



How to submit a petition

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1. About our petition scheme

This guide lists the steps you need to take when organising and submitting a petition to us, Woking Borough Council.

The topic of the petition must be about one of the following:

- a council service or facility
- a suggested improvement to the borough's economy, community or environment which we and partner organisations are responsible for.

Petitions can be submitted to us online, via our e-petitions service, or written on paper.

If you wish to submit a paper petition or have any questions about our petitions service, please contact our Democratic Services team.

Write to: Democratic Services, Woking Borough Council, Civic Offices, Gloucester Square, Woking, Surrey GU21 6YL

Phone: 01483 743 863

Email: memberservices@woking.gov.uk

2. Information needed to submit a petition

Petitions submitted to us must include:

- A clear and short description of the subject or issue which you would like to petition against. This must also include what action you, the petitioner, would like us to do.
- The name and address and signature of the person supporting the petition.

Petitions should be accompanied by contact details, including an address, for the petition organiser.

The petition organiser can be anyone who lives, works or studies in Woking. This includes anyone under the age of 18. This is the person we will contact to explain how it will respond to the petition.

The contact details of the petition organiser will not be placed on our website. In the event that the petition does not identify a petition organiser, we will contact the petition's signatories to agree who should act as the petition organiser.

In the period immediately before an election or referendum, we may need to deal with a petition differently. If this is the case, we will explain the reasons and discuss the revised timescale.

If a petition does not follow the guidelines set out above, we may decide to disregard it. In such cases, we will write to the petition organiser to explain the reasons. A copy of the notification will be [published on our website](#).

3. Petitions which will be excluded from the scheme

We will not take action on any petition which is considered to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate. The petition organiser will be advised of the reasons for our decision, and a copy of the notification will be published on our website.

Other procedures apply, if the petition applies to:

- a planning or licensing application
- a statutory petition (for example requesting a referendum on having an elected mayor)
- a matter where there is already an existing right of appeal, such as council tax banding and non-domestic rates.

Where a petition is received on the same or similar topic as one we have received in the last six months, it will not be treated as a new petition. We will acknowledge receipt of the petition within 14 days and include details of its response to the previous petition on the topic.

Where we are still considering a petition on the same or similar topic, the new petition will be amalgamated with the first received petition.

4. How your petition is managed after it is submitted

We will let the petitioner know that we've received the petition within 14 days of receiving it.

The acknowledgement will indicate what we have done or propose to do in response to the petition and outline the timescale. It will also be published on our website, except in cases where this would be inappropriate.

[View current and previous petitions.](#)

The petition will be reviewed in stages. At each stage, we will write to the petition organiser. If the petition has been submitted online, all information will be sent to the petition organiser's email account.

We will only contact the petition organiser on matters relating to the petition.

5. How we respond to a petition

Our response to a petition will depend on what a petition asks for and how many people have signed it. A petition may include one or more of the following:

- Giving effect to the request in the petition ('taking the action requested').
- Considering the petition at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Executive or Full Council.
- Holding an inquiry into the matter.
- Holding a public meeting.
- Undertaking research.
- Giving a written response to the petition organiser setting out our views about the request in the petition.
- Referring the petition to our Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration.
- Holding a consultation.
- Holding a meeting with petitioners.
- Calling a referendum.

The relevant local ward councillors will be advised when a petition has been received and will be consulted on the appropriate response. The type of response we provide may be dependent on the number of signatories to the petition. The table below summarises our approach:

Number of signatories	Response from the council
Less than 10 signatories	Response from officer (treated as standard correspondence).
10 to 99 signatories	Response from the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council.
At least 100 signatories	Petition is automatically referred to the Executive.
At least 200 signatories	Officer (s) called to provide evidence at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This threshold only applies where such action is requested within the petition.
At least 400 signatories	Petition is automatically referred to a meeting of Full Council.

