

E-Petitions Guidance

Who can sign an e-petition?

An e-petition can be signed by a person (other than an elected Councillor) of any age who lives, works, or studies in or uses services provided by Brighton & Hove City Council.

If you sign an e-Petition on this website, you will be required to provide us with basic personal information ([an email address and an address including post code](#)) to enable us to verify the “signatures” collected are genuine. Your name (but no other details) will be published on the e-Petition website. We will only use the information you provide for this purpose.

You can only sign an e-petition once. The list of signatories will be checked by officers and any duplicate signatures or obviously frivolous responses will be removed.

Who can submit an e-petition?

An e-petition can be submitted by a person of any age who lives, works or studies in Brighton & Hove or uses service provided by Brighton & Hove City Council. To submit an e-petition you will need to be a registered user. Registration is a simple process that just requires you to provide us with a few details in case we need to contact you about the e-petition. From time to time, the Council may also submit an e-petition itself to gauge public feeling on a particular issue.

How do I start an e-petition?

On the e-petitions homepage, select the ‘Submit a new e-petition’ option. You will be prompted to enter a title which the system will automatically check against existing e-petitions to allow you to see if a similar one has been considered recently. 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 need to fill in the online form. This will be submitted to the Democratic Services team who may contact you to discuss your e-petition before it goes live.

What issues can my e-petition relate to?

Your e-petition should be relevant to some issue on which the Council has powers or duties or on which it has shared delivery responsibilities. It should also be submitted in good faith and be decent, honest and respectful. Your e-petition may be rejected if the Head of Democratic Services considers it:

- Contains intemperate, inflammatory, abusive or provocative language;
- Is defamatory, frivolous, vexatious, discriminatory or otherwise offensive; or contains false statements.
- Is too similar to another petition submitted within the past six months;

- Discloses confidential or exempt information, including information protected by a court order or government department;
- Discloses material which is otherwise commercially sensitive;
- Names individuals, or provides information where they may be easily identified, e.g. 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 the Council's Planning or Licensing functions as there are separate statutory processes in place for dealing with these matters;
- Does not relate to an issue upon which the Council has powers or duties or on which it has shared delivery responsibilities.

During politically sensitive periods, such as prior to an election, politically controversial material may need to be restricted.

The Council accepts no liability for the petitions on these web pages. The views expressed in the petitions do not necessarily reflect those of the Council.

If your petition relates to an issue which is beyond the powers of the Council to address, it may be more appropriate to start an e-petition on the [Number 10 website](#). Advice on the admissibility of e-petitions can be obtained from Democratic Services (contact details below).

Privacy policy

The details you give us are needed to validate your support but will not be published on the website, other than your name under the list of signatories. This is the same information required for a paper petition. The Council may contact you in relation to any petitions you have signed, unless you have requested not to be contacted when signing the e-petition.

What information should my e-petition contain?

Your e-petition will need to include:

- A title.
- A statement explicitly setting out what action you would like the Council to take (a "call for action").
- Any information which you feel is relevant to the e-petition and reasons
- Why you consider the action requested to be necessary. You may include links to other relevant websites.
- A date for when your e-petition will go live on the website. It may take Democratic Services a couple of days to check your e-petition request and discuss any issues with you so please ensure that you submit the request a few days before you want the e-petition to go live.
- A date for when your e-petition will stop collecting signatures. In order to achieve the maximum impact, you may want to set this date so that the e-

petition will be submitted prior to a date on which a debate is to be held or a decision taken on the issue. We will host your e-petition for up to 4 months but would expect most to be shorter in length than this.

As lead petitioner, your name will be displayed with your e-petition on the website.

If you are having trouble submitting an e-petition or would like further advice and information then please contact Democratic Services and Scrutiny (details below) and we will be happy to assist you.

Promoting your e-petition

Whilst the Council will host e-petitions on its website, it will not generally promote individual e-petitions. It is therefore down to the lead petitioner to spread the word about their e-petition in order to get as many people as possible to sign up. If this is not done then your e-petition could receive no signatures. Raising awareness of it could be done in a number of ways such as promoting it on local community websites, discussion forums or newsletters. All it takes is to give people a brief explanation of the issue and then direct them to the site at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/epetitions to sign up.

What happens when the e-petition is complete?

When the e-petition reaches its closing date, you will no longer be able to sign it online. The list of signatories will be collated by Democratic Services and you will be contacted regarding the submission of the completed e-petition.

What will happen to the e-petition once it is submitted?

Once the e-petition has been submitted, you will be offered the choice as to whether you wish the petition to be

- (i) presented at the next full Council meeting or
- (ii) referred to the appropriate decision-making meeting for response or
- (iii) wish to receive a response directly from the relevant Director.

If you wish to refer the petition to a full Council meeting, you will be invited to attend the meeting and will be offered the opportunity to present the petition which will involve spending up to three minutes summarising what the petition is about and how many signatories you have. Following the presentation of the petition it will be referred to the appropriate decision-making body for consideration and you would be invited to attend that meeting.

If you prefer to refer the petition directly to the relevant decision-making meeting, which could be the Cabinet, a Cabinet Member Meeting, a Committee or Sub Committee depending on the issue; you will be advised of the date & time of the meeting and invited to attend and present your petition. A response will be sent to you within 15 working days of the meeting and will be posted on the Council's website.

In either option above, if the petition originator does not attend to present the petition, it will be read out by the Mayor or the person presiding over the meeting on your behalf and you will be advised of this upon receipt of the petition.

If you prefer to receive a response from the relevant Director without the petition being presented at a meeting, a response will also be sent to you within 21 working days of the closure of the petition and will be posted on the Council's website.

What can e-petitions achieve?

When you submit an e-petition to the Council it can have positive outcomes that lead to change and inform debate. It can bring an issue to the attention of the Council and show strong public approval or disapproval for something which the Council is doing. As a consequence, the Council may decide to, for example, change or review a policy, hold a public meeting or run a public consultation to gather more views on the issue.

Can I still submit a paper petition?

Yes, you can still submit paper petitions.

A petition may also gather names and addresses in both forms - you can have a paper version and an online version, although repeat names will be removed. Both forms should run for the same period of time and must be submitted together. When submitting an e-petition request, please let us know if you are running a paper petition as well and this can be highlighted on the website.

Contact Details

For more information and advice, or to discuss a potential e-petition, please contact:

Mark Wall

Head of Democratic Services

mark.wall@brighton-hove.gov.uk

01273 291006

Alternative formats and languages

If you would like information published by Brighton & Hove Council in large print, Braille, audio tape, in pictures and symbols, or in a community language please call.

Brighton & Hove Council reserves the right to vary these guidelines as and when necessary. However, any changes will not be applied retrospectively.