

# Petitions Guidance

*How the Council will consider your petition*



## What is a petition?

1. A petition is a formal written request, typically signed by many people, appealing to an organisation (often the Council or some other public service) to take some form of action in respect of a particular cause or issue.

## Thinking of starting a petition?

2. The Council welcomes petitions, recognising that they are one way in which people can voice their concerns and seek to influence decisions. As such the Council will address with care and attention, and respond to, petitions about all matters over which it exercises some control or influence. It will deal with each in an efficient and appropriate way having regard to factors such as the subject matter, the level of support and the timeliness of the issue with which the petition is concerned.
3. Advance discussion between prospective petitioners and Council officers assists the Council's understanding of the nature of the petition and is usually helpful to both parties. To this end, petitioners are encouraged to contact the Council (contact details at the end of this Guidance) before they start to collect signatures.

## Who can create and sign a petition?

4. Anyone who lives, works or studies in the Borough can create or sign a petition about a local issue and submit it to the Council. In considering the level of support for a petition, the Council will weigh the numerical and geographical spread of the signatories against the subject matter of the petition. Signatories from addresses outside the Borough, or outside the West London area, may be discounted unless the subject matter of the petition is one that manifestly affects this wider geographical area, or has some significant effect on visitors to the Borough.
5. Petition signatories should in normal circumstances be aged 18 years or older. There may be circumstances, however, e.g. in relation to a schools or parks issue, where a separate, supplementary petition from those under 18 will be accepted as additional evidence supporting the substantive petition.

## What format should be used?

6. Petitions can be created, and signatures collected, in either electronic or hardcopy format, but please note that all petitions, once completed, must be submitted to the Council in hardcopy form showing clearly the specific request for action (stating the issue and the action you would like the Council to take), including any request that the petition be considered at a Scrutiny or full Council meeting, followed by the name (typed or printed clearly), postal address and postcode of each signatory/supporter.

7. For all petitions we will need the contact details, including an address (ideally an email address), of the petition organiser or 'lead petitioner'. This is the person we will contact to explain how we will handle the petition. In the absence of a clear contact point, the first decipherable name and address on the petition will be used.
8. Council officers (contact details at the end of this Guidance) may be able to advise on the wording of a petition to ensure it complies with this Guidance and/or to provide a petition 'template' which can be used to collect signatures.
9. Where a hardcopy petition is submitted, the specific request for action - which should include any request that the petition be considered at a Scrutiny or full Council meeting - must be shown at the top of every page/side that contains signatures and every supporter must sign the petition (as well as printing their name and address) - so that it is clear that every signatory has assented to their inclusion and is fully aware of what they are supporting.
10. Those wanting to submit an e-petition are encouraged to use the [epetitions facility](#) on the Council website. Other e-petitions systems may be used provided the petition submitted to the Council complies fully with the Council's requirements as set out in this Guidance.

## Handing in your completed petition

11. Save for the specific cases mentioned below, the handling of petitions submitted to the Council will normally be the responsibility of Governance Services Team. Petitions will be considered most swiftly if they are sent directly to the Head of Governance Services (contact details at the end of this Guidance). Alternatively they can be sent direct to another relevant officer, given to a Ward Councillor or to a Cabinet Member, or simply posted to the Council.
12. Petitions relating to planning applications should be emailed to [planning@rbkc.gov.uk](mailto:planning@rbkc.gov.uk) or sent to The Town Hall, Hornton Street, London W8 7NX. Those relating to licensing applications should be emailed to [licensing@rbkc.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@rbkc.gov.uk) or sent to 37 Pembroke Road, London W8 6PW.

## How the Council deals with petitions

13. Because the range of issues that can be addressed by a petition is very wide, the Council does not have one standard procedure for considering all petitions. Rather, the Head of Governance Services will identify the most appropriate way of dealing with each petition having regard to the wishes of the lead petitioner and all other relevant factors.
14. Some petitions will be handled in accordance with statutory or other established procedures, e.g.
  - petitions relating to a current planning or licensing application will be dealt with as part of the statutory planning or licensing process, and
  - petitions addressing a matter which is the subject of a current or imminent consultation (e.g. on a planning policy or brief) will be dealt with as part of that process.

15. Where more than one petition with the same or a similar request for action are received at around the same time the Council may decide to consider them together and will liaise on this with each of the lead petitioners.
16. Once received, petitions will be passed to the relevant senior Council officer who will normally acknowledge the petition within 5 working days of its receipt. The Council will normally send its substantive response within 6 weeks of receipt, however there may be occasions where this substantive response will be delayed, such as:
  - over the Summer holiday period (when the Council does not meet);
  - where a petition is to be debated at a meeting of the full Council or a scrutiny committee;
  - where a petition relates to a matter which has yet to be considered; or
  - in the period immediately before an election or referendum

In such circumstances we will explain the reasons and explain to the lead petitioner the revised timescale which will apply.

17. A petition may be referred to one of the Council's Scrutiny Committees for review where:
  - (i) a petition suggests the need for examination of a past decision, current policy, or ongoing service delivery issue; and
  - (ii) the petition achieves at least 750 valid\* supporting signatures.
18. A petition may be referred to a meeting of the full Council for debate where:
  - (i) a petition addresses a broad and current issue of interest or relevance to residents across the Borough as a whole; and
  - (ii) the Mayor so agrees; and
  - (iii) the petition achieves at least 1,500 valid\* supporting signatures.

*\* see 4-5 above*

19. If either of the above applies, the lead petitioner will be asked to confirm that s/he would like the petition handled in that way and, if s/he does, will be invited to address, or nominate someone else to address, the meeting in question. Council or Scrutiny consideration of any petition will be based upon a written report from the relevant Council officer, published with the relevant agenda. The response to any petition that is considered in these ways will be given, usually by the relevant Cabinet Member, after they have had the opportunity fully to consider the points raised at the meeting in question.

## Data Protection

20. The names given by signatories to petitions signed via the Council website are publicly available. However addresses are not published and the Council will not reveal contact details of petition signatories to any third party, including Ward Councillors, without the express consent of the individual.

## When the Council will not deal with a petition

21. The Council may decide not to consider petitions that do not follow this Guidance or which it considers to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise

inappropriate. In such circumstances the Council will contact the lead petitioner to explain the reasons.

22. If a petition is about something over which the Council has no direct control (e.g. local underground or NHS services), the Council may, with the consent of the lead petitioner, forward it to the most relevant body.
23. A petition will not normally be considered where it is received within six months of another petition with the same or a similar request for action being considered by the Council.

## What if I feel my petition has not been properly handled?

24. If a petition organiser feels that the Council has not dealt, or is not dealing, with their petition properly, they should contact the Director of Strategy and Local Services (using the contact address below) who will review the matter and respond within 15 working days.

## Contact details

Head of Governance Services  
Kensington Town Hall  
London W8 7NX  
(T) 020 7361 3945/2265  
(E) [cabinet.coordinator@rbkc.gov.uk](mailto:cabinet.coordinator@rbkc.gov.uk)