If we are able to take the action requested in the petition, our acknowledgement may confirm that the action requested has been undertaken and that the petition will be closed. If the petition has enough signatures to trigger a debate at a meeting of the Full Council, or a senior officer giving evidence, then the acknowledgment will confirm this, setting out when and where the meeting will take place. If the petition needs more investigation, the acknowledgement will outline the intended steps.

Where the petition is referred to the relevant portfolio holder for a response, the petition organiser will be invited to make a written statement in support of the petition.

Where the petition is referred to a meeting of the Full Council, the petition organiser will be allowed three minutes to present the petition, following which the petition will be discussed by councillors.

If a petition is about something over which we have no direct control, consideration will be given to making representations on behalf of the community to the relevant body. We work with a large number of partner organisations and, where possible, we will work with these partners to respond to a petition. If we are not able to do this for any reason, notification will be sent to the petition organiser setting out our reasons.

If a petition relates to a service or responsibility of a different council, we will give consideration to what the best method is for responding to it. This may consist of simply forwarding the petition to the other council, but could involve other steps. The petition organiser will again be notified of the action taken by us.

6. Presenting a petition at a council meeting

If a petition contains between 100 and 400 signatures it will be referred to a meeting of the Executive for consideration. If more than 400 signatures have been added to the petition, it will automatically be referred to a meeting of the Full Council for debate. The only exception would be in those cases where the petition asks for a senior council officer to give evidence at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

We will contact the petition organiser before the meeting and if the organiser or their nominee wishes to present the petition at the meeting, confirmation must be given at least 10 working days before the meeting.

The presentation of a petition is limited to no more than three minutes, and should be confined to reading out, or summarising, the purpose of the petition, indicating the number and description of signatories, and making supporting remarks relevant to the petition. Councillors may then proceed to ask questions of the petition organiser.

At a meeting of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the chairman may permit the petition organiser to participate in the committee's consideration or debate of the issues raised by the petition.

We will consider all the specific actions it can potentially take on the issues highlighted in a petition and the councillors will decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting. They may decide to support the action the petition requests, or not, or refer the matter to another meeting, such as the Executive or Overview and Scrutiny Committee, for further consideration.

The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of this decision.

7. Petitions presented by deputations or lobby groups

Associations or groups who wish to present a petition to us about a council service or initiative or about an issue which affects the borough can do so as a 'deputation'.

The request must be made at least 10 working days before the meeting at which the petition will be presented and should include all details of the issue, the number of people forming the deputation (no more than five) and their names and addresses and names of the people who will speak about the petition.

The chairman will ask the members of the deputation who are presenting the petition to speak about it for up to five minutes. Councillors may then ask members of the deputation questions about the petition.

8. Petitions asking senior council officers to give evidence

A petition may ask for a senior council officer to give evidence at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee about something for which the officer is responsible as part of their job. For example, a petition may ask a senior council officer to explain progress on an issue, or to explain the advice given to elected members (councillors) to enable them to make a particular decision.

If a petition requests such action and contains at least 200 signatures, the relevant senior officer will give evidence at a public meeting of our Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Only officers from our Corporate Leadership Group (CLT) can be petitioned to give evidence. However, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 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 committee may also decide to call the relevant councillor to attend the meeting.

The committee members will ask the questions at the meeting, but the petition organiser will be able to suggest questions to the committee chairman. These questions must be received by our democratic services team at least 10 working days before the meeting.

9. How to submit an e-petition

An e-petition facility is available via our website through which borough residents can create petitions for submission to us. The same guidelines apply to e-petitions as to paper petitions.

Under the scheme, the petition organiser will need to provide their name, postal address and email address. The petition organiser also needs to decide how long they would like the petition to be open for signatures, up to a maximum of 12 months.

When an e-petition is created, it may take up to five working days before it is published online. During this time, we will check that the content of the petition is suitable before it is made available for signature.

