



CONSTITUTION

May 2024

Part D

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Petition Scheme

1. Introduction

The Council welcomes petitions and recognises that petitions are one way in which people can let us know their concerns. All petitions sent or presented to the Council will receive an acknowledgement from the Council within **15** working days of receipt. The acknowledgement will set out what the Council intends to do with the petition.

Anyone who lives, works, or studies in the South Gloucestershire area can sign or submit a petition, including those under the age of 18. Petitions may be submitted on paper or electronically using an online petition system which meets the requirements of a valid petition, or a combination of the two.

Petitions can be presented to a meeting of the Full Council. These meetings take place 6 times per year. All dates and times can be found on the [Councils Webpages](#).

If you would wish your petition presented to the Full Council meeting please contact your Local Councillor to present it on your behalf, or email Democratic Services at democraticservices@southglos.gov.uk at least **10** working days before the meeting for guidance on the process.

If your petition has received 2,500 signatories or more from people who Live, work or study in South Gloucestershire this can then trigger a Full Council debate and if this is the case contact will be made with the lead petitioner to discuss options for enabling this to take place.

You can also submit petitions to the Cabinet and Committees (including Scrutiny Committees). Details of when these meetings take place can also be found on the [Council's webpages](#).

E petitions after can be created, signed and submitted online by following this link: [Petitions | BETA - South Gloucestershire Council \(southglos.gov.uk\)](#)

A paper petition template is available at Appendix 1 and this will help you to see what information we need in order to consider your petition under the terms of the Council scheme.

If your petition relates to a Planning and Licensing decisions, then these are dealt with through a different channel. Please see the Councils constitution for matters relating to Planning and Licensing decisions.

2. Guidelines for submitting a petition

Petitions may be submitted to the Full Council, Cabinet or Committees of the Council. Under the terms of this scheme, they must include:

- A clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition. It should state what action the petitioners wish the Council to take;
- The name and address and signature of any person supporting the petition
- There is no minimum signatories but you must live, work or study in the local authority area.

Petitions should be accompanied by contact details, including an address, for the petition organiser who must also live, work or study in the local authority area. This is the person that 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.***

A Petition **must not** contain:

- Offensive, intemperate, or provocative language.
- Potentially false or defamatory statements.
- Confidential, commercially sensitive, or distressing material.
- Advertisements or endorsement of products or services.
- Names of officials or family members unless they are senior management.
- Details related to criminal charges.

Petitions that are **not admissible** under this Scheme:

- Petitions on matters that the South Gloucestershire Council is not responsible for.
- Petitions that are essentially requests under Freedom of Information or the South Gloucestershire Council complaints process.
- Petitions relating to issues of misconduct by Councillors or staff.

A form is available as Appendix 1, which sets out the main summary information required when submitting a petition.

If you want to submit a petition to a specific meeting of the Council, **Cabinet** or any Committee meeting (including Scrutiny Committees) then you need to ensure that we receive a completed petition with details of the petition subject matter, number of signatures and your contact details by no later than **24 hours** on a working day (not Saturday/Sunday or bank holidays) before that meeting to enable it to be submitted.

Please note petitions submitted by the petitioner to meetings of the Full Council will not be discussed in detail at that point, unless there is an agenda item specifically relating to that issue. Petitions received in this way will be referred to the appropriate Member and / or Officer for proper consideration.

In the period immediately before an election or referendum the Council may need to deal with petitions in a different way – if this is the case an explanation of the reasons will be provided with a revised timescale which will apply.

If a petition does not follow the guidelines as set out, the Council may decide not to do anything further with it. In that case, you will receive a written explanation of the reasons.

3. What will the Council do when it receives my petition?

An acknowledgement will be sent to the petition organiser within **15** 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.

If the Council considers it can meet what the petition asks for, the acknowledgement may confirm what action has been taken on the request and the petition will be closed.

If some other action is proposed or intended, the acknowledgement will explain this. If the petition has enough signatories to trigger a debate at Full Council, then the acknowledgment will confirm this and advise when and where the meeting will take place. If the petition needs more investigation, you will be advised of the Council's next steps.

The Council reserves the right to verify signatories as required. Petitioners should ensure that a valid address and postcode is included for all petitioners that relates to a home address (if living in South Gloucestershire) or work address (if working or run a business in South Gloucestershire). These details will be taken into account when identifying if there are enough signatories from people who live or work in the area to trigger a Full Council debate.

4. Full council Debates

In line with the Councils Standing Orders if a petition contains more than **2,500** signatures from people who live, work or study in South Gloucestershire it will trigger the right to be debated by the Full Council. This means that the issue raised in the petition will be discussed at a meeting which all Councillors can attend.

If the petition organiser wishes to take up this opportunity, they will be given 5 minutes to present the petition at the next available meeting of the Full Council. The petition

will then be discussed by Councillors Full Council will decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting.

