

CONSTITUTION 2021 – Version 2.2 (January 2023)
PART 8 – CODES AND PROTOCOLS
SECTION 4 – PETITIONS SCHEME

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Contents

1.0	INTRODUCTION.....	3
2.0	WHAT ARE THE GUIDELINES FOR SUBMITTING A PETITION?	4
3.0	WHAT WILL THE COUNCIL DO WHEN IT RECEIVES MY PETITION?.....	5
4.0	HOW WILL THE COUNCIL RESPOND TO PETITIONS?	5
5.0	FULL COUNCIL DEBATES.....	6
6.0	OFFICER EVIDENCE	7
7.0	WHAT CAN I DO IF I FEEL MY PETITION HAS NOT BEEN DEALT WITH PROPERLY?.....	7
8.0	HOW LONG WITH THE COUNCIL RETAIN MY PETITION?	8

CONSTITUTION 2021 – Version 2.2 (January 2023)
PART 8 – CODES AND PROTOCOLS
SECTION 4 – PETITIONS SCHEME

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Before considering whether to raise a petition to Arun District Council, it is recommended that you discuss your issue with your local Ward Councillor who may be able to help you with it or explain how to make representations on a particular subject to the right person at the Council.
- 1.2 Any Arun resident can submit a petition provided it includes **not less than 10 signatures**. A petition may be signed by anyone living or working in the Arun District.
- 1.3 All petitions sent or presented to the Council will receive an acknowledgement within 10 working days of receipt. This acknowledgement will set out what the Council plans to do with the petition. The Council will treat something as a petition if it is identified as being a petition, or if it seems that it is intended to be a petition.
- 1.4 Details of all petitions received will be included on the Council's website but this will not include the contact details of anyone who has signed the petition or that of the petition organiser.
- 1.5 Petitions can be sent to the:
Committee Services Team
Arun District Council
Arun Civic Centre
Maltravers Road
Littlehampton
BN17 5LF
Email: committees@arun.gov.uk
- 1.6 Petitions can also be handed over to a meeting of the Full Council. These meetings generally take place on an 8-weekly basis. Dates and times can be found on the Council's website www.arun.gov.uk or by emailing committees@arun.gov.uk or telephoning the Committee Services Team on 01903 737611.
- 1.7 If you would like to hand over your petition to the Council, or would like your Councillor or someone else to do this on your behalf, please contact the Committee Services Team by email on committees@arun.gov.uk or by telephone on 01903 737611 at least 10 working days before the meeting and they will guide you through the process.
- 1.8 If your petition has received 1,500 relevant signatures or more it will also be scheduled for a Full Council debate (see paragraph 5, Full Council Debates). If this is the case, the Committee Services Manager will let you know whether this will happen at the same meeting or a later meeting of the Full Council.

CONSTITUTION 2021 – Version 2.2 (January 2023)
PART 8 – CODES AND PROTOCOLS
SECTION 4 – PETITIONS SCHEME

2.0 WHAT ARE THE GUIDELINES FOR SUBMITTING A PETITION?

2.1 Petitions submitted to the Council must include:

- a) a clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition;
- b) a statement about what action the petitioners wish the Council to take; and
- c) the name, full postal address, including postcode, and signature of any person supporting the petition.

2.2 Petitions should be accompanied by contact details, including an address, for the petition organiser. This is the person who will be contacted to explain how the Council will respond to the petition. The contact details of the petition organiser will not be placed on the website. If the petition does not identify a petition organiser, the Committee Services Manager will contact signatories to the petition to agree who should act as the petition organiser.

2.3 A petition will not be accepted where:

- a) it is considered to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate;
- b) it is a statutory petition (for example requesting a referendum on having an elected mayor);
- c) it refers to a planning or licensing application; or
- d) it refers to a decision for which there is an existing right of appeal or other procedure (for example Council Tax banding).

2.4 Further information on how you can express your views on such matters can be found on the Council's website www.arun.gov.uk

2.5 In the case of petitions that are considered to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate, the petition will be referred to the Monitoring Officer to decide if the petition is to be disallowed and respond to the petitioner. If the Monitoring Officer disallows a petition, the petitioner may request a review of that decision. That request will be reported to the Audit & Governance Committee to confirm whether the petition can be accepted or not. The Committee 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.

2.6 The petition organiser will be advised in writing when a petition has not been accepted explaining the reasons for this.

2.7 In the period immediately before an election or referendum, the Council may need to deal with your petition differently. If this is the case, the Committee Services Manager will explain the reasons and discuss the revised timescale which will apply.

CONSTITUTION 2021 – Version 2.2 (January 2023)
PART 8 – CODES AND PROTOCOLS
SECTION 4 – PETITIONS SCHEME

2.8 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, the Committee Services Manager will write to you to explain the reasons.

