

CRAWLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL PETITIONS SCHEME

Introduction

The Council welcomes petitions and recognises that petitions are one way in which people can let us know their concerns. Members of the public can submit petitions on the following:

- Issues relating to the Borough Council's responsibilities
- Anything relating to an improvement in the economic, social or environmental well-being of the Council's area to which any of the partner authorities could contribute

The Council will respond to all petitions it receives. We will be as flexible as we can when handling your petition so that it is considered quickly and in the most appropriate way.

Essentially there are 2 types of petitions:

1. "Ordinary petitions"
Petitions which contain between 50 and 999 signatures and also all petitions with over 50 signatures to hold officers to account which call for evidence from a senior Council officer will be reported to whoever or whichever has the authority to take a decision on the matter e.g. the Cabinet; Cabinet Member; Officer; Committee or Sub Committee. Petitions with between 50 and 999 signatures will be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission prior to its submission to the appropriate decision-maker.
2. "Petitions requiring debate at Full Council"
Petitions which contain 1,000 signatures or more will be debated by Full Council unless it is a petition to hold officers to account which calls for evidence from a senior Council officer in which case it will be reported to whoever or whichever has the authority to take a decision on the matter e.g. the Cabinet; Cabinet Member; Officer; Committee or Sub Committee.

How do I Submit a Petition?

- Petitions can be either paper or electronic

All petitions sent or presented to the Council will receive an acknowledgement from the Council within 10 working days of receipt. This acknowledgement will set out what we plan to do with the petition. We will treat something as a petition, if it is identified as being a petition, or if it seems to us that it is intended to be a petition but which we consider is not part of an ongoing or statutory consultation process. A petition is defined as a communication in writing or using an electronic facility which is signed by the appropriate number of qualifying persons.

Paper petitions can be sent to:

Head of Legal, Democracy and HR (Petitions Officer)
Crawley Borough Council
Town Hall
The Boulevard
Crawley
West Sussex RH10 1UZ

Or be created, signed and submitted [online](#).

Petitions can also be presented to a meeting of the Council. These meetings take place on a 9 weekly basis, dates and times can be found on our website. If you would like to present your petition to the Council, or would like your Councillor or someone else to present it on your behalf please contact the Democratic Services Manager on 01293 438549 at least 10 working days before the meeting and they will talk you through the process.

What are the Guidelines for Submitting a Petition?

Petitions submitted to the Council 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 (the address can be an address where the signatory lives, works or studies).

Petitions should be accompanied by contact details, including an address, for the Principal Petitioner. This is the person we will contact to explain how we will respond to the petition. The contact details of the Principal Petitioner will not be placed on the website. If the petition does not identify a Principal Petitioner, we will contact signatories to the petition to agree who should act as the Principal Petitioner.

Paper petitions must include a signature and the signatory's name and address this can be the address where the signatory lives, works or studies. If the petition is in electronic form it must be made using the [Council's e-petitions facility](#).

Petitions which we consider to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate, part of a consultation process or repeat petition which is substantially the same as one presented within the last 6 months will not be accepted.

In the period immediately 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 revised timescale which will apply.

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, we will write to you to explain the reasons.

Who Can Submit a Petition?

Anyone who lives, works or studies in the Borough of Crawley including under 18s may sign, organise and submit a petition.

What Will The Council Do When It Receives My Petition?

An acknowledgement will be sent to the Principal Petitioner within 10 working days of receiving the petition. It will let them know what we plan to do with the petition and when they can expect to hear from us again. It will also be published on our website.

If we can do what your petition asks for, the petition will be closed. If the petition has enough signatures to trigger a Council debate, or a senior officer giving evidence, then the acknowledgment will confirm this and tell you when and where the meeting will take place. If the petition needs more investigation, we will tell you the steps we plan to take.

If a petition applies to a consultation process which is being carried out by the Council, an acknowledgement will confirm that the petition will need to be considered as part of the consultation process and details of the department or lead officer will be provided.

If the petition applies to a planning or licensing application, is a statutory petition (for example requesting a referendum on having an elected mayor), or on a matter where there is already an existing right of appeal or a separate complaints process, these petitions will not be accepted. If you require information on any of these matters you should in the first instance contact the:

Council's Democratic Services Manager:
Crawley Borough Council
Town Hall
The Boulevard
Crawley,
West Sussex,
RH10 1UZ

Tel: 01293 438549

E-mail: democratic.services@crawley.gov.uk.

If we decide that a petition is not acceptable then we will let the Principal Petitioner know our reasons. If the petition relates to the responsibilities of one of our partner authorities then the petition will be forwarded to that body for them to deal with within 10 working days of its receipt unless the petition relates to an improvement in the economic social or environmental well being of the Borough. In those cases the petitions will be considered under the Council's scheme.

To ensure that people know what we are doing in response to the petitions we receive, the details of all the petitions submitted to us will be published on our website, except in cases where this would be inappropriate. Whenever possible we will also publish all correspondence relating to the petition (all personal details will be removed). When you sign an e-petition you can elect to receive this information by email. We will not send you anything which is not relevant to the e-petition you have signed.

How Will The Council Respond To Petitions?

Our response to a petition will depend on what a petition asks for and how many people have signed it, but may include one or more of the following:

- Taking the action requested in the petition
- Considering the petition at a Council meeting
- Holding an inquiry into the matter
- Undertaking research into the matter
- Holding a public meeting
- Carrying out a consultation
- Holding a meeting with petitioners
- Referring the petition for consideration by the Council's Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny Commission* or relevant Committee
- Writing to the Principal Petitioner setting out our views about the request in the petition.

