

South Cambridgeshire District Council Petitions Scheme

1. Introduction

The Council welcomes petitions and recognises that they are one way in which people may let us know about their concerns and participate in the democratic process. This scheme explains how members of the public may submit petitions to the Council.

2. What is a petition?

We treat as a petition any communication which is signed by, or sent to, the Council on behalf of a number of people which contains a formal request for the Council to consider a particular matter or take a specified course of action.

3. What can the petition be about?

A petition must relate to something that the Council does, or for which it has a responsibility, or something over which the Council has some influence.

4. What information must be included within a Petition?

4.1 Petitions submitted to the Council must:

- (a) Include a clear and concise statement about the subject of the petition and what action you would like the Council to take.
- (b) Be addressed to South Cambridgeshire District Council.
- (c) Include the name and contact details (including address, post code telephone number or email address) of the petition organiser who should be a local person *. This will be the person we contact to explain how we will respond to the petition. The contact details of the petition organiser will not be placed on the Council's website.
- (d) In the case of paper petitions, contain the name, postal address, post code and signature of each local person who signed it. This must be in a legible format so that we can check the validity of the signatories.
- (e) In the case of electronic petitions, contain the name, postal address, post code and a valid email address for each local person who is party to it.

- 4.2 *A “local person” is anyone who lives, works or studies or who owns or occupies property in the District.
- 4.3 Exceptionally, we may, at the discretion of the relevant Chair, agree to accept a petition signed by persons who, are not “local persons” but where we are satisfied, having regard to the subject matter of the petition, that they are affected by, or have a legitimate interest in, the business of the Council (or Cabinet, relevant committee or sub committee, as appropriate).
- 4.4 A template petition signature sheet is attached to this scheme.

5. How many signatures do I need?

- 5.1 The type of petition will determine the number of signatures required for it to be valid and how it will be processed. Petitions received will fall into one of the following two categories:

(a) Ordinary Petitions:

These must contain **50** or more signatures before they will be reported to the next most convenient meeting with the power to take a decision on the matter in question.

(b) Petitions for Debate at Full Council Meetings

In order to trigger a debate at Full Council meetings, these petitions must contain at least **100** signatories or **50%** of the electorate of a particular parish to which the petition relates, whichever is the lowest. These petitions shall be taken to the next meeting of the Council (excluding the Annual Council meeting or an extraordinary Council meeting).

6. How do I submit a Petition?

- 6.1 **Paper petitions** should be submitted to the following address:

Democratic Services
South Cambridgeshire District Council
South Cambridgeshire Hall
Cambourne Business Park
Cambourne
Cambridge
CB23 6EA

- 6.2 Paper petitions may also be given to your local Ward councillor to hand in at a meeting of the Council on your behalf. Such petitions will be treated in accordance with the provisions of this scheme and will not be discussed at the same meeting at which it is handed in.

6.3 **Electronic Petitions** should be submitted via the Council's website (www.scamb.gov.uk).

6.4 Once submitted, your request will be reviewed prior to its activation to ensure that it meets the requirements of the Petitions Scheme. If acceptable, confirmation of its activation period, which will be set at 90 days, will be sent to you via email. Once the 90 days has passed, the electronic petition will automatically be submitted to the Council.

6.5 We may accept e-petitions created on websites hosted by third parties. However, the Council does not monitor third party websites and therefore if you are setting up a petition on one of these sites, it will be the responsibility of the lead petitioner to ensure that the petition is submitted directly to the Council (most sites have a facility to enable the signatory data and comments to be downloaded and submitted in an electronic format).

6.6 Please be aware that it is also the responsibility of the lead petitioner to submit the petition in a format that enables the Council to verify the address of each signatory. This means that signatories who do not evidence that they live, work, study or occupy property in the District may not be included when we count the total number of signatories.

7. When should I send my Petition in?

7.1 You may send your petition in at any time. However if the petition relates to a particular issue on an agenda for a meeting or if it has sufficient signatories to trigger a debate at Full Council, then the petition must be received at least 10 clear working days before a meeting, if it is to be reported to that meeting. Dates of our Council, Cabinet and committee meetings are published on our website.

7.2 Where it is necessary to undertake a significant amount of work to collect information and advice in order to enable the matter to be properly considered, we may decide that it is necessary to consider the petition at the following meeting of the relevant body and we will notify the petition organiser accordingly.

8. Is my Petition guaranteed to be reported to a meeting?

8.1 Whilst we accept the majority of petitions we receive, we will not accept a petition under this scheme which:

- (a) relates to a matter for which the Council is not directly responsible for or has no influence over.

- (b) relates to a planning or licensing application or decision – these are dealt with using separate procedures.
- (c) is a statutory petition, such as calling for a referendum, as separate requirements apply.
- (d) relates to any matter where there is already an existing right of appeal or a separate complaints process (for example: complaints about councillor conduct).
- (e) refers to a consultation which the Council is carrying out. Any petition relating to a consultation shall automatically be referred to the consultation organiser.
- (f) duplicates another petition already received or is the same, or has a substantially similar effect, as a petition which has been made to the Council within the last year.
- (g) contains confidential information, for example, about a specific individual.
- (h) relates to an individual or body where a right of review of appeal is given by other legislation.
- (i) breaches data protection, libel or the Authority's statutory requirement to comply with equalities and anti-discrimination legislation.
- (j) refers to a matter which is, or may be, the subject of legal proceedings.
- (k) seeks to support or promote the personal interests of the petition organiser.
- (l) raises issues about the competence or performance of a councillor or officer. Any such issues should be dealt with under the Code of Conduct complaints procedure (for councillors) or the Council's complaints procedure (for officers).
- (m) contains matters associated with political parties or organisations.
- (n) is vexatious, abusive, offensive, discriminatory or otherwise inappropriate.

