

## Swindon Borough Council

### E-petitions Guidance

Online petitions are submitted and signed through the Council and Democracy section of the Council website.

#### Register as a E-Petition User

- To register a new e-petition or to sign an existing one you will be asked to register as a new user by providing us with a username, name and address, a valid email address and adding a password. You will have to verify your identity via your email address before you can proceed. Only your name will be visible on the website.

#### Submit a request for an E-Petition

- Select Submit a new ePetition.
- You will then need to fill in a short online form to complete your petition including the following:
  - You will be asked to give your petition a title.
  - In the box, provide a statement explicitly setting out the nature of your concern and what action you would like the Council to take.
  - Add any information which you feel is relevant to the e-Petition and reasons why you consider the action requested to be necessary.
  - In addition, let us know how long you want your E-petition to last for, it can run for a maximum of 12 months, but the default is for 6 weeks.
  - There is also a drop down box which allows you to associate your e-Petition with any existing issue in the Council's Forward Plan which details all of the key decisions to be taken by the Council in the coming months.
  - You will then be asked if you are creating a petition on behalf of an organisation, this section is optional.
  - The petition will then be submitted and an email will automatically be sent to your nominated account to let you know the Petitions Officer in Committee Services has received your request.
- The Petitions Officer will then contact you via email to let you know that your E-petition has been published or raise any queries or ask for additional information.
- When you create an e-petition, it may take up to 10 working days before it is published online. This is because we have to check the content of your petition is suitable before it is made available for signature.

- If your request for a petition falls outside the Petition Scheme, the Petition Officer will advise you that it has been rejected and the reasons why.

#### **Your e-Petition may be rejected if:**

- Contains intemperate, inflammatory, abusive or provocative language,
- Is rude, offensive, defamatory, scurrilous or vexatious.
- Is identical or too similar to a petition submitted in the past 6 months.
- Discloses confidential or exempt information, including information protected by court order or government department.
- Discloses material which is otherwise commercially sensitive.
- Provides information relating to the personal and private lives of 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.
- Relates to a specific issue where there is already a right of appeal.
- Does not relate to something which is the responsibility of the authority, or over which the authority has some influence.

#### **Who Can Sign Your E-Petition**

Once your E-petition is open, anyone can login and sign your E-petition electronically by entering a name, address, valid email address and verification code.

When an e-petition has closed for signature, it will automatically be submitted to the Petition Officer in Committee Services. In the same way as a paper petition, you will receive an acknowledgement within 10 working days.

At the point when an e-petition is completed a petition acknowledgement and response will be emailed to everyone who has signed the e-petition and elected to receive this information. The acknowledgement and response, and a graph showing the results of the petition will be published on this website.

#### **What happens next?**

When an e-petition is completed the Petitions Officer will refer the petition to the relevant decision-maker including Officer, Cabinet Member, Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Council meeting. When a petition relates to a local matter, the relevant ward Councillors will also be informed. The website will be updated with information on how the petition will be dealt with and any outcomes.

There are five types of petition: consultation, statutory, for debate, to hold an officer to account or ordinary. The Council's petition scheme sets out in detail how each will be dealt with. If the petition meets the criteria to be put to a full Council meeting or an Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the petition organiser

will be asked if they wish to speak to the meeting. Ward Councillors will also have the chance to speak to a petition relating to a local matter.

We treat as a petition, any communication which is signed by or sent to us on behalf of a number of people. How we deal with your petition will depend on what type of petition you submit as set out above. For practical purposes we normally set a requirement for at least 10 signatures before we treat it as a petition.

**Can I submit both an electronic and paper petition?**

It is possible to have both an electronic and paper petition running at the same time, but these should have the same start and end date and in all other ways be identical in their purpose. These will be treated by the Petition Officer as one petition and duplicate signatures will be discounted.

If you are having trouble submitting an e-Petition or would like further advice and information on these or the Petition Scheme in general then please contact

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