3.0 WHAT WILL THE COUNCIL DO WHEN IT RECEIVES MY PETITION?

3.1 An acknowledgement will be sent to the petition organiser within 10 working days of receiving the petition. It will let them know what the Council plans to do with the petition and when they can expect to hear from the Council again. It will also be published on the Council's website.

3.2 If the Council can do what your petition asks for, the acknowledgement may confirm that it has 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, you will be told the steps the Council plans to take.

3.3 To ensure that people know what the Council is doing in response to the petitions received, the details of all petitions submitted will be published on the Council's website, except in cases where this would be inappropriate.

4.0 HOW WILL THE COUNCIL RESPOND TO PETITIONS?

4.1 The Council's response to a petition will depend on what a petition asks for and how many people have signed it, but may include one or more of the following:

- a) taking the action requested in the petition
- b) considering the petition at a Full Council meeting
- c) holding an inquiry into the matter
- d) undertaking research into the matter
- e) holding a public meeting
- f) holding a consultation exercise
- g) holding a meeting with petitioners
- h) referring the petition for consideration by the relevant Committee
- i) calling a referendum
- j) writing to the petition organiser responding to what the petition requested

4.2 The Council will consider all specific actions it can potentially take on the issues highlighted in a petition.

CONSTITUTION 2021 – Version 2.2 (January 2023)
PART 8 – CODES AND PROTOCOLS
SECTION 4 – PETITIONS SCHEME

- 4.3 Where your petition does not have the prescribed number of signatures to trigger a debate or officer attendance before a Committee, the Committee Services Manager will determine the most appropriate course of action in consultation with the relevant Group Head and relevant Committee Chair and advise you accordingly.
- 4.4 If your petition is about something over which the Council has no direct control (for example the local railway or hospital), it 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 the Council is not able to do this for any reason (for example if what the petition calls for conflicts with Council policy), then you will be advised of the reasons for this. You can find more information on the functions of the Council on its website www.arun.gov.uk
- 4.5 If your petition is about something that a different Council is responsible for, the Council 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 the Committee Services Manager will always notify you of the action to be taken.

5.0 FULL COUNCIL DEBATES

- 5.1 If a petition contains more than 1,500 signatures, it will be debated by the Full Council unless it is a petition asking for a senior council officer to give evidence at a public meeting (see paragraph 6.0, Officer Evidence). 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.
- 5.2 The petition organiser will be given 5 minutes (maximum) to present the petition at the meeting. The relevant Committee Chair will be given 5 minutes (maximum) for a right of reply before Councillors discuss the petition for a maximum of 30 minutes, with each Councillor allowed to speak for a maximum of 3 minutes. The length of the debate can be extended at the Chair of the Council's discretion.
- 5.3 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

CONSTITUTION 2021 – Version 2.2 (January 2023)
PART 8 – CODES AND PROTOCOLS
SECTION 4 – PETITIONS SCHEME

on which a Committee is 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 the Council's website.

6.0 OFFICER EVIDENCE

6.1 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 Councillors to enable them to make a particular decision.

6.2 If your petition contains at least 750 signatures, and your petition clearly states the specific issue you want to raise, the relevant senior officer will give evidence at a public meeting of the relevant Committee. You can find out details of the Council's Committees and their functions at Part 3 (Responsibility for Functions) of the Constitution.

6.3 The senior officers that can be called to give evidence are the Chief Executive, Directors and Group Heads. Their details can be found at Part 7 (Management Structure) of the Constitution. You should be aware that the relevant 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 relevant Committee may also decide to call another Committee Chair or Councillor to attend the meeting.

6.4 The members of the relevant Committee will ask the questions at this meeting, but you will be able to suggest questions to the Chair of the Committee by contacting the Committee Manager up to 3 working days before the meeting. Details will be given to you to assist with this process.

6.5 The Chair of the Committee will have absolute discretion on the appropriateness of any questions submitted which will also be supplied in advance of the meeting to the officer being called to give evidence.

7.0 WHAT CAN I DO IF I FEEL MY PETITION HAS NOT BEEN DEALT WITH PROPERLY?

7.1 If you feel that we have not dealt with your petition properly, the petition organiser has the right to request that the Council's Audit & Governance Committee reviews the steps that the Council has taken in response to your

CONSTITUTION 2021 – Version 2.2 (January 2023)
PART 8 – CODES AND PROTOCOLS
SECTION 4 – PETITIONS SCHEME

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.

- 7.2 The Audit & Governance Committee 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 this Committee determine that the Council has 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 a relevant Committee or arranging for the matter to be considered at a meeting of the Full Council.
- 7.3 Once the review 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. There is no right of appeal through the Full Council.

8.0 HOW LONG WITH THE COUNCIL RETAIN MY PETITION?

- 8.1 Once your petition has been considered by the Full Council, a Committee or officer then it will be confidentially destroyed unless the Petition Organiser has requested that this be returned to them.
- 8.2 All other correspondence relating to the processing of your petition will be retained for one year and then confidentially destroyed.