

APPENDIX 5**PETITION SCHEME****1. Introduction**

Redbridge Council recognises that petitions are a useful way for people to let us know issues or concerns and allow elected Councillors to consider the need for change. We want to make sure that local people have an opportunity to express their views and the Petition Scheme is one of several ways you can have your say. This Petition Scheme sets out how you can submit a petition and what action the Council will take upon receiving it.

2. Our petitions pledge

Firstly we'd like to pledge our commitment in making the Petitions Scheme a meaningful opportunity to voice your opinion. The Council will:

- Consider and respond to every petition submitted
- Provide a formal response and explanation of the actions, if any, it proposes to take as a result of the petition
- Protect the privacy and personal details of every signatory and the petition organiser

3. First steps

Anyone who lives, works or studies in Redbridge can organise or sign a petition to be submitted to the Council. Under 18s can also sign and submit petitions.

3.1 What is a petition?

We treat as a petition any communication which is signed by or sent to us on behalf of a number of people. The petition must be in the form of template published on the Council's website.

3.2 What should a petition contain?

A petition should include:

- 3.2.1** A clear statement of your concerns and what you want the authority to do. This must relate to something which is within the powers, functions and responsibilities of the Council. Where a petition relates to a matter which is within the responsibility of another public authority, we will ask the petition organiser whether s/he would like us to redirect the petition to that other authority. Where a petition does not relate to any of the matters set out above we will return the petition to the petition organiser with an explanation for that decision.

- 3.2.2 The full name and contact details of the "petition-organiser" or someone to whom you would like any correspondence about the petition to be sent. Contact details may be either a postal address or an Email address.
- 3.2.3 The full names of the petitioners (which can include the petition organiser). Where the petition is in paper form, this can include an actual signature from each petitioner, but an actual signature is not essential. Where the petition is in electronic form, a list of the full names of the petitioners will suffice. You may include the addresses of petitioners, which may be useful to the authority, for example, in assessing the degree of local support or opposition to a planning application, but this is not essential. If you want your petition to be debated at a meeting of the Council ("A Petition for Debate") or at a public meeting of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee at which a specific officer will be required to report ("A Petition to hold an Officer to Account"), your petition will need to contain a higher number of signatories or petitioners (see below);
- 3.2.4 If you are submitting the petition in response to our consultation on a specific matter, please identify the matter that it relates to, so that we can ensure that your petition is considered along with original matter.
- 3.2.5 Petitions that are considered to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate will not be accepted. If a submitted petition refers to the subject of ongoing legal proceedings or targets individual members of the community it will be considered to be inappropriate. A petition will generally not be accepted within 6 months of the Council considering a petition on the same subject. We will reject any petition that obviously relates to a party political matter. In the six weeks before an election or referendum we may need to deal with your petition differently - if this is the case we will explain the reasons and discuss the changes which will apply with the petition organiser. If your petition is rejected, we will write to you to explain why.

3.3 Who should you send a petition to?

Where you submit a petition in response to consultation by the authority, please address it to the return address set out in the consultation invitation. This will ensure that it is reported at the same time as the matter to which it relates is considered.

We have appointed a Petitions Officer, who is responsible for receiving, managing and reporting all other petitions sent to the authority. Please address petitions to -

The Petitions Officer
London Borough of Redbridge
PO Box 2, Ilford, Essex, IG1 1 DD

Or to [\[Petitions@redbridge.gov.uk\]](mailto:Petitions@redbridge.gov.uk)

The Petitions Officer will ensure that your petition is acknowledged to the petition organizer and entered on the authority's petitions website

(www.redbridge.gov.uk) and that the website is regularly up-dated with information on the progress of your petition. The Petitions Officer can also provide you with advice about how to petition the authority or the progress of your petition, at either of the above addresses or by telephone at 0208 708 2159.

3.4 [-petitions:

3.4.1 E-petitions can be created and submitted through the Council's e-petition link, which is at this address www.redbridge.gov.uk. This scheme applies to e-petitions in the same way as it applies to paper petitions. The petition organiser must provide:

- his/her full name, postal address and e-mail address
- a time frame for how long the e-petition should be open for signatures. Most petitions run for 6 months but the organiser can choose a longer or shorter time frame, up to a maximum of 12 months.

