

# E-Petitions Guidance

## **Who can sign an ePetition?**

An ePetition can be signed by a person of any age who lives or works in Staffordshire. To submit or sign an e-petition you have to be a registered user.

Registration is a simple process that just requires you to provide us with a few details in case we need to contact you about the ePetition. You will be asked to supply your full name, address and a valid email address, for verification purposes.

You can only sign an ePetition once. The list of signatories will be checked by officers and any obviously frivolous responses will be removed.

Details of all signatories will be passed to the lead petitioner on the completion of the ePetition.

## **Who can submit an ePetition?**

An ePetition can be submitted by a person of any age who lives or works in Staffordshire. To submit an ePetition you will need to be a registered user.

From time to time, the Council may also submit an ePetition itself to gauge public feeling on a particular issue.

## **How do I start an ePetition?**

On the ePetitions homepage, select the 'Submit a new ePetition' option. You will be prompted to enter a title which the system will automatically check against existing ePetitions to allow you to see if a similar one has been considered recently.

You will then need to fill in the online form. This will be submitted to Member and Democratic Services and an officer may contact you to discuss your ePetition before it goes live.

Your local county councillor will be notified when a petition is received which is relevant to his/her division.

## **What issues can my ePetition relate to?**

Your ePetition should be relevant to some issue on which the Council has powers or duties or on which it has shared delivery responsibilities through the Local Area Agreement or other partnership arrangement. It should also be submitted in good faith and be decent, honest and respectful.

Your ePetition may be rejected if the Head of Member and Democratic Services considers it:

- Contains inflammatory, abusive or provocative language.
- Is defamatory, frivolous, vexatious, discriminatory or otherwise offensive; or contains false statement.
- Is too similar to another petition submitted recently.
- Discloses confidential or exempt information, including information protected by a court order or government department.
- Discloses material which is otherwise commercially sensitive.
- Names individuals, or provides information where they may be easily identified, e.g. individual officers of public bodies, or makes criminal accusations.

- Contains advertising statements.
- Refers to an issue which is currently the subject of a formal Council complaint, Local Ombudsman complaint or any legal proceedings.
- Would result in financial or commercial gain for the organiser or anyone suspected of having a close association with the organiser

During politically sensitive periods, such as prior to an election, politically controversial material may need to be restricted.

The Council accepts no liability for the petitions on these web pages. The views expressed in the petition do not necessarily reflect those of the Council. Advice on the admissibility of ePetitions can be obtained from Member and Democratic Services (contact details below).

### **Privacy policy**

The details you give us are needed to validate your support but will not be published on the website. This is the same information required for a paper petition. On the completion of an ePetition, your details will be passed on to the principal petitioner.

### **What information should my ePetition contain?**

Your ePetition will need to include:

- A title.
- A statement explicitly setting out what action you would like the Council to take (a “call for action”).
- Any information which you feel is relevant to the ePetition and reasons why you consider the action requested to be necessary. You may include links to other relevant websites.
- A date for when your ePetition will go live on the website and a date for when it will stop collecting signatures.
- A choice of options for signatories to choose from, i.e. will you simply be asking people to ‘agree’ with the petition or will you give them the option to ‘agree’ or ‘disagree’?

### **What happens when the ePetition closing date is reached?**

When the ePetition reaches its closing date, you will no longer be able to sign it online. The list of signatories will be collated by Member and Democratic Services and then referred to an appropriate Council officer for consideration. Your local county councillor will be kept informed. A response will be sent to you within 15 working days and will be posted on the Council’s website.

In accordance with Appendix 2 Paragraph 11 of our Constitution your e-petition can be presented, with the Chairman’s permission, by you or your local county councillor to a meeting of the Full Council, after the petition has closed. The Chairman may also give permission for your local county councillor to speak to the council about the petition.

The receipt of your ePetition will be reported by the relevant Cabinet Member to the appropriate committee or panel.

### **What can ePetitions achieve?**

When you submit an ePetition to the Council it can have positive outcomes that lead to change and inform debate. It can bring an issue to the attention of the Council and show strong public approval or disapproval for something which the Council is doing. As a consequence, the Council may decide to, for example, change or review a policy, hold a public meeting or run a public consultation to gather more views on the issue.

### **Can I still submit a paper petition?**

Yes, you can still submit paper petitions according to the rules set out in Appendix 2, Paragraph 11 of the Council's constitution.

A petition may also gather names and addresses in both forms – you can have a paper version and an online version, although repeat names will be removed. Both forms should run for the same period of time and must be submitted together. Please inform Member and Democratic Services if you are running a combined paper and electronic petition so that we can submit them together.

### **Contact Details**

For more information and advice, or to discuss a potential ePetition, please contact:

Lynne Coates  
Staffordshire County Council  
County Buildings  
Martin Street  
Stafford  
ST16 2LH

Tel: 01785 276139

Fax: 01784 276219

Email: [lynne.coates@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:lynne.coates@staffordshire.gov.uk)

Staffordshire County Council reserves the right to vary these guidelines as and when necessary. However, any changes will not be applied retrospectively.