If we cannot publish a petition for some reason, the petition organiser will be advised of the reasons. Petition organisers will then be able to change and resubmit a petition. If this is not done within 10 working days, a summary of the petition and the reason why it has not been accepted will be [published on our website](#).

When an e-petition has closed for signature, it will automatically be submitted to our democratic services team.

In the same way as with a paper petition, the petition organiser will receive an acknowledgement within 14 working days of receipt of the petition. A copy of the petition acknowledgement and response will be emailed to everyone who has signed the e-petition and elected to receive this information. [The acknowledgment and response will also be published on our website.](#)

10. Signing an e-petition

Details of all the e-petitions currently available for signature will be available on our website. Those wishing to add their support to a petition will be asked to provide their name, postcode and valid email address.

Once the information has been added, an email will be sent to the email address provided which contains a link which must be clicked on in order to confirm that the email address is valid.

Once this has been done, the 'signature' will be added to the petition. People visiting the e-petition will be able to see all 'signatures' but will not have access to the contact details.

11. Requesting a review of our actions relating to a petition

The petition organiser has the right to request that our Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviews the steps that we have taken in response to their petition. The petition organiser will be asked to provide a short explanation of the reasons why our response is not considered to be adequate.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will consider such requests at its next meeting, although on some occasions this may not be possible and consideration will take place at the following meeting. If the committee determine that we have not dealt with a petition adequately, it may investigate the matter, make recommendations to the Executive or arrange for the matter to be considered at a meeting of the Full Council.

Once the committee has completed its review the petition organiser will be informed of the results within five working days. [The results of the review will also be published on our website.](#)

12. Other ways to engage with us and our councillors

In addition to being able to submit petitions, residents can contact us in a number of ways.

Contacting our customer contact centre

For general enquiries, residents can contact the council on 01483 755 855 or visit the Civic Offices. [Information is also available on our website.](#)

Questions from the public to the Executive

Our Executive is made up of seven councillors which meet 10 times a year. It is accountable for decision making within our policies, recommends to us on strategic issues and ensures consistent application of corporate standards.

A public question time takes place during the first 30 minutes of the Executive meetings. This allows anyone living or working in the borough to ask up to three questions of a particular member of the Executive or the Leader of the Council.

Questions need to be submitted in writing to the Chief Executive no later than 12pm, seven days before the day of the meeting. The questioner will be invited to attend the meeting and ask the question(s) in person.

Topics which can be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Residents can submit suggested topics for review by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. In order to be considered, suggestions for review must meet the following criteria.

- Affect a group of people living within the Woking Borough.
- Relate to a service, event or issue in which we have a significant stake or over which we have influence.
- Not be an issue which the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has considered during the last 12 months.
- Not relate to an individual service complaint.
- Not relate to matters dealt with by another council committee, unless the issue deals with procedure.

Public speaking at Planning Committee

We have adopted a public speaking scheme to enable residents to express their objections at the Planning Committee to applications which meet the criteria.

Objectors may speak against any application which attracts 10 or more individual objections (a petition is regarded as one objection) prior to 14 days before the meeting.

In addition the public has the right to speak in objection to the following types of applications, irrespective of the number of objections made:

- Any application which, in the opinion of the borough planning officer, raises major policy issues which is at variance with approved planning policies, or is of such a magnitude that significant planning issues are raised.
- Any application for development requiring an Environmental Statement under the provisions of Schedule I and II of the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988 and any subsequent amending regulations.
- Applications for major commercial development with a floor space exceeding 2500 square metres (outline or detailed applications), but not reserved matters.
- Applications for residential developments of over 50 dwellings (outline or detailed applications), but not reserved matters.

Contacting a ward councillor

Residents can contact their local ward councillors for assistance with any questions or concerns.

Councillors can raise questions at council meetings and pursue issues where it can be demonstrated that all existing avenues have been exhausted ('councillor call for action').

[Details of the borough councillors are available on our website.](#)