The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of the outcome of the Full Council debate and of the Council's decision and any explanation in the event of Council not being able to take the action which had been requested.

5. E-petitions

The Council welcomes e-petitions being created and submitted through the [South Gloucestershire Council E-Petitions Scheme](#).

E-petitions must follow the same guidelines as for paper petitions and in addition:

- Petition organisers and subscribers must provide a valid email address as well as their name and address; and
- The period for which the petition shall be open to subscription must be determined at the outset.

The petition organiser will need to provide their name, postal address, and email address, and will need to decide how long the petition is to be open for signatories. It maybe that the ending of the petition would coincide with a relevant meeting or decision. It may be helpful to discuss this with Democratic Services. If so, please contact us via email at democraticservices@southglos.gov.uk

When an e-petition has been submitted on the Council's website, the petitions will be acknowledged within **15** working days and this will include a link to the petition. Upon the e-petition reaching its end date, it will be closed to further subscription and will then be dealt with as explained in Section 4.

When you create an e-petition, it may take **5** working days before it is published online. This is because we have to check that the content of your petition is suitable before it is made available for signature.

If it is considered that your petition cannot be published for any reason, the Council will contact you within this time to explain. You will be able to change and resubmit your petition if you wish. If you do not do this 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 of the website.

When an e-petition has closed for signature, it will automatically be submitted to Democratic Services. In the same way as a paper petition, you will receive an acknowledgement within **15** working days.

E-petitions that have been created through websites other than the Council's own E-petitions scheme can be submitted to the Council but will still need to meet the criteria as set out. For example a name, address and email address. Providing the Council with

a list of names and addresses on a spreadsheet will not be sufficient. There must be an associated email address for an e-petition to be valid.

If you would like to present an e-petition to a meeting of the Full Council, please contact the Democratic Services Team within **5** working days of your receipt of the acknowledgement.

6. Combined Paper and E-petitions

E-petitions can be used in conjunction with paper petitions provided that the criteria for petitions is met. In addition, the Lead Petitioner must be the same and that the wording used in both e-petition and the paper version are identical. In addition the timeframe for opening and closing both petitions should be the same. There must be no duplication of signatories between the e-petition and paper petition. The total number of signatories will be the sum of the e-petition and the paper petition.

7. Responses to Petitions

Depending on how petitions have been submitted to the Council will determine the way in which a response is provided to the Lead petitioner for example:

Petition Format	Response
<p>Standards Petitions Submitted/emailed direct to a member or officer of the Council.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper format (or image of paper format) • Third Party E-Petitions Scheme 	<p>Response provided direct to Lead petitioner by the relevant service department.</p>
<p>Petitions submitted as part of an open consultation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper format (or Image of Paper format) • South Glos E-Petitions Scheme • Third Party E-Petitions 	<p>Petitions which are received by the response date in the consultation invitation will be taken into consideration by the decision maker. The relevant technical officer will respond to the lead petitioner direct.</p>
<p>Petitions submitted to a Full council/Cabinet or committee meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper format (or Image of Paper format) • South Glos E-Petitions Scheme • Third Party E-Petitions 	<p>These will be referred by the meeting to the relevant Member or officer with responsibility for that function who will respond directly to the lead petitioner.</p>

South Gloucestershire E-Petitions Scheme	Referred by Democratic Services to the relevant service department to respond direct to the Lead petitioner. The response will be published on the South Gloucestershire E-petitions scheme.
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8. GDPR Considerations

The Councils own e-petitions scheme does not identify publicly the name and contact details of individual signatories. These are available to officers for verification.

Unless individual signatories to paper petitions or third-party e-petitions scheme have indicated that they are happy to have their details been made publicly available then the Council will not publish those details to adhere to its GDPR obligations. The number of signatories and nature of the petition can still be made publicly available.

9. What can I do if I feel my petition has not been dealt with properly?

If you feel that we have not dealt with your petition properly, please contact the Monitoring Officer (email) who will review your complaint and will advise you of the action which is intended. Please provide a short explanation of the reasons in your communication with us.

Appendix 1

South Gloucestershire Council - Petition Template

Please use this suggested template additional pages should also include the petition subject at the top of the page.

The petition organiser must live, work or study in South Gloucestershire.

Please also refer to the petitions scheme available at [Petitions | BETA - South Gloucestershire Council \(southglos.gov.uk\)](https://www.southglos.gov.uk/petitions) for further information about how we deal with petitions at the Council.

Contact Details of the Lead Petitioner
(the person the Council will contact with responses to the petition)

Full Name:	
Address for Correspondence:	1st Line: _____ 2nd Line: _____ 3rd Line: _____ Post code: _____
Home Telephone No:	
Mobile Number No; :	
Email address:	
Live/Work/Service user (please indicate all that apply)	
Signature	

