

Pendle Council Petition Scheme

Petitions

The Council welcomes petitions and recognises that they are one way in which people can let us know their concerns. All petitions sent or presented to the Council will receive an acknowledgement within 10 working days of receipt.

This acknowledgement will set out what we plan to do with the petition. We will treat something as a petition if it is identified as being a petition, or if it seems to us that it is intended to be a petition.

Paper petitions should be sent to:

Committee Services
Town Hall
Market Street
Nelson
BB9 7 LG

(committee@pendle.gov.uk and 01282 661648)

Or they can be created, signed and submitted online by following this link
<http://www.feedbackonline.org.uk/petitions/>.

Petitions can also be presented in person to a meeting of the Council, the executive or one of our committees. The dates, times and venues can be found on our website.

If you would like to present your petition to a meeting, or would like your councillor or someone else to present it on your behalf, please contact Committee Services on committee@pendle.gov.uk or 01282661648 at least 10 working days before the meeting and they will talk you through the process.

If your petition has received 100 signatures or more it will also be scheduled for a Full Council debate [see below] and if this is the case we will let you know whether this will happen at the same meeting or a later meeting of the Council.

What are the guidelines for submitting a petition?

Petitions submitted to the Council should include:

- A clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition; it should state what action the petitioners wish the Council to take
- the name and address and signature of any person supporting the petition.

Petitions should be accompanied by contact details, including an address, for the petition organiser. This is the person we will contact to explain how we will respond to the petition. The contact details of the petition organiser will not be placed on our website. If the petition does not identify a petition organiser, we will contact the first three signatories to the petition to agree who should act as the petition organiser.

What will the Council do when it receives my petition?

We will send an acknowledgement to the petition organiser within 10 working days of receiving the petition. This will let them know what we plan to do with the petition and when they can expect to hear from us again. The petition will also be published on our website.

If we can do what your petition asks for, the acknowledgement may confirm that we have taken the action requested and the petition will be closed. If the petition has enough signatures to trigger a Full Council debate or a senior officer giving evidence (see below), then the acknowledgment will confirm this and tell you when and where the meeting will take place.

If the petition needs more investigation, we will tell you the steps we plan to take.

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 will apply. We will explain these in our acknowledgement.

We will not take action on any petition which we consider to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate and will explain the reasons for this in our acknowledgement of the petition.

To ensure that people know what we are doing in response to the petitions we receive the details of all the petitions submitted to us will be published on our website.

In the period immediately before an election 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. 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, we will write to you to explain the reasons.

How will the Council respond to petitions?

Our response to a petition will depend on what a petition asks for and how many people have signed it, but it will include one or more of the following:

- taking the action requested in the petition
- considering the petition at a Full Council meeting
- holding an inquiry into the matter
- undertaking research into the matter
- holding a public meeting
- conducting a consultation exercise
- holding a meeting with petitioners
- referring the petition for consideration by the Council's Scrutiny Management Team* or the Executive, or an area committee or another committee
- writing to the petition organiser setting out our views about the request in the petition

(*The Scrutiny Management Team is responsible for scrutinising the work of the Council – in other words, it has the power to hold the Council’s decision makers to account.)

In addition to these steps, the Council will consider all the specific actions it can potentially take on the issues highlighted in a petition. These will largely depend on whether the Council is directly responsible for the service in question. You can find more information on the services for which the Council is responsible on our website.

If your petition is about something over which the Council has no direct control (for example the local railway or hospital) we will consider making representations on behalf of the community to the relevant body. The Council works with a large number of local partners and where possible will work with these partners to respond fully to your petition. If we are not able to do this for any reason then we will set out the reasons for this to you.

If your petition is about something that a different council is responsible for we will give consideration to what the best method is for responding to it. This might consist of simply forwarding the petition to the other council, but could involve other steps. In any event we will always notify you of the action we have taken.

Full Council debates

If a petition contains more than 100 signatures it will be debated by the Full Council unless it is a petition asking for a senior council officer to give evidence at a public meeting.

This means that the issue raised in the petition will be discussed at a meeting which all councillors can attend. 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.

The petition organiser will be given five minutes to present the petition at the meeting and the petition will then be discussed by councillors.

