

Petitions Scheme

Blackpool Council



Petitions Scheme

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Petitions Scheme

Introduction

Blackpool Council welcomes petitions and recognises that they are one of many ways in which people can let the Council know about their concerns and participate in the democratic process. This document sets out how the Council will deal with petitions that meet the criteria set out in the scheme.

The type of petition determines how a petition will be responded to. There are two types of petitions:

- Ordinary petitions requiring at least 50 signatures
- Petitions for debate at full Council requiring at least 1,500 signatures

More detail about how the Council will respond to each of these is found on page 5 of this scheme.

If something is clearly intended to be a petition but does not meet the requirements set out in this scheme, we will ask the relevant service area to provide a response directly to the petition organiser.

Paper petitions can be sent to:

Democratic Governance
Blackpool Council
PO Box 4
Blackpool
FY1 1NA

Petitions can also be created, signed or submitted online by following this link:

www.blackpool.gov.uk/Your-Council/Have-your-say/Petition-the-Council

Please ensure you read the full scheme prior to submitting a petition to the Council.

If after reading the scheme you no longer feel a petition is the most appropriate avenue for your communication, there are a number of other ways in which you can have your say including:

- Writing to the appropriate Cabinet Member or Senior Officer
- Contacting your local Councillor
- Making a suggestion through the Council's website
- Responding to consultation
- Speaking at meetings of the Council, Planning Committee, Scrutiny Committees etc. Please see the Council's website.

Visit the Council's website for further information:
www.blackpool.gov.uk

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What is a petition?

We treat as a petition any communication which is signed by or sent to us on behalf of a number of people.

Who can submit a petition?

Anyone who lives, works or studies in Blackpool can organise or sign a petition. The Council would also consider a petition from visitors to Blackpool on a subject that was connected with one of our visitor attractions.

What should a petition contain?

- A clear statement of your concerns and what action you would like the Council to take. If this is not clear we may need to return the petition to you for further clarification. This also should include whether it is an ordinary petition or full Council debate.
- The name and contact details of the “petition organiser” or someone to whom you would like any correspondence about the petition to be sent. The petition organiser should not be an MP or Councillor of Blackpool Council.
- The name, address and signature of any person supporting the petition. If the details of any person are not clear then these may not be counted towards the total number.

What can a petition be about?

Petitions should relate to a matter which is relevant to the functions of the Council or where the Council has influence.

Exceptions to the Petitions Scheme

The majority of petitions we receive will be accepted but there are some circumstances where we will not be able to deal with your petition under this scheme. Petitions that fall outside of this scheme include:

- Any matter that the Council is not directly responsible for or has no influence over. We will return the petition to you and where possible direct you to the correct organisation.
- Any matter relating to a planning decision. For further information about making representations about planning decisions, please contact planning@blackpool.gov.uk
- Any matter relating to a licensing application. For further information about making representations please contact licensing.la2003@blackpool.gov.uk
- A statutory petition (for example a petition for a directly elected Mayor)
- Any matter where there is already an existing right of appeal or a separate complaints process, such as council tax banding and non-domestic rates.
- Any specific issue that the Council is carrying out a formal consultation on. Please see page 7 for further information regarding how we will deal with your petition in this circumstance.
- A petition where we have received another petition on the same issue within the previous two years. In these circumstances, we will write to the petition organiser and include a copy of the response to the first petition received.
- Any petition we consider to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate. You should not include confidential information or potentially libellous, false or defamatory statements or statements which cause personal offence, distress or loss.
- Any petition that is asking the Council to do anything unlawful or relating to the subject of any legal action taken by the Council or individual.

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Types of petition and numbers of signatures required

How we deal with your petition depends on which type of petition you submit:

Ordinary Petitions

To be considered valid, a petition should contain at least 50 signatures. If your petition contains less than 50 signatures but you are able to demonstrate that, in relation to a particularly local issue of concern, it was simply not possible to obtain 50 signatures, the Council may still consider your petition under this scheme.

If your petition is accepted as an 'ordinary petition' you will receive an acknowledgement within 10 working days of receipt and be advised of the action being taken with regards to your petition.

In most circumstances an ordinary petition will be submitted to the appropriate Cabinet Member and senior officer for consideration. You will receive a response to your petition from the relevant officer or Cabinet Member within four weeks of receipt. If more time is required, the petitioner will be contacted with a new deadline for response and the reasons why.

Petitions for debate at full Council

If a petition contains 1,500 valid entries the petitioner has the right to ask that the petition is debated by full Council. This means that the issue raised in the petition will be discussed at a meeting where all councillors can attend, if the petition organiser wishes to take this opportunity.

If your petition is accepted as a 'petition for debate at full Council' you will be contacted within 10 working days of submission and will be advised of the process to be taken at the Council meeting.

The Council will aim to consider the petition at its next ordinary meeting, although on some occasions this may not be possible and consideration will then take place at the following meeting. Petition debates will not take place at the Council's budget setting or annual meetings.

Petition organisers are welcome to present their petition at full Council up to a maximum of five minutes. Councillors will then debate the petition subject to a maximum of 20 minutes.

The Council will decide how to respond to the petition at the meeting. It may decide to take the action the petition requests, take no further action or to request further investigation into the matter. If the issue is one that requires the Executive to make the final decision, the Council will decide whether to make recommendations to inform that decision.

