
6E: LOCAL PETITION SCHEME

1.0 PETITIONS

The Council welcomes petitions and recognises that petitions are one way in which people can let the Council know of their views and concerns.

Petitions may be submitted to the Council either by post, or electronically, or by being physically presented to the Council at a meeting of the full Council.

Petitions sent by post should be sent to the Monitoring Officer, c/o Democratic Services, West Oxfordshire District Council, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire, OX28 1NB.

Petitions can also be created, signed and submitted online to the Monitoring Officer at democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk.

Petitions can be presented to a meeting of the full Council. (The dates of such meetings can be found at www.westoxon.gov.uk). If you would like to present your petition to the Council, or would like your Councillor to present it on your behalf, please contact Democratic Services on 01993 861522 at least 10 working days before the meeting and they will talk you through the process. Your petition will be accepted by the Council and you will be advised in writing, following the meeting, of the next steps. You will not have any right to address Council at a meeting where the petition is presented.

The Council will treat something as a petition, subject to it meeting the criteria at paragraph 2.0 below, if it is identified as being a petition, or if it seems to us that it is intended to be a petition.

2.0 CRITERIA FOR A PETITION

Petitions submitted to the Council must include:

- a minimum of 500 signatories; and
- a clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition. It should specifically state what action the petitioners request the Council to take; and
- the name, postcode and signature of any person supporting the petition, with the exception that signatures are not required on electronic petitions; and
- the contact details, including full name, address and email for the petition organiser. This is the person we will contact to explain how we will respond to the petition.

Petitions which are considered, by the Monitoring Officer, to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise offensive or inappropriate, will not be accepted and the petition organiser will be informed of that fact together with reasons.

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, the Monitoring Officer will write to the petition organiser to explain the reasons.

If the petition applies to a planning or licensing application, is a statutory petition (for example requesting a referendum on having an elected mayor), or is on a matter where there is already an existing right of appeal, such as council tax banding and non-domestic rates, other procedures apply, and the petition will not be accepted or dealt with in accordance with this scheme. Further information on all these procedures and how you can express your views is available at www.westoxon.gov.uk

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.

3.0 THE COUNCIL'S PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH A PETITION

All petitions to the Council, regardless of how submitted, will receive an acknowledgement, from the Monitoring Officer to the petition organiser, within 10 working days of receipt. This acknowledgement will set out what the Council plans to do with the petition.

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

The Petition will be accepted, provided it meets the criteria of paragraph 2.0 above, and will be published on the Council's website. The contact details of the petition organiser will not be so published. Whenever possible we will also publish all correspondence relating to the petition (all personal details will be removed).

3.1 The Council's response to a petition

The Council's 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 petition for consideration to one of our Scrutiny Committees;
- calling a referendum;
- writing to the petition organiser setting out our views about the request in the petition

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

If your petition is about something over which the Council has no direct control, or that a different Council is responsible for, the Monitoring Officer will advise the Petition Organiser to whom the representations should be directed to, or the Council may consider making representations on behalf of the community to the relevant body. More information about the services for which the Council is responsible can be found at www.westoxon.gov.uk.

3.2 Petitions with over 500 but less than 1,500 signatories

In circumstances where a petition contains more than 500 signatures, and so qualifies as a petition, but has insufficient signatories to trigger a Council debate, the Leader of the Council will determine what action will be taken in response to the Petition.

The Petition will be referred to the Leader of the Council, together with an Officer report, which will be published for 5 working days on the Council's website, before the Leader makes their decision. The decision will be contained in a Decision Notice which will be sent to the petition organiser and published on the Council's website.

The Leader may take whatever professional Officer advice, and undertake whatever consultation they deem appropriate, in reaching their decision.

3.3 Petitions with over 1,500 signatories

If the petition has 1,500 signatures it will trigger a Council debate. The acknowledgment will confirm this and advise the petition organiser when and where the meeting will take place. The Council will endeavour to consider the petition at its next meeting, or as soon as practicable thereafter. If the petition needs more investigation, we will tell you the steps we plan to take.

At the relevant Council meeting, the petition organiser will be given five minutes to present the petition to Councillors. Councillors will receive an Officer report with the petition, setting out various options and recommendations. Councillors will consider the petition, debate it, in accordance with the usual rules of debate, and make a resolution as to how to respond to the Petition. The Council 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

within the remit of the Council's Executive, the Council will refer the matter to the Executive for a decision but may make recommendations to the Executive to inform their decision.

The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of the Council's resolution regarding the petition. This confirmation will also be published on our website.

3.4 E-petitions

E-petitions can be accessed and submitted via our website www.westoxon.gov.uk

4.0 REVIEW OF PROCESS

If you feel that the Council has not dealt with your petition properly, you should contact the Monitoring Officer who will review the process, and respond to you within 10 working days.