The Council will decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting. It 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 on which the Executive is required to make the final decision, the Council will decide whether it wishes to make recommendations to inform that decision. The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of this decision. This confirmation will also be published on our website.

Officer evidence

Your petition may ask for a senior council officer to give evidence at a public meeting about something for which the officer is responsible as part of their job. For example, your petition may ask a senior council officer to explain progress on an issue, or to explain the advice given to councillors to enable them to make a particular decision.

If your petition contains at least 100 signatures, the relevant senior officer will give evidence at a public meeting of the Council’s Scrutiny Management Team.

This is a list of the senior staff that can be called to give evidence;

- Stephen Barnes – Chief Executive

- Philip Mousdale – Executive Director (Citizen and Community Services)
- Brian Cookson – Executive Director (Regeneration)
- Dean Langton – Chief Finance Officer
- Paul Hussey – Chief Executive’s Policy Unit Manager
- Richard Townson – Democratic and Legal Services Manager
- Neil Watson - Planning Manager
- Julie Whittaker – Housing Regeneration Manager
- Dorothy Morris – Economic Development and Tourism Manager
- Peter Atkinson – Engineering and Special Projects Manager
- Ian McInery – Operational Services Manager
- Colin Patten – Parks and Recreation Services Manager

You should be aware that the Scrutiny Management Team may decide that it would be more appropriate for another officer to give evidence instead of any officer named in the petition– for instance if the named officer has changed jobs or it is a different officer who is responsible for the issue. The Team may also decide to call an executive portfolio holder or a committee chairman to attend the meeting.

Committee members will ask the questions at this meeting, but you will be able to suggest questions to the chairman of the Scrutiny Management Team by contacting Committee Services up to three working days before the meeting.

E-petitions

The Council welcomes e-petitions which are created and submitted through this link – <http://feedbackonline.org.uk/petitions/>. E-petitions should follow the same guidelines as paper petitions (see above).

The petition organiser will need to provide us with their name, postal address and email address. You will also need to decide how long you would like your petition to be open for signatures. Most petitions run for six months, but you can choose a shorter timeframe if you wish. You can also extend the length at the closing date if you want to capture more signatories before submitting it.

When you create an e-petition, it may take up to five working days before it is published online. This is because we have to check that the content of your petition is suitable before it is made available for signature.

If we feel we cannot publish your petition for some reason, we will contact you within this time to explain. You will be able to change and resubmit your petition if you wish. If you do not do this within 10 working days, a summary of the petition and the reason why it has not been accepted will be published on the website.

When an e-petition has closed for signature, it will automatically be submitted to Committee Services. In the same way as with a paper petition, you will receive an acknowledgement within 10 working days. If you would like to present your e-petition to a meeting, please contact Committee Services within 10 working days of receipt of the acknowledgement.

A petition acknowledgement and response will be emailed to everyone who has signed the e-petition and has asked to receive this information. The acknowledgment and response will also be published on this website.

How do I 'sign' an e-petition?

You can see all the e-petitions currently available for signature at <http://feedbackonline.org.uk/petitions/>.

When you sign an e-petition you will be asked to provide your name, your postcode and a valid email address. When you have submitted this information you will be sent an email to the email address you have provided.

This email will include a link which you must click on in order to confirm the email address is valid. Once this step is complete your 'signature' will be added to the petition. People visiting the e-petition will be able to see your name in the list of those who have signed it but your contact details will not be visible.

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

The Council's Executive Director (Citizen and Community Services) has overall responsibility for the administration of this petition scheme. You can contact him on Philip.mousdale@pendle.gov.uk or 01282 661634.

If you still feel that we have not dealt with your petition properly, the petition organiser has the right to request that the Council's Scrutiny Management Team review the steps that the Council has taken in response to your petition.

It is helpful to everyone, and can improve the prospects for a review if the petition organiser gives a short explanation of the reasons why the Council's response is not considered to be adequate.

The Team will try to consider your request at its next meeting, although on some occasions this may not be possible and consideration will take place at the following meeting. Should the committee determine we have not dealt with your petition adequately, it may use any of its powers to deal with the matter. These powers include instigating an investigation, making recommendations to the Executive or a committee, and arranging for the matter to be considered at a meeting of the Full Council.

Once the appeal has been considered the petition organiser will be informed of the results within 5 working days. The results of the review will also be published on our website.