates),
 - (c) statutory petitions (such as requesting a referendum on having an elected mayor).
2. Petitions will not be considered if they do not comply with the requirements of this scheme or are vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate.
3. If the petition is about something over which the County Council has no direct control (for example the local railway or hospital) the Council will consider making representations on behalf of the community to the relevant body.
4. Petitions may be submitted on paper or by using the e-petition facility available through the Council website.
5. All accepted petitions will receive a response from the relevant Cabinet Member, to be sent to the petition organiser and published on the website. At all further stages, the petition organiser will receive updates and this information will be published.
6. The following thresholds apply for further action on the petition:
 - (a) Where the petition relates to a County Council matter that relates to a specific District Council area and contains at least 750 signatures it will be debated at the most appropriate local meeting (e.g., Joint Transportation Board).
 - (b) Between 1500 and 4999 signatures, the petition will be debated at the appropriate Cabinet Committee.
 - (c) 5000 signatures or more, the petition will be debated at County Council.

Paper Petitions

7. Petitions submitted to the County Council must include:
 - (a) a clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition. It should state what action the petitioners wish the County Council to take,

(b) the name, address and contact details of the petition organiser (this is the person the Council will contact to explain how it will respond to the petition), and

(c) the name and address and signature of any person supporting the petition.

8. Where a petition has passed the threshold for debate at either Cabinet Committee or Council, the petition must be submitted to Democratic Services at least 14 days before the next relevant meeting to enable consideration to be given to its eligibility for inclusion on the agenda.

E-petitions

9. The requirements under 20.8 for paper petitions also apply for e-petitions and this information will be gathered through the e-petition creation and signing process. In addition, the petition organiser will be asked to decide how long the petition will be open for. The default is 3 months, but a different timescale can be agreed with the organiser.

10. Publication of an e-petition created online can take up to ten days. The organiser will be contacted if the petition cannot be published and ten days will be given to make any changes. Where a petition is not accepted, or appropriate changes not made, the reasons for rejection will be published on the website.

Receipt of the Petition

11. Receipt of a paper petition will be acknowledged within 5 days, or within 5 days of a e-petition closing.

12. The decision as to how the Council will proceed will be communicated to the petition organiser within 20 working days.

Petition Debates

13. Where a petition is accepted for debate at Council or Cabinet Committee, the procedure set out at 14.34-39 will be followed – this is reproduced below for ease.

14. Where a petition is eligible for discussion at a full Council or Committee meeting these rules apply, excepting that the County Council or Cabinet Committee will not debate a petition on the same decision/issue as one debated by it within the previous six months.

15. The total time for a single debate shall be 45 minutes.

16. The petition organiser, or their named representative, will be invited to attend the meeting and to submit a written statement of no more than 500 words, which should be sent to the Democratic Services Unit (preferably by e-mail) to arrive by 5:00pm on the Monday of the week before the County Council or Cabinet Committee meeting. The relevant Directorate should also submit a brief position statement/briefing note by the same deadline. The Clerk shall also prepare a short report containing the full text of the petition and the number of signatures.
17. At the meeting of the County Council or Cabinet Committee the petition organiser, or their named representative, will be given five minutes to present the petition at the meeting and the petition will then be discussed by Members. The relevant Cabinet Member will be invited to speak for up to five minutes on the Petition. If the petition organiser or their named representative are not present, then the petition will be debated in their absence.
18. The County Council or Cabinet Committee will decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting. Where it has the authority to do so, it may take the action the petition requests, or may choose not to for reasons put forward during the debate. It may commission further investigation into the matter, for example by the relevant Cabinet Member or Committee. Where the issue is one on which the Executive is required to make the final decision, the County Council or Cabinet Committee will decide whether to make recommendations to inform that decision.
19. The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of the Council or Cabinet Committee's decision, which will also be published.

Other Provisions

20. The petition organiser has the right to request that the steps that the County Council has taken in response to their petition are reviewed. All reviews will be considered by the Selection and Member Services Committee.
21. The petition organiser will be asked to provide a short explanation of the reasons why the County Council's response is not considered to be adequate.
22. The Selection and Member Services Committee will consider the request to review at the next appropriate meeting.
23. Once any appeal has been considered, the petition organiser will be informed of the results within 5 working days. The results of any review will also be published on the Council's website.