

MENDIP DISTRICT COUNCIL PETITIONS SCHEME

The Council welcomes petitions, bearing 50 or more signatures, and recognises that petitions are one way in which people can let us know their concerns. All petitions sent or presented to the Council will receive an acknowledgement from the Council 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 can be sent to:

Monitoring Officer
Mendip District Council
Cannards Grave Road
Shepton Mallet
Somerset
BA4 5BT

Petitions can also be presented to a meeting of full Council. These meetings usually take place on a quarterly basis in each of the following months: September, December, February and May at 18:30hrs. If you would like to present your petition to full Council, or would like your councillor or someone else to present it on your behalf, please contact the Council's Democratic Services Supervisor, on 0300 3030 8588 at least 10 working days before the meeting, who will discuss the process with you.

If your petition has received 1500 signatures or more it will automatically be scheduled for full Council debate. If this is the case we will let you know the date of the meeting at which your petition will be debated.

What are the guidelines for submitting a petition?

Petitions submitted to the Council must relate to a function of the Council and 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 (unless agreed otherwise in writing by the Council's Monitoring Officer). 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 the website.

In the period immediately before an election or referendum 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.

What will the Council do when it receives my petition?

An acknowledgement will be sent to the petition organiser within 10 working days of receiving the petition. It will let them know what we plan to do with the petition and when they can expect to hear from us again. It 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, 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 is a statutory petition (for example requesting a referendum on having an elected mayor), or on a matter where there is already an existing right of appeal, such as council tax banding and non-domestic rates, other procedures apply. Further information on all these procedures and how you can express your views is available on our website or telephoning the Council on 0300 3030 8588e.g.

- comments, compliments and complaints
- planning - appeals
- council tax - appeals

Rejection of Petitions

1. After consultation with the Chief Executive, Leader of the Council and the Chairman of the Scrutiny Board the Council's Monitoring Officer may reject any petition which is considered to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate;
2. The Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chief Executive, will reject petitions if they relate to a regulatory decision or include no contact details;

3. The Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chief Executive, will reject a petition if a petition that was substantially similar to one received within the preceding twelve (12) months (unless the number of petitions has substantially increased; and

When a petition is rejected, the reasons for rejecting that petition will be reported to the next available Scrutiny Board meeting.

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, except in cases where this would be inappropriate.

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 by way of example, may include one or more of the following:

- taking the action requested in the petition
- considering the petition at a Council meeting
- holding an inquiry into the matter
- undertaking research into the matter
- holding a public meeting
- holding a consultation
- holding a meeting with petitioners
- referring the petition for consideration by the Council’s Scrutiny Board
- calling a referendum
- writing to the petition organiser setting out our views about the request in the petition

The Council's Scrutiny Board is a committee of councillors who are responsible for scrutinising the work of the Council – in other words, the Scrutiny Board 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. Below are some examples.

Petition subject	Appropriate steps
Alcohol related crime and disorder	If your petition is about crime or disorder linked to alcohol consumption, the Council will, among other measures, consider the case for placing restrictions on public drinking in the area by establishing a designated public place order or, as a last resort, imposing an alcohol disorder zone. When an alcohol disorder zone is established the licensed premises in the area where alcohol related trouble is being caused are required to contribute to the costs of extra policing in that area. The

	<p>Council’s response to your petition will set out the steps we intend to take and the reasons for taking this approach.</p>
<p>Anti-social behaviour (ASB)</p>	<p>As the elected representatives of your local area and licensing authority, the Council plays a significant role to play in tackling anti-social behaviour. The Council, in conjunction with our partners in the local crime and disorder partnership have set out minimum service standards for responding to issues of anti-social behaviour, you can find more details about these standards from the Council's website.</p> <p>When responding to petitions on ASB, we will consider in consultation with our local partners, all the options available to us including the wide range of powers and mechanisms we have to intervene as part of our role as social landlord and licensing authority. For example, we will work with the neighbourhood policing team in the affected area to identify what action might be taken including what role CCTV might play, consider identifying a dedicated contact within the council to liaise with the community and neighbourhood partners on issues of ASB in the area in question and, where appropriate, we will alert the crime and disorder reduction partnership and crime and disorder overview and scrutiny committee to the issues highlighted in the petition.</p>
<p>Under-performing health services</p>	<p>We will work with local health partners to consider the matter raised in the petition.</p> <p>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 to your petition. If we are not able to do this for any reason (for example if what the petition calls for conflicts with Council policy), then we will set out the reasons for this to you. You can find more information on the services for which the Council is responsible from the Council's website.</p> <p>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.</p>

Petitions containing over 1500 signatures will be debated at a meeting of the Full Council.

Petitions containing between 750 and 1500 signatures will require, if appropriate, a senior Officer to give evidence at the Scrutiny Board.

Petitions containing between 50 and 750 signatures will be considered by the Monitoring Officer, ~~Corporate Manager Governance, Assets and Public Spaces~~ and relevant Portfolio Holders.

Full Council debates

If a petition contains more than 1,500 signatures it will be debated by Full Council unless it is a petition asking for a senior 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 endeavour 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 for a maximum of 15 minutes.

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 Council's Cabinet are required to make the final decision, the Council will decide whether 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 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 Officer to explain progress on an issue, or to explain the advice given to elected members to enable them to make a particular decision.

If your petition contains at least 750 signatures, the relevant senior Officer will give evidence at a public meeting of the Council's Scrutiny Board. The senior staff that can be called to give evidence are:

<u>Title</u>	<u>Name</u>
Chief Executive	Stuart Brown
<u>Deputy Chief Executive</u>	<u>Tracy Aarons</u>
<u>Deputy Chief Executive</u>	<u>Donna Nolan</u>
Section 151 Officer	Paul Deal
<u>Corporate Group Managers</u>	
Access to Services <u>Corporate Services</u>	Chris Atkinson <u>Sara Skirton</u>
Built Environment <u>Planning and Growth</u>	Tracy Aarons <u>Ian Bowen</u>
Governance Assets and Public Spaces and Monitoring Officer <u>Law and Governance</u>	<u>Donna Nolan</u>
Regulatory Services <u>Community Health</u>	Stuart Cave <u>Claire Malcolmson</u>
<u>Neighbourhood Services</u>	<u>Stuart Finney</u>
Housing	Jai Vick

You should be aware that the Scrutiny Board 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.

The Board may also decide to call the relevant councillor to attend the meeting. Board members will ask the questions at this meeting, but you will be able to suggest questions to the Chair of the Scrutiny Board by contacting the Council's Democratic Support Supervisor on 0300 303 8588 up to three working days before the meeting.

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

If you feel that we have not dealt with your petition properly, the petition organiser has the right to request that the Council's Scrutiny Board reviews 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 Scrutiny Board will endeavour 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 Scrutiny Board 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 Council's Cabinet and arranging for the matter to be considered at a meeting of 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.