

Preston City Council Petition Scheme

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Preston City Council welcomes petitions and recognises that petitions are one way in which people can let us know their concerns. The purpose of this Petition Scheme is to make local decision making, in relation to petitions, more transparent and make the response to petitions publicly available.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 A petition is just one way of telling us your views. You may wish to raise the issue through a different route, such as via your local Ward Councillor or by asking a question at a meeting of Council. For details about Public Question Time at a Council meeting, see our website www.preston.gov.uk or contact Member Services on 01772 906112 to discuss it.

2. How can I submit a Petition?

- 2.1 A petition must be signed by at least **fifty** people and anyone who signs should **live, work or study** in the Council's area.
- 2.2 Petitions can be submitted to the Council in the following ways:-
 - On paper
 - Electronically by email (for this method of submission to be used, each sheet of signatures must be scanned in full as an exact replica of the original. The original petition must be retained by the Petition Organiser)
 - Electronically through the Council's e-Petition facility via the Council's website at <https://www.preston.gov.uk/petitions>

Please send any paper petitions to:-

Head of Member Services
Preston City Council
Town Hall
Preston
PR1 2RL

Or by email to: ju.thorpe@preston.gov.uk

Submission of a Petition

2.3 To be a valid petition and trigger a response under the Petition Scheme the petition must:-

- Have a clear and concise statement requesting that the Council take action, or cease taking action, with regard to a particular issue. The statement **must be included on the top of each and every page** which contains signatures to the petition (see attached proforma as a template to assist you).
- Obtain a minimum of 50 valid signatories. Include the name, address and signature of any person supporting the petition (any person signing the petition must verify that they **live, work or study** within the Council's area).
- Not be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate to be dealt with.
- Not relate to matters excluded from the Petition Scheme. These include any matter relating to individual planning or licensing decisions or any other matter relating to an individual or entity, for which other established processes exist i.e. the right of appeal or recourse to a review.
- Not be one made under any other legislation, for example requesting a referendum on having an elected Mayor.
- Use the Council's **e-Petitions facility** if online (see Section 3 below for details).

2.4 Where a petition complies with the above requirements and the petition relates to a function of the Council it will be classified as an '**active petition**'.

(Please note that upon receipt of an active petition, the consent of the Petition Organiser will be required in order to send details of the petition to the relevant Ward Councillors. Ward Councillors may be able to assist an officer dealing with the petition because of their knowledge of the ward).

2.5 All petitions should be accompanied by the contact details of the Petition Organiser including their name and address. The Petition Organiser is the person the Council will contact to explain how it will respond to the petition. If the petition does not identify a Petition Organiser, the Council will contact the signatories to the petition and agree who should act as the Petition Organiser. At this stage, a Consent Form will be sent to the Petition Organiser (either by post or electronically), to obtain their consent to share their information with the Ward Councillors, as well as to potentially publish their name and address publicly on the Council's website, in agendas, reports, minutes and documents of the Council, in relation to the petition.

(Please note that 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 Council will explain the reasons and discuss the revised timescale which will apply).

- 2.6 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, it will write to the Petition Organiser to explain the reasons.
- 2.7 If the petition does not relate to a function of the Council, the Council will explain this in the acknowledgement to the petition and may suggest an appropriate body to which it should be submitted to.
- 2.8 The Council will not take action on any petition which it considers to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate. The decision will be taken by the Council's Director of Corporate Services.
- 2.9 To ensure the Council understands the level of local support for a petition, it reserves the right to seek to verify each signatory to the petition. This can be significant when establishing whether an active petition has obtained the requisite number of signatures to trigger specific processes.

3 **E-Petitions Facility**

- 3.1 You may wish to create and submit a petition using the Council's online e-Petitions facility located on the Council's website at <https://www.preston.gov.uk/petitions>.
- 3.2 An e-petition follows the same guidelines as a paper petition (as set out above).
- 3.3 A Petition Organiser will need to provide their name, address and email address (please see 2.5. above).
- 3.4 A Petition Organiser will also need to decide how long they would like the e-petition to be open for signing. The maximum time that can be requested is six months.
- 3.5 The first stage in the e-petition process is to submit a request for an e-petition to be opened for signatures. The request will be considered to ensure that the content of the e-petition is suitable before it is made available for the public to sign. The Petition Organiser will be informed via email within five working days as to whether the request has been successful or not. If it is felt that the Council cannot publish the petition online, the reason will be notified to the Petition Organiser. The Petition Organiser may then change the contents and re-submit the petition should they so wish.
- 3.6 If the request is accepted the e-petition will 'go live' on the Council's website and will be 'open' for public signatures for the specified time. Anyone wishing to sign an e-petition must first register as a user to ensure they meet the criteria for signatories i.e. live, work or study.
- 3.7 It is possible to run a paper petition and e-petition simultaneously, with both sets of signatures being added together for a total number. However, duplicate signatures will be disregarded.