3.4.2 It is possible to run an e-petition at the same time as a paper petition. The petition organiser should inform the Council that a paper petition is also being undertaken when submitting their e-petition. As with paper petitions, the responsibility for publicising an e-petition lies with the petition organiser.

3.4.3 Once an e-petition has been created it will be published online within 5 working days. The Council will check that the content is suitable before it is made available for signatures. If we feel that we cannot publish a petition, the petition organiser will be contacted and the reasons explained. The organiser will then have the opportunity to change and resubmit the petition. If this is not done within 14 days, a summary of the petition and the reason why it has not been accepted will be published on the Council website.

3.4.4 When an e-petition has closed for signature, it will automatically be submitted to an officer to take forward. In the same way as a paper petition, the petition organiser will receive an acknowledgement within 14 days.

3.4.5 A petition acknowledgement and response will be e-mailed to all signatories of the e-petition who have requested to receive this information. The acknowledgement and response will also be published on the website.

3.4.6 To 'sign' an e-petition, signatories will be asked to provide their full names, postcode and e-mail address. When this information is submitted, an email will be generated to the e-mail address provided. This will include a link that must be clicked on in order to confirm that the e-mail address is valid. Once this step is complete, the 'signature' will be added to the petition. People visiting the e-petition will be able to see the names of those who have signed it but not any contact details.

3.5 The Subject Matter of a Petition

The way in which a petition is dealt with will depend partly on what it is about. There are three different types of subject matter, which are set out below.

3.5.1. Ordinary Petitions

These are petitions that do not come within either of the following specific types. Please note that petitions which raise issues of possible Councillor misconduct will be taken as complaints arising under the Local Government Act 2000 and will be considered by the Monitoring Officer as the proper officer nominated to deal with allegations of misconduct by councillors, rather than considered under this Petitions Scheme.

3.5.2 Licensing or Planning Petitions

These are petitions that relate to applications for licences or planning permission, reviews of such licences, enforcement action, the adoption of development plan documents and related matters. These petitions will, where appropriate, be reported to a public meeting of the body which will be taking the decision, or otherwise to the relevant senior officer.

3.5.3 Statutory Petitions

Particular Acts of Parliament require the Council to consider petitions, for example a petition for a review of Parish Councils, or a petition for a directly-elected Mayor. Where you submit a petition under such a specific statute, we will report it to the next available meeting of the Council in accordance with the statutory requirements. Also, there are a number of cases in which an individual has a statutory right to a review or an appeal against a decision of the Council. Any petition dealing with a matter in respect of which there is such a right will be referred to the relevant review or appeal body.

3.6 Special Types of Ordinary Petition

There are two special types of ordinary petition. These are as follows:

3.6.1 Petitions for Debate

If you want your petition to be reported to and debated at a meeting of the Council, it must contain at least 1,500 signatories or petitioners.

3.6.2 Petitions to Hold an Officer to Account

If you want your petition to be considered at a meeting of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee, where an officer, identified either by name or by post title, will be required to answer questions on the conduct of a particular matter, your petition should contain at least 1,250 signatories or petitioners. The authority has determined that such petitions must relate to a Senior Officer of the Council.

The current post titles of the Senior Officers are as follows:

Chief Executive

Director of Assurance

Executive Director of People

Director of Children & Families
Director of Education
Director of SEND and Inclusion
Director of Public Health
Assistant Director, Adult Social Care

Executive Director of Regeneration and Culture

Director for Planning and Building
Head of Leisure and Culture
Head of Property
Head of Capital Delivery

Executive Director of Communities

Director of Housing
Director of Civic Pride
Director of Highways, Parking and Transportation

Executive Director of Resources

Director - Finance
Director of IT
Director - Benefits & Transactional Centre

Executive Director of Strategy

Director of HR, Payroll and Pensions
Director of Policy, Programmes and Change
Director of Digital, Customer Experience and Community Safety

In order for such a petition to be treated in this way, the petition organiser must state clearly the reasons for requiring the officer to give evidence. These reasons must relate to the officer's job and not to their personal circumstances or character. Please be aware that the Scrutiny Committee may decide that it would be more appropriate for another officer to give evidence instead of the senior officer named in the petition.

