

EPetitions Guidance (to be read in conjunction with the petitions scheme)

Who can sign an ePetition?

An ePetition can be signed by a person of any age who lives, works or studies in or has used services provided by Herefordshire Council. You do not have to be a registered user to sign an ePetition but you will need to provide a few basic details, including a valid email address, for verification purposes.

You can only sign an ePetition 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 ePetition?

An ePetition can be submitted by a person of any age who lives, works or studies in Herefordshire or has used services provided by Herefordshire Council. To submit an ePetition 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 ePetition.

From time to time, the Council may also submit an ePetition itself to gauge public feeling on a particular issue.

How do I start an ePetition?

On the ePetitions homepage, select the 'Submit a new ePetition' option. You will be prompted to enter a title which the system will automatically check against existing ePetitions to allow you to see if a similar one has been considered recently.

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 ePetition before it goes live. It may take up to 10 days for your ePetition to be published online.

What issues can my ePetition relate to?

Your ePetition 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 honest and respectful.

Your ePetition may be rejected if the Democratic Services Manager considers it:

- 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) ;
- 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).

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 ePetition is about something over which the Council has no direct control (for example the local railway or hospital) we will consider making representations on behalf of the community to the relevant body.

If we feel we cannot publish your ePetition for some reason we will contact you to explain. You will be able to change and resubmit your ePetition if you wish. If you do not do this within 10 days a summary of the ePetition and the reason why it has not been accepted will be published under the 'rejected petitions' section of the website.

What information should my ePetition contain?

Your ePetition will need to include:

- A title.
- A statement explicitly setting out what action you would like the Council to take.
- Any information which you feel is relevant to the ePetition and reasons.
- Why you consider the action requested to be necessary. You may include links to other relevant websites.
- A date for when your ePetition will go live on the website. It may take Democratic Services up to 5 working days to check your ePetition request and discuss any issues with you so please ensure that you submit the request in sufficient time to allow the ePetition to go live on your required date.

- A date for when your ePetition will stop collecting signatures. Most petitions run for 6 months but you can choose a shorter or longer timeframe, up to a maximum of 12 months.

As lead petitioner, your name will be displayed with your ePetition on the website.

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

Promoting your ePetition

Whilst the Council will host ePetitions on its website, it is for the lead petitioner to spread the word about their ePetition.

What happens when the ePetition is complete?

When the ePetition 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 ePetition within 10 working days of the closing date.

What will happen to the ePetition once it is submitted?

Our response to a petition will depend on what a petition asks for and how many people have signed it. If we can do what your petition asks for, the acknowledgement may confirm that we have taken the action requested and the petition will be closed. For every petition the response will be made public and details will also be available on our website for all to see.

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.

What can ePetitions achieve?

When you submit an ePetition 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 ePetition request, please let us know if you are running a paper petition as well and this can be highlighted on the website.

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 ePetition.

Contact Details

For more information and advice, or to discuss a potential ePetition, please contact:

Democratic Services Department
councillorservices@herefordshire.gov.uk
01432 383690