3.8 When an e-petition has closed for signing, the number of signatories will be tallied. Provided that the e-petition has at least 50 valid signatories the Council will respond to the Petition Organiser as set out in Sections 4, 5 and 6 below.

4 **How will the Council respond to Petitions?**

4.1 The Petition Organiser of a valid petition will be sent a written acknowledgement of the petition within 10 working days of its receipt or the closure of an e-petition. It will let the Petition Organiser know what the Council plans to do with the petition and when they can expect to hear from the Council again.

4.2 Where a petition is received which affects a particular ward(s) the Council will notify the Ward Councillors of the petition (please see 2.4 above).

4.3 If the petition is an active petition the Council will also notify the Petition Organiser, in writing, within 20 working days of receipt of the petition or the closure of an e-petition, of the steps (see below) the Council has taken or proposes to take in response to the petition and its reasons for doing so. It will publish the written notification on the Council's website unless the Council considers that it would be inappropriate to do so (the contact details of the Petition Organiser will not be displayed).

4.4 Please note that the written response described in paragraph 4.3 above may be included in the written acknowledgement of the petition as detailed in paragraph 4.1 above (i.e. in a single document).

4.5 Depending on what a petition asks for and how many people have signed it, the steps that Directors, or their representatives, may take or propose to take may include one or more of the following (this is not an exhaustive list):-

4.5.1 Taking the action requested in the petition;

4.5.2 Consider the petition at a Council meeting;

4.5.3 Hold an inquiry;

4.5.4 Hold a public meeting;

4.5.5 Undertake research;

4.5.6 Write to the Petition Organiser setting out the Council's views about the request in the petition; and

4.5.7 Refer the petition for consideration by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (this Committee is responsible for scrutinising the work of the Council and holding the Council's Executive to account).

5 **Full Council Debates**

5.1 If an **active petition** contains more than 1350 signatures it will be debated by the full Council. This means that the issue raised in the petition will be discussed at a meeting of all elected Members. The Council will endeavour to consider the petition at its first meeting following the receipt of the petition, although where this is not possible or appropriate, consideration will take place at the following meeting.

- 5.2 The Petition Organiser will be notified in writing of the date and time of the Council meeting in which the petition is to be debated. The Petition Organiser or someone nominated on his or her behalf will be given the opportunity to speak about the petition at the Council meeting, normally for up to 5 minutes. It will then be debated by the Council. The maximum time allocated for Councillors to debate petitions will be 30 minutes although this may be extended at the discretion of the Mayor.
- 5.3 The Council will decide how to respond to the petition at the meeting. The Petition Organiser will receive written confirmation of the Council's decision. The confirmation will also be published on the Council's website.

6 **Reviewing the Results**

- 6.1 Where the Petition Organiser of an active petition receives written notification of the steps that the Council has taken or proposes to take he or she has the right to request that the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee reviews the adequacy of those steps. The request for review must be made in writing within 30 days starting from the date of the written notification. It is helpful to everyone and can improve the prospects of a review if the Petition Organiser gives a short explanation of the reasons why the Council's decision is not considered to be adequate.
- 6.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee will endeavour to consider the review at its first meeting following the request, however, where this is not possible or appropriate, consideration will take place at the following meeting.
- 6.3 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 the Council's website unless it considers it would be inappropriate to do so.

7 **Petitions with under 50 Signatures**

- 7.1 Petitions within the category will be considered as part of the Council's Complaints Procedure.

If you have with queries about the Council's Petition Scheme,
please contact the Head of Member Services on 01772
906112 or email ju.thorpe@preston.gov.uk

Example Proforma

Petition to Preston City Council

Statement of Petition:-

(Please insert details here)

Contact details of Petition Organiser:-

Name:

Address:

Tel No:

Email:

Signatories

By signing this form you are confirming that you are consenting to Preston City Council holding and processing your personal data. All personal information will be kept safe and secure and will only be kept for as long as is it necessary to deal with the Petition.

If you do grant consent, please note that you can withdraw your consent by contacting ju.thorpe@preston.gov.uk

Name	Address	Signature	Identify if living/working or studying in Preston	Consent to hold and process your personal data – Please tick the box below to give your consent