4. The Petitions Website

- 4.1 The authority maintains a petitions website at www.redbridge.gov.uk.
- 4.2 When a petition is received, within 5 working days the Petitions Officer will open a new public file within the website and will put in that file the subject matter of the petition, its date of receipt and the number of signatories or petitioners. The petition organiser's full name and contact details will only be included on the website if s/he so requests.

- 4.3 As soon as it is decided who the petition will be considered by within the authority, and when that consideration will occur, this information will be entered on the website at the same time as it is sent to the petition organiser. Once the petition has been considered, the authority's decision will be notified to the petition organiser and put on the website within 5 working days of that consideration.

- 4.4 Petitions are presented on the petitions website in the order in which they are received, but the website can be searched for key-words to identify all petitions relating to a particular topic. All petitions are kept on the website for 2 years from the date of receipt.

5. What happens when a petition is received?

Whenever a petition is received -

- 5.1 Within 7 working days of receipt, the Petitions Officer will acknowledge receipt to the petition organiser.
- 5.2 The Petitions Officer is responsible for determining whether the petition is one which meets the criteria set out in paragraph 3.2 (e.g. whether it relates to any of the specified matters and whether it is vexatious, abusive or inappropriate) and within which of the categories set out in paragraph 3.5 it falls. This officer is also responsible for determining whether the special criteria applying to petitions for debate or petitions to hold an officer to account apply.
- 5.3 The Petitions Officer will within 14 working days of receipt of the petition provide a substantive response to the petition organiser setting out who the petition will be reported to for consideration (see below at paragraph 8).
- 5.4 Whilst we are committed to dealing with petitions promptly, a petition will normally need to be received at least 10 working days before any meeting of a relevant decision making body if it is to be reported to that meeting. Where it is necessary to undertake a significant amount of work to collect information and advice to enable the matter to be properly considered, it may be necessary for the Petitions Officer to decide that the petition will be held over until the following meeting of the relevant body.
- 5.5 Within 5 working days of receipt of a petition, the Petitions Officer will open a new public file for the petition on the authority's petitions website, setting out the subject matter of the petition, the date of receipt and the number of petitioners. The petition organiser's full name and contact details will only be included on the website if s/he so requests.
- 5.6 At each stage of the consideration of the petition, within 5 working days of any decision, the Petitions Officer will ensure that the petitions website is updated to ensure that petitioners can track progress of their petition.
- 5.7 The process after this stage differs for the various types of petitions – see below.

6. What Happens to a Licensing or Planning Petition?

- 6.1 Licensing or planning petitions relate to applications for a licence or planning permission, applications to review or revoke licences, enforcement activity, and the adoption of development plan documents.
- 6.2 Where the matter to which the petition relates will be determined by a Council body, such as a Licensing Committee or Sub-Committee, the petition will be reported to that body at the meeting when the matter will be determined. In other cases, the petition will be referred to the relevant Senior Officer of the Council, who will inform the petition organiser of what steps, if any, have been taken in response to the petition. The Council's Constitution defines who will take different types of decision, as set out in the terms of Reference of Committees and Sub-Committees and the Scheme of Delegations.

7. What Happens to a Statutory Petition?

- 7.1 Particular Acts of Parliament require the Council to consider petitions, for example a petition for a directly-elected Mayor. Where you submit a petition under such a specific statute, we will report it to the next available meeting of the Council in accordance with the statutory requirements. Where the petition relates to a matter in respect of which a person has a statutory right of review or appeal, it will be reported to the relevant review or appeal body.

8. What Happens to an Ordinary Petition?

The following applies to ordinary petitions which do not qualify as petitions for debate or petitions to call an officer to account.

