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**PETITIONS SCHEME**

This Scheme sets out the various ways that petitions can be submitted to Newcastle City Council and what you can expect of the Council when it considers and responds to petitions.

Submitting a petition is one of many ways you can contact and discuss concerns with the Council. As a Council we are committed to an on-going conversation with residents and partners from across the City. This helps us to:

* share thoughts on important issues;
* find out the views of others;
* invite feedback on specific proposals; and
* help people to share their ideas and concerns on any issue.

Sometimes people will want to talk to the Council about matters of policy or services about which we have direct control or significant influence. Where possible, we can take these views into account when we make decisions. Alternatively, people may wish to highlight to us matters where the Council has no control or very little influence, but can offer support (e.g. by highlighting the issue to Government or other partner organisations).

Through our overall approach to engagement – known as ‘Let’s Talk’ - there are many ways for people to have conversations with the Council including:

* contacting relevant Council officers – particularly on everyday service matters;
* speaking to their local Ward Councillors – including through regular ward surgeries and ward committee meetings and get togethers;
* participating in specific consultations in lots of different ways such as by taking part in local events, or by contacting us by phone, post, email, online or through social media. Note: in some cases (e.g. statutory consultations) the way we consult has to follow clear rules set out by legislation, or regulations from Government or other agencies;
* participating in public debates with Councillors and partners (e.g. through scrutiny or other committees, groups or forums);
* submitting petitions to the City Council for consideration and response across a wide range of issues;
* making a public address or asking a question at City Council;
* making formal or informal complaints to the Council following our complaints procedure.

Petitions have been an important part of our democratic process for centuries. They go hand-in-hand with our rights to freedom of speech and peaceful, legal protest and they often highlight the strength of feeling for or against an important issue.

Therefore, Newcastle City Council supports the right of all residents and partners to petition City Council. At the same time, we recognise that completing petitions can be time-consuming and cost money to those involved and that sometimes there are more straightforward ways for people to let us know their views. So, before deciding to complete and submit a petition to the City Council, we ask that people consider using the many other ways available to make their voices known to the Council.

**What do we consider to be a petition?**

For the purposes of this scheme, the Council will treat something as a petition if it is identified as a petition (or if it seems to the Council that it is a petition) and if it is signed by ten or more people who live, work, study, own a business, or use services in the City.

It is important to note that some issues which, for example, relate to a planning or licensing application or concern a matter where there is already an existing statutory right of appeal or review (such as council tax banding and non-domestic rates) may be subject to other procedures and a petition cannot be considered under this scheme.

**What should my petition relate to?**

A petition to Council should relate to:

* a matter which the Council has responsibility for; or
* anything relating to the economic, social or environment well-being of the City, as long as the Council has a degree of influence over your concerns or ideas.

If your petition is about something over which the Council has no direct control (e.g. rail services, or hospital services) the Council will look at it and consider making representations on behalf of the community to the relevant body. The Council works with a number of local partners and, where possible, will work with these partners to respond to your petition. If the Council is not able to do this for any reason, the Council will explain the reasons for this.

If your petition is about something that a different Council or authority is responsible for, the Council will give consideration to what the best method is for responding, which may be simply forwarding the petition to the other Council, but may involve other types of action.

In any event, the Council will always notify you of the action it is taking.

**What should I include in my petition?**

**Paper petitions** submitted to the Council must:

* include a clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition;
* state what action the petitioners wish the Council to take;
* list the name, address, and signature of any person supporting the petition; and
* identify whether the person lives, works, studies or owns a business in the City.

Paper petitions must be accompanied by contact details, including an address, for the petition organiser. This is the person the Council will contact to explain how the Council will respond to the petition.

**E-petitions** must follow the same guidelines as that described for paper petitions but also must include:

* a valid e-mail address for the petition organiser.
* the title and proposed text of the e-petition.

It is important to note that:

* if the Council considers a petition to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate it will explain the reasons for this in the acknowledgement of the petition. A petition may be considered inappropriate if the matter relates to on-going legal proceedings or targets individual members of a community. The Council’s Monitoring Officer, in conjunction with the Chief Executive, will be responsible for determining the appropriateness of petitions.
* if a petition or e-petition does not follow the guidelines set out above, the Council may decide not to do anything further with it and will explain the reasons, if contact details are provided.

**Who can submit a petition?**

Anyone who lives, works, studies, owns a business or uses services in Newcastle , including under 18s, can sign or organise a petition.

**How do I submit a petition?**

**Paper petitions**:

You can submit a petition to any Councillor or Council officer or hand it into any council building or councillor. To post, please send to:

**Let’s Talk**

**Civic Centre**

**Barras Bridge**

**Newcastle upon Tyne**

**NE1 8QH**

Your paper petition can be submitted electronically using the following email address: **letstalk@newcastle.gov.uk**

**E-Petitions:**

An e-petition is a petition which collects signatures online, allowing petitions to be made available to a potentially much wider audience than a traditional paper petition.

