

PETITION SCHEME
(Council Procedure Rule 10.1)
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Anyone who lives, works or studies in the Council's area may sign or organise a petition and trigger a response. This includes anyone under the age of 18. This petition scheme explains the rules that the Council will apply to any petition it receives.

2. Petitions

- 2.1 Petitions submitted to the Council under this scheme must:

2.1.1 include a clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition.

2.1.2 state what lawful action the petitioners wish the Council to take;

2.1.3 be signed by at least 20 people supporting the petition;

2.1.4 include the name and address (in a legible format) and signature of any person supporting the petition together with their connection with the Council's area ie lives, works or studies; and

2.1.5 contact details, including name, address, telephone number (and where possible, an e-mail address) of the petition organiser.

- 2.2 The petition organiser is the person the Council will contact to explain how it will respond to the petition. The contact details of the petition organiser will not be placed on the Council's website.

- 2.3 If a petition does not include all of the information required by this scheme may not be accepted by the Proper Officer. In that case, the Council will write to the petition organiser to explain the reasons why.

3. Petitions not included in this scheme

- 3.1 The Council will not take action on any petition which the Proper Officer considers to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate and will explain the reasons for this in the acknowledgement of the petition.

- 3.2 This petition scheme does not apply to:

3.2.1 any petition which is not about a matter for which the Council has a responsibility or which affects its area;

3.2.2 any petition relating to a planning or licensing application or decision (which will be referred by the Proper Officer to the relevant officer/committee so that regard may be had to it in reaching any decision where this is appropriate in accordance with arrangements that the relevant committee has agreed);

3.2.3 a statutory petition (for example requesting a referendum on having a directly elected mayor);

3.2.4 is related to confidential staffing matters; or

3.2.5 a petition relating to a matter where there is already an existing recourse to a review or right of appeal, such as council tax banding and non-domestic rates, where other procedures apply.

3.3 In addition, any petition on the same or similar topic as one that the Council has received and dealt with in the previous six months is excluded.

3.4 Details of petitions affecting particular wards that have been excluded will be sent to the Members representing those wards.

4. Guidelines for submitting a petition

4.1 Paper petitions can be sent to:

The Proper Officer, Dorset Council, County Hall, Dorchester DT1 1XJ

4.2 The Council will accept e-petitions hosted by third parties (for example, Change.org), or as paper petitions information about e-signatories downloaded from third party e-petition hosts.

4.3 Petitions can also be presented to a meeting of the Council if it meets the threshold. Where the threshold is met the petition organiser should contact the Proper Officer at least 10 working days before the Council meeting.

5. How the Council will respond to a petition

5.1 The Council will acknowledge receipt of a petition within 10 working days setting out what the Council plans to do with the petition. The acknowledgment will let the petition organiser know what the Council plans to do with the petition and when they can expect to hear from the Council again. Where the subject matter of the petition affects particular wards, the Members representing those wards will be notified of the receipt of the petition.

5.2 If paragraph 3.3 applies to the petition then the Council's acknowledgement will include details any previous petition on the same topic. If the Council is still considering a petition on the same or similar topic, the acknowledgement will tell the petition organiser that the new petition has been amalgamated with the first petition.

5.3 The Council's response to a petition will depend on what a petition asks for, but may include one or more of the following:

5.3.1 taking the action requested in the petition;

5.3.2 considering the petition at a meeting of the Council or Executive;

5.3.3 holding an inquiry into the matter;

5.3.4 holding a public meeting;

5.3.5 holding a meeting with petitioners or the petition organiser;

- 5.3.6 undertaking research into the matter;
- 5.3.7 writing to the petition organiser setting out the Council's views about the request in the petition
- 5.3.8 referring the petition to an Overview and Scrutiny Committee or another Committee of the Council for consideration.

5.4 The Council's response may also depend on the number of people who have signed the petition. The table below sets out the thresholds:

Number of signatories	Response
20 - 49	Response from relevant director/service head (treated as standard correspondence).
50 – 4,999	Response from relevant Executive Member
5000+	Referred for debate at a meeting of the full Council

- 5.5 If the Council is able to do what a petition asks, the acknowledgement to the petition organiser may confirm that the Council has taken the action requested and the petition will be closed.
- 5.6 Where the petition is referred to the relevant Executive Member for a response, the petition organiser will be invited to make a written statement in support of the petition (if one has not already been included in the petition).
- 5.7 If the petition has enough signatures to be referred to trigger a debate at a meeting of the full Council, then the acknowledgment will confirm this and inform the petition organiser when and where the relevant meeting will take place. The Council will try to consider the petition at its next meeting, although on some occasions this may not be possible and consideration will then take place at the following meeting.
- 5.8 Where the petition is referred to the full Council, the petition organiser (or any person authorised by him/her) will, if they so wish, be given a period not exceeding three minutes to present the petition at the meeting and unless the petition is referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or another Committee or sub-committee for consideration without debate; the petition will be debated by Members. Members may ask questions of the petition organiser. The petition organiser (or any person authorised by him/her) will be granted a right of reply for a further period not exceeding three minutes at the end of the debate and before a final decision or vote is taken.