

## **Petitions**

Herefordshire Council welcomes petitions and recognises they are a valuable facility to enable issues affecting local communities to be highlighted. Through the petitions protocol the council is able to engage with local residents to understand local concerns and respond where appropriate. Petitions should relate to a matter for which the council is responsible. The information below provides detail of the rules the council applies to receive and accept petitions.

### **Who can submit a petition?**

Petitions will be accepted from people who live, work or study in Herefordshire.

### **What should a petition include?**

To ensure a petition is accepted the following should be provided:

- A clear and concise statement outlining the subject matter of the petition and what action is sought from the council. The petition must concern local services for which the council is responsible.
- Details of the petition organiser including name and postal address. The organiser will be the point of contact for queries regarding the information submitted and will be sent the response from the council.
- The name and address of any person supporting the petition. To be accepted a petition needs to have the support of at least 15 people.

### **What should a petition avoid?**

A petition should be compiled under the principle of good faith and be honest and respectful. To avoid rejection, a petition should avoid the following:

- language or statements which are defamatory, frivolous, vexatious, discriminatory, false, or otherwise offensive;
- requests to the council to disclose information as other processes exist to access information (see [https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200148/your\\_council/15/access\\_to\\_information/2](https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200148/your_council/15/access_to_information/2) ) ;

- naming individuals, or providing information where they may be easily identified, e.g. individual officers of public bodies;
- accusations of criminality;
- advertising statements;
- reference to an issue which is currently the subject of a formal council complaint, Local Government Ombudsman complaint or any legal proceedings; or
- matters for which there are other statutory processes (such as planning or licensing applications, traffic regulation orders, or statutory petitions for a referendum).

## **How to submit a petition**

There are four ways to submit a petition to the council. A petition can be posted, submitted online or handed to the chairman of the council. In addition the council also hosts an ePetitions facility to allow the creation and administration of petitions online.

### Post

Please post your petition to the address below:

Democratic Services Manager  
Herefordshire Council  
Plough Lane  
Hereford  
HR4 0LE

### Email

You can scan and submit your petition to the email address below:

[councillorservices@hereford.gov.uk](mailto:councillorservices@hereford.gov.uk),

### In person

The chairman of the council is available to receive petitions before the start of each ordinary meeting of the full Council. During the meeting the petition will be formally passed to the relevant cabinet member or committee chairman. To arrange to meet the chairman to present a petition please email [councillorservices@hereford.gov.uk](mailto:councillorservices@hereford.gov.uk) and provide your details.

### ePetition

An online facility for running a petition is provided on the council's website, known as ePetition. Guidance on creating and running a petition through ePetition is available online – [ePetition guidance](#).

In addition to applying the criteria above, the length of time a petition is open for signatures will also need to be determined. Most petitions on ePetition run for six months, but you can choose a shorter or longer period, within a maximum of 12 months.

### **Next steps/outcomes**

All petitions received will be acknowledged within 10 working days. The acknowledgement will confirm whether the petition has been accepted and will provide an explanation of when the council intends to respond substantively to the petition, if appropriate. In the case of an ePetition, once created, it may take 10 working days for the petition to be published on the Council's website.

To ensure that people are aware of the council's response to petitions received, the details of all the petitions accepted will be published online, except in cases where this would be inappropriate. The names of the petition organiser or signatories to a petition will be published but contact details will not be placed on the website.

### Rejected petitions

In the event that a petition is rejected, the acknowledgement letter will outline the reasons why it was not accepted.

If an ePetition is rejected at this stage it can be amended, to take account of the reasons in the acknowledgement letter, and resubmitted. If no amendment is received within 10 working days, a summary of the petition and the reason why it has not been accepted will be published under the 'rejected petitions' section on the council's website.

### Accepted petitions

Petitions which have been accepted will be provided with a substantive response which will follow the initial acknowledgment letter. This will address the issues raised in the petition and outline any action the council intends to take in response. The substantive response will be published online alongside the original petition.

Further action that the council could take includes:

- Implementing the action requested in the petition.
- Referring the matter to the relevant scrutiny committee to review.
- Undertaking research into the matter.
- Holding a public meeting.
- Holding a consultation.
- Holding a meeting with petitioners.

If the council is not taking the action requested by the petitioners an explanation will be given.

If a petition is signed by 5% (approximately 7,000 residents) of the people on the electoral roll and has not been rejected the lead petitioner can request that it is debated at the next ordinary meeting of full Council. Up to 30 minutes will be set aside at the meeting and the lead petitioner will be invited to outline briefly the petition at the start of the debate.

### **Petitions for a change to a different form of governance**

The council can be petitioned to hold a referendum on whether it should change to a different form of governance.

The Local Government Act 2000 requires Herefordshire Council to publish a notice which sets out the minimum number of signatures which would be needed to support a valid petition requiring the council to hold a referendum on whether it should change to a different form of governance.

Please access the link below for more information on Mayoral referendums and the mayoral petition notice containing information about the minimum number of signatures to support a valid petition (equivalent to 5% of the local government electorate in Herefordshire):

[Mayoral referendums](#)

### **Further help/information**

If you require any further help or assistance please contact Democratic Services using the email address below:

[councillorservices@hereford.gov.uk](mailto:councillorservices@hereford.gov.uk),