All petitions

No matter the type of petition the petition organiser will receive an acknowledgement letter within 10 working days of receipt setting out the action being taken in relation to the petition.

When a petition is received which relates to a local matter (particularly affecting specific electoral wards) a copy of the petition will be sent to each relevant ward councillor at the same time as acknowledging receipt of the petition to the petition organiser.

It may be inappropriate for the Council to deal with certain petitions during periods when it is subject to restrictions, such as immediately before elections or referendums. In these circumstances, the petition organiser will be informed when the petition will be considered, or when any material relating to it will be published on the Council's website. In this circumstance we will contact you within 10 working days to explain the situation to you.

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If your petition falls outside of the criteria of the scheme it will be treated as correspondence and sent to the relevant service area for a response. The relevant senior officer will have discretion and flexibility to decide how to reply to this correspondence so that they are able to take appropriate action to respond to the request.

How to submit a petition

You can submit a petition either as a paper petition to the following address:

Democratic Governance
Blackpool Council
PO Box 4
Blackpool
FY1 1NA

or by using the Council's e-petition facility:

www.blackpool.gov.uk/Your-Council/Have-your-say/Petition-the-Council

E-Petitions

The Council welcomes e-petitions that are created and submitted through our website. E-petitions must follow the same guidelines as paper petitions.

The petition organiser will need to provide the Council with their name, postal address and email address. Unless otherwise agreed following discussions with the petition organiser, an e-petition will remain open for signatures for a period of 90 days.

When an e-petition is created, it may take up to five working days before it is published online. This is because checks will need to be made on the suitability of the content matter before it is made available for signatures. If the petition falls outside the scheme you will be advised and are welcome to submit a revised version. If the petition does not fall within the scheme it will not be published on the Council's website.

When an e-petition has closed for signatures, it will be considered as part of this petitions scheme.

Joint Petitions

Petitions can also be made up of both paper and electronic and must follow the rules for both types of petition. The submission of signatures on paper must take place prior to the closing date of the e-petition and the petition organiser must state on both the paper petition and e-petition that it is a joint petition.

How do I sign an e-petition?

When you sign an e-petition you will be asked for your name, postcode and a valid email address. When you have submitted this information you will be sent an email with a link that you must click in order to validate your email address and petition signature.

Further information

How will the Council deal with petitions relating to ongoing consultations?

If the Council receives a petition about an issue that it is already consulting with residents about, the petitions scheme will be suspended for that petition. All petitions received that relate to the subject of a formal consultation will automatically be incorporated into the formal consultation process at the earliest stage possible. Petition organisers will be informed of this course of action within 10 working days.

Sometimes we receive petitions after the consultation deadline has passed but before a final decision has been taken. In these circumstances the decision maker will be asked to take your petition into consideration when they make the decision.

All petitions received after a decision has been taken on a matter that the Council has previously consulted residents on will not be considered under the scheme but will be passed to the relevant senior officer to respond.

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What happens after the petition is submitted?

We will send an acknowledgement letter within 10 working days of receipt to the petition organiser. This acknowledgement will also say as much as we can at that stage of about what we have done or plan to do. If your petition meets the requirements for a debate at a scrutiny committee or Council you will also be informed of the process for this.

Other reasons your petition may be rejected

The specific criteria for the petitions scheme are set out earlier in this guidance. If a petition does not meet the criteria it will not be considered under the scheme. If we are unable to consider your petition using the scheme we will send an acknowledgement letter within 10 working days of receipt to the petition organiser setting out the reasons why and what action we can take, if any, in response to your submission.

Outside the general exceptions there are several reasons why a petition may be rejected, including but not exclusively:

- the petition statement is not clear
- the subject matter of the petition is not within the remit of the Council
- the entries contain incomplete or invalid information such as no full address

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

If you are unhappy with the way that your petition has been processed, you can submit a complaint to the Council via the Corporate Complaints scheme.

You can find more guidance at www.blackpool.gov.uk/Your-Council/Have-your-say/Comments-compliments-and-complaints

Will my paper petition be published on the Council's website?

Yes, if your petition is accepted under the scheme an overview of it will be published on the Council's

website together with any updates regarding action taken, or being taken in respect of the petition. We aim to publish petitions on our website within 10 working days of receipt.

If you create an e-petition using the Council's facility this will be published on the website as soon as it has been checked for suitability.

Petitions are presented on the website in the order in which they are received. Details of petitions received will be kept on the website for up to two years from the date of receipt unless subject to further appeal or other action.

Will the Council check each signature?

The Council reserves the right to seek to verify each signature appended to a petition. This can be significant when establishing whether a petition has obtained the requisite number of signatures to trigger a specific process.

Privacy Policy

The details you provide when signing a paper or e-petition are needed to validate your support. For paper petitions no personal details will be included on the website, for e-petitions only your name will be listed. The Council may contact you in relation to any petitions you have signed, unless you have requested not to be contacted when signing the petition.

Blackpool Council is the data controller for personal information collected in respect of both the Council's E-petition facility and for paper petitions.

Your personal information will not be shared outside of the Council, unless otherwise required to by law.

Paper petitions will be scanned and stored securely in electronic format and will be deleted after 12 months unless subject to further appeal or other action.

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Document Control

Issued by:	
Last edited:	