The Council's Chief Executive and/or Monitoring Officer, after consultation with the Chair of the Council or the relevant committee, will determine whether your petition should be rejected because it falls under one of the criteria above.

9. How will the Council deal with my Petition?

9.1 When a petition is received:

- (a) we will acknowledge receipt to the petition organiser within 3 working days.
- (b) in some cases, we may be able to resolve the petitioners' request directly by getting the relevant lead cabinet member or officer to take appropriate action. For example, where the petition relates to fly tipping and the Council can arrange for it to be cleared up directly. Where this happens, we will ask the petition organiser whether he or she is satisfied that the matter is resolved.
- (c) unless the matter has been resolved to the satisfaction of the petition organiser, we will write to the petition organiser within 10 working days of receipt, confirming whether the petition has been accepted and advising what steps the Council has taken, or proposes to take, in response to the petition. In some circumstances, more time will be needed to clarify some details about what action the Council proposes to take but we will inform you of this.
- (d) at the same time as writing to the petition organiser, we will notify political group leaders/convenors and the relevant local councillor(s) and officers of receipt of the petition.

10. How will my Petition be dealt with at a Full Council meeting?

10.1 Where your petition contains at least 100 valid signatures from local persons (or from 50% of the electorate of the parish), it will trigger the right to be debated at full Council. This means the issue raised in the petition will be discussed at a meeting at which all councillors may attend. If it relates to an item on the agenda, it will normally be dealt with immediately before the start of that item. Otherwise it will be taken at the beginning of the meeting.

The following process shall be followed:

- (a) petition organiser (or their representative) to present the petition for up to 3 minutes. If any clarification of what the petitioner has said is required, the Chair shall have the discretion to allow councillors to ask questions.
- (b) relevant lead cabinet member (and/or relevant committee chair, if appropriate) invited to respond to the petition for up to 3 minutes.
- (c) local councillors (if appropriate) invited to respond to the petition for up to 3 minutes.

- (d) Council to debate the petition and make a decision either to:
- (i) vote in support of the petition;
 - (ii) vote against the petition;
 - (iii) note the petition;
 - (iv) make recommendations to Cabinet, if the issue it is one that requires Cabinet to make the final decision;
 - (v) refer the petition to another body, lead cabinet member or officer for consideration;
 - (vi) agree such other action as it considers appropriate.

10.2 A maximum of 30 minutes (including the presentations referred to in (a) to (c) above) shall normally be allowed at the meeting to consider the petition. The Chair may use their discretion to extend the timescale if necessary.

10.3 The Chair shall have discretion to manage the number of petitions dealt with at each meeting.

11. How will my Petition be dealt with at a Cabinet, Committee or Sub-Committee meeting?

11.1 Where a petition contains 50 or more signatures, it shall be referred to the next convenient meeting of the Cabinet, Committee or Sub Committee which has the power to take a decision on the matter in question. If it relates to an item on the agenda, it will normally be dealt with at the start of that item. Otherwise it will be taken at the beginning of the meeting.

11.2 The following process shall be followed:

- (a) Petition organiser (or their representative) to present the petition for up to 3 minutes. If any clarification of what the petitioner has said is required, the Chair shall have the discretion to allow councillors to ask questions.
- (b) Relevant lead cabinet member (if appropriate) invited to speak.
- (c) Any local councillor present invited to speak for up to 3 minutes (if petition relates to their Ward).
- (d) Cabinet, Committee or Sub Committee to consider the petition and determine what course of action to take.

12. **Will I be informed of the outcome of consideration of my Petition?**

- 12.1 Yes, we will write to the petition organiser within ten working days of the meeting to confirm the outcome. Where appropriate, the decision will be published on the Council's website.

13. **What do I do if I am not happy with the way my Petition was dealt with?**

- 13.1 If you are unhappy with the way that your petition has been handled, you can submit a complaint to the Council via the Corporate Complaints Scheme [\[insert link\]](#)

14. **How else may I have my say?**

- 14.1 South Cambridgeshire District Council welcomes feedback as this helps us to review and develop the services we provide. There are a number of other ways that you can have your say including:

- (a) asking a question at a Council, Cabinet or Committee meeting [\[insert link\]](#)
- (b) writing to the relevant senior officer or lead cabinet member
- (c) contacting your local councillor
- (d) suggesting an item for consideration at our Scrutiny and Overview Committee
- (e) responding to our consultations

- 14.2 Visit the Council's website at www.scambs.gov.uk for more information.

15. **Personal Data**

- 15.1 Information on how the Council collects, uses and retains personal data is detailed in the South Cambridgeshire District Council Customer Privacy Notice [\[insert link\]](#)

Version 1

Petition to South Cambridgeshire District Council – signature sheet

We the undersigned petition South Cambridgeshire District Council to:

Each person signing this petition should provide their name, signature and a home, work, study, property or business address that is within the boundaries of South Cambridgeshire District Council. Any signatures that do not include this information will not be counted.

Name (please print)	Address including postcode (this must be an address in South Cambridgeshire)	Signature	Live/work/study / own property or business (please indicate)