In this case the e-petition should be forwarded to the email address above, once the closing date for the e-petition has passed.

**What will the Council do when it receives my petition?**

**Paper Petition:**

The petition will be passed to a Director or Assistant Director of the Council, who is considered best placed to deal with it, having regard to its subject matter.

If the petition is about a local issue, a copy of the petition will be sent to the relevant ward councillors, Cabinet member and local parish council.

An acknowledgement will be sent to the petition organiser within ten working days of receipt of a petition. The acknowledgement will explain whether the petition is suitable to be dealt with under the scheme and, if the Council is in a position to, the acknowledgment will explain what the Council has done or proposes to do in response to the petition, and, if appropriate, when the petition organiser should expect to hear from the Council again.

**How will the Council respond to petitions?**

The Council will respond to all petitions.

It is important to note that if a petition contains more than 2,500 signatures in support of the action requested, it could trigger a full council debate (see below). Petitions which have 2,500 signatures or less in support of the action requested, will be classed as ordinary petitions and the Council will proceed in one or more of the following ways:

* taking the action requested in the petition;
* writing to the petition organiser setting out the Council views about the request in the petition;
* undertaking research into the matter;
* holding a public meeting;
* holding a consultation;
* holding a meeting with the petitioners;
* referring the petition to other partner organisations;
* considering the petition at a meeting of City Council.

**Can I submit a petition to a full City Council meeting?**

The right for a petition to be submitted to City Council applies regardless of the number of signatures. The petition organiser can request to present the petition at a meeting of City Council by contacting Democratic Services (tel: 0191 2115159 Email: linda.scott@newcastle.gov.uk) by noon of the Monday before an ordinary meeting of City Council when such meeting is held on a Wednesday and, in other cases, by noon of the day before the day of the meeting. The dates of the meetings of City Council can be accessed at [Browse Meetings, 2025 | Newcastle City Council](https://democracy.newcastle.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx). The Lord Mayor shall decide whether to allow the petition to be presented to Council, taking into account:

* The public interest in the matter.
* Whether the petition relates to the work of the Council.
* Whether the petition is of a personal character.
* Whether the petition relates to issues that have been raised at meetings in the recent past, without good reason.
* Petitions should usually not relate to judicial or quasi-judicial matters.
* Petitions to full Council should usually not relate to individual planning applications, licence applications, grant applications or appeals.
* Petitions should not relate to confidential or exempt matters within the meaning of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985.
* Petitions should not relate to party political matters.
* Petitions should not be frivolous, vexatious or unreasonable in all the circumstances.

If the Lord Major agrees, the procedure that will be followed is:

* the person or persons presenting a petition shall be asked to read the text of the petition (confining herself/himself to not exceeding one hundred words) and stating the number of signatures attached to it;
* full City Council will not discuss the matter of the petition, except to determine how to progress the petition, by one of the following means:
* refer the petition to a Committee, Sub Committee or officer of the Council (if necessary, in consultation with a Cabinet member and/or ward members) for consideration and decision about any appropriate action, and, if so
* resolve that a report shall be presented back on the matter to the Council or other body.

**‘Full Council debates’**

Full Council can debate a petition if it contains 2,500 signatures or more in support of the action requested. If a petition has enough signatures to trigger this action, the petition organiser will be contacted, with information on when and where the meeting will take place.

It is important to note that the Council will endeavour to consider the petition at its next meeting, but this may not always be possible.

The procedure that will be followed is:

* The petition organiser will be given five minutes to present the petition and s/he should have provided the full text of their presentation by 12 noon on the Monday before the meeting. The petition organiser is allowed no further opportunity to participate in the debate.
* The relevant Cabinet Member will reply to the petition and propose a motion as to what action the Council should decide to take. That action could be:
	+ taking the action requested in the petition;
	+ not taking the action requested in the petition;
	+ commissioning further investigation into the issue(s) in the petition;
	+ where the issue(s) is one upon which Cabinet are required to make the final decision, Council will decide whether to make recommendations to inform that decision.
* Another Member will second the motion.
* Two Opposition members may then speak.
* The Cabinet Member who proposed a motion can respond
* All Councillors then vote on the motion (if an amendment has been proposed, then it is voted upon first).

In order to adhere to the fifteen minute time limit, each speech will be restricted to three minutes.

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

If you feel that the Council has not dealt with your petition properly, the petition organiser can make a formal complaint via the Council’s complaints procedure. More details can be found on the website at <http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/your-council-and-democracy/contact-the-council/complaints>.