- 8.1 After a valid petition has been received and acknowledged, it will be referred to the most appropriate Senior Officer, who will decide what steps to take.
- 8.2 If it is possible for the Council to do what the petition asks for, the relevant officer may confirm that we have taken the action requested and the petition will be closed.
- 8.3 Otherwise our response to the petition will depend on what it asks for and how many people have signed it but may include one or more of the following:
 - Considering the petition at a meeting, including a meeting of full Council, Cabinet, a committee or a meeting where a Senior Officer gives evidence
 - Holding an inquiry into the matter
 - Undertaking research
 - Holding a public meeting
 - Holding a consultation
 - Holding a meeting with petitioners
 - Referring the petition for consideration by a Scrutiny Committee
 - Writing to the petition organiser setting out our views about the request in the petition.

- 8.4 All accepted petitions will be considered and the conclusions and any resulting actions will be published on the Council website. This may include 'no action' for reasons provided.
- 8.5 Within 5 working days of the consideration of the petition, the Petitions Officer will notify the petition organiser of the authority's decision in respect of it and advise him/her that if s/he is not satisfied with that decision, s/he may require the matter to be reported to the next convenient meeting of the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee for review.
- 8.6 At each stage, the Petitions Officer will enter the relevant information on the website at the same time as it is sent to the petition organiser.
- 8.7 A report will be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee each quarter advising on the action taken in response to each petition received in accordance with the Petition Scheme.

9. Petitions for Debate

- 9.1 Petitions for Debate will be reported to the next convenient meeting of Council. Petitions will not be considered at the Annual Meeting of Council or at Extraordinary Meetings of Council which are not convened to consider the subject matter of the petition.
- 9.2 The petition organiser will be given up to five minutes to present the petition at the meeting and the petition will then be discussed by Councillors for a maximum of 15 minutes. The Council will then decide how to respond to the petition. If full Council has the power to do so it may decide to take the action requested in the petition, not to take the action for reasons considered during the debate, or to commission further work. If, on the other hand, only the Council's Executive may take the action requested it may refer the matter to the Executive for consideration with or without a recommendation. The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of the decision, which will also be published on our website.
- 9.3 If, before a petition for debate has been considered by full Council, the Council takes the action requested we will write to the petition organiser and ask him/her if s/he still wishes the matter to be debated or if s/he wishes to withdraw it. If the petition organiser withdraws the petition no further action will be taken. The result of the petition will still be published on the Council's website.

10. What happens to a Petition to Hold an Officer to Account?

- 10.1 Petitions to hold an officer to account will be reported to the next convenient meeting of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 10.2 In advance of the Committee meeting, the petition organiser will be invited to submit a list of questions which she/he would like put to the officer at the meeting. These questions will be provided to the Chair of the Committee, who will decide whether they are appropriate, and to the officer concerned, in advance of the meeting.
- 10.3 At the meeting, the Chair will invite the petition organiser to address the Committee for a maximum of 5 minutes on the issue, and the relevant officer will then be required to report to the Committee in relation to the conduct of the subject matter of the petition. Members of the Committee may question the officer, and the Chair may invite the petition organiser to suggest questions for him/her to put to the officer.

- 10.4 The Scrutiny Committee may decide that a report or recommendations should be submitted to the Council's Executive or full Council after the meeting. This will be made available on the Council's website.

11. Appeals to an Overview Committee

- 11.1 If the petition organiser is not satisfied with the outcome of the Council's consideration of his/her petition, he/she may appeal to the Overview Committee by notifying the Petitions Officer of his/her intention to appeal within 20 working days of being notified of the authority's decision on the petition. (This only applies to valid petitions which meet the criteria set out in paragraph 3.2).
- 11.2 Within 5 working days of receipt of intention to appeal, the Petition Officer will notify the petition organiser of the time, date and place of the next convenient meeting of the Overview Committee and will invite the petition organiser to attend the meeting and to address the Committee for up to 5 minutes on why he/she considers that the authority's decision on the petition is inadequate.
- 11.3 At the meeting, the Committee will invite the petition organiser to make their representations and to explain why he/she considers that the authority's response was insufficient. Should the Committee decide that the Council has not dealt with the petition adequately, it may:
- Set up a working group to review the handling of the petition.
 - Make recommendations to the Cabinet.
 - Arrange for the matter to be considered at a meeting of full Council.
 - Ask a Scrutiny Committee to be involved in the review.