

Petitions scheme

Paper petitions

August 2020

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Business and Member Support Team | Luton Council

Petitions

We welcome petitions and recognise that they are one way in which people can let us know their concerns. All petitions sent or presented to us will receive an acknowledgement **within 10 working days**. This acknowledgement will set out what we plan to do with the petition.

Petitions can be sent to:

The Chief Executive
Luton Council
Town Hall
Luton, LU1 2BQ

Any petitions received, relating to a subject that is under consultation, regardless of the number of signatures, will be sent direct to the relevant department responsible for the consultation. The petition will be submitted to the consultation and be considered under the consultation process.

What are the 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 state what action the petitioners wish the council to take
- the signatures of **five or more people** who live, work or study within Luton
- the name, full postal address, signature of any person supporting the petition and the date the petition was signed

Petitions should be accompanied by contact details, including an address, for the petition organiser. This is the person we will contact to explain how we will respond to the petition.

If the petition does not identify a petition organiser, we will contact the first signatory to the petition where contact details have been given.

Petitions can be submitted in hard copy or electronic format.

Petition subjects

The subject of the petition should:

- relate to a relevant matter, i.e. a matter which relates to a function of the council, for example – education, social services, parks, highways OR
- be a matter which relates to an improvement in the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of the people of Luton to which a partner, for example the police, fire service or NHS, could contribute

If a petition does not follow the guidelines set out above, we may decide not to do anything further with it. In that case, we will write to the lead petitioner to explain the reasons.

The subject of a petition should usually not replicate a similar petition received **within the last 12 months**.

What will the council do when it receives my petition?

An acknowledgement will be sent to the petition organiser **within ten working days** of receiving the petition. It will let you know what we plan to do with the petition and when you can expect to hear from us again.

If we can do what the petition asks for, the acknowledgement may confirm that we have taken the action requested and the petition will be closed.

If the petition has enough signatures to trigger a council debate, then the acknowledgement will confirm this and tell you when and where the meeting will take place. If the petition needs more investigation, we will tell you the steps we plan to take.

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

This procedure relates to all petitions OTHER THAN those on development control matters for which there is a procedure within Development Control. Any petitions received on development control matters should be passed immediately to the Development Control manager.

Any petition received which relates to an individual or is raising an issue personal to the lead petitioner should be referred to the appropriate department to be dealt with under our complaints procedure.

Any petition received following consultation undertaken by the Licensing Unit with regard to liquor licensing matters, for example, objections to an application of a variation of a licence, should not be dealt with under this procedure but passed to the Licensing Unit for processing.

If a petition is about something over which we have no direct control (for example the local railway or hospital) we will aim to make representations on behalf of the community to the relevant body.

We work 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.

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.

Whenever possible we will also publish all correspondence relating to the petition (all personal details will be removed).

Copies of these petitions may also be sent to local ward councillors and other councillors as appropriate.

How will the council respond 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:

- referring the matter to the Petitions and Representations Committee for matters of ward and wider community interest
- referring matters of policy to the Executive
- referring a petition to full council for debate if the necessary threshold of *1400 signatures is met.

In addition to these steps, we will consider all the specific actions it can potentially take on the issues highlighted in a petition.

Rather than submitting a formal petition you may wish to discuss matters of local community interest or concern with your local ward councillors, with a view to resolving the matter directly.

If your petition is about something over which we have no direct control (for example the local railway or hospital) we will aim to make representations on behalf of the community to the relevant body. We work 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.

If your petition is about something that a different council is responsible for, we will give consideration to what the best method is for responding to it. It might consist of simply forwarding the petition to the other council, but could involve other steps. In any event we will always notify the lead petitioner of the action we have taken.

* 1400 = approximately 1% of the electorate of Luton

Full council debates

If a petition contains more than *1,400 signatures it will be debated by the full council. This means that the issue raised in the petition will be discussed at a meeting which all councillors can attend.

The petition organiser will be given **five minutes to present the petition** at the meeting. Councillors will then have a maximum of 15 minutes to ask questions of the lead petitioner, to seek clarification or further information and the petition will then be discussed by councillors.

We will decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting. We may decide:

- to take the action the petition requests
- not to take the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate
- to commission further investigation into the matter, for example by the Executive or a relevant committee

The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of this decision. This confirmation will also be published on our website.

Actions taken by the council

Once your petition has been considered the council will:

- notify the petition organiser in writing of the steps we have taken or propose to take and of the reasons for doing so
- publish this notification on our democracy website **within five working days** of the decision being made

Petition reviews

What can I do if I feel my petition has not been dealt with properly?

If you feel that we have not dealt with your petition properly, the petition organiser has the right to request that our Overview and Scrutiny Board review the steps that we have taken in response to your petition, provided the petition is valid.

The board will consider your request as soon as practically possible following receipt. Should the board determine we have not dealt with your petition adequately, it may use any of its power to deal with the matter.

These powers include:

- instigating an investigation

- making recommendations to the council's Executive
- arranging for the matter to be considered at a meeting of the full council

Once the appeal has been considered the petition organiser will be informed of the results **within ten working days**. The results of the review will also be published on our website.

ePetitions

The council does not currently accept e-Petitions.

Privacy statement

The details you give us are needed to validate your support for a petition but we will not be published on the website.