*The Overview and Scrutiny Commission is a Committee of Councillors who are responsible for scrutinising the work of the Council – in other words, the Overview and Scrutiny Commission has the power to hold the Council's decision makers to account.

In addition to these steps, the Council will consider all the specific actions it can potentially take on the issues highlighted in a petition. The table below gives some examples:

If your petition 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. The Council works with a large number of local partners and where possible will work with these partners to respond to your petition. If we are not able to do this for any reason (for example if what the petition calls for conflicts with Council policy), then we will set out the reasons for this to you. You can find more information on the services for which the Council is responsible [here](#).

If your petition is about something that a different Council is responsible for we will give consideration to what the best method is for responding to it. This might consist of simply forwarding the petition to the other Council, but could involve other steps. In any event we will always notify you of the action we have taken.

Petitions which contain between 50 and 999 signatures and also all petitions with over 50 signatures to hold officers to account which call for evidence from a senior Council officer will be reported to whoever or whichever has the authority to take a decision on the matter e.g. the Cabinet; Cabinet Member; Officer; Committee or Sub Committee. Petitions with between 50 and 999 signatures will be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission prior to its submission to the appropriate decision-maker.

Full Council Debates

If a petition contains more than 1,000 signatures it will be debated by the Full Council unless it is a petition asking for a senior Council officer to give evidence at a public meeting. This means that the issue raised in the petition will be discussed at a meeting which all Councillors can attend. The Council will endeavour to consider the petition at its next meeting, although on some occasions this may not be possible and consideration will then take place at the following meeting. Petitions will not be considered at the Annual Meeting of the Council or at Extraordinary meetings of the Council. The Principal Petitioner will be given up to five minutes to present the petition at the meeting and the petition will then be discussed by Councillors. A maximum of 30 minutes will be allowed at each meeting for considering petitions. The Council will decide how to respond to the petition at the meeting. They may decide to take the action the petition requests, not to take the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate, or to commission further investigation into the matter, for example by a relevant Committee. Where the issue is one on which the Cabinet are required to make the final decision, the Council will decide whether to make recommendations to inform that decision. All petitions considered by Full Council will be subject to a recorded vote where the decision is not unanimous. The Principal Petitioner will receive written confirmation of this decision. The confirmation will also be published on our website.

Officer Evidence

Your petition may ask for a senior Council officer to give evidence at a public meeting about something for which the officer is responsible as part of their job. For example, your petition may ask a senior Council officer to explain progress on an issue, or to explain the advice given to elected Members to enable them to make a particular decision.

If your petition contains at least 50 signatures, the senior officer will give evidence at a public meeting of the Council's Cabinet, Full Council, Committee or Sub Committee or referred to

the Cabinet Member – whichever has the power/authority to take decisions on the matter. Senior Council staff who can be called to give evidence are:

- Chief Executive (Natalie Brahma-Pearl)
- Deputy Chief Executive (Ian Duke)
- Head of Legal, Democracy and HR (Ann-Maria Brown)
- Head of Digital and Transformation (Simon Jones)
- Head of Corporate Finance (Karen Hayes)
- Head of Strategic Housing (Diana Maughan)
- Head of Economy and Planning (Clem Smith)
- Head of Crawley Homes (Karen Dodds)
- Head of Community Services (Chris Harris)
- Head of Major Projects and Commercial Services (Nigel Sheehan)

Petitions to hold an officer to account will be reported to the next convenient meeting of the Cabinet, relevant Committee or Sub Committee or to the Cabinet Member or another more senior officer – whichever or whoever has the authority to take a decision on the matter.

In advance of the Committee meeting, the Principal Petitioner will be invited to submit a list of questions which s/he would like put to the officer at the meeting. These questions will be provided to the Chair of the Cabinet or relevant Committee or Cabinet Member, who will decide whether they are appropriate, and to the officer concerned, in advance of the meeting (5 working days before the meeting). Please contact the Democratic Services Manager on 01293 438549 in advance of the meeting. You should be aware that the Cabinet or relevant Committee may decide that it would be more appropriate for another officer to give evidence instead of any officer named in the petition – for instance if the named officer has changed jobs. The Cabinet or Committee may also decide to call the relevant Councillor to attend the meeting. Committee Members will ask the question at this meeting.

At the meeting of the Cabinet or Committee the Chair will invite the Principal Petitioner to address the Cabinet or Committee for a maximum of 3 minutes on the issue.

Petitions which contain between 50 and 999 signatures and also all petitions with over 50 signatures to hold officers to account which call for evidence from a senior Council officer will be reported to whoever or whichever has the authority to take a decision on the matter e.g. the Cabinet; Cabinet Member; Officer; Committee or Sub Committee. Petitions with between 50 and 999 signatures will be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission prior to its submission to the appropriate decision-maker.

E-petitions

The Council welcomes e-petitions which are created and submitted through our [website](#). E-petitions must follow the same guidelines as paper petitions. The Principal Petitioner will need to register and provide us with their name, postal address and email address. You should also indicate how long you would like your petition to be open for signatures. Most petitions run for six months, but you can suggest a shorter or longer timeframe, up to a maximum of 12 months. Please contact the Democratic Services Manager on 01293 438549 to agree a suitable period.

When you create an e-petition, it may take 10 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 we feel we cannot publish your petition for some reason, we will contact you within this time to explain. You will be able to change and resubmit your petition if you wish.

When an e-petition has closed for signature, it will automatically be submitted to The Head of Legal, Democracy and HR (Petitions Officer). In the same way as a paper petition, you will receive an acknowledgement within 10 working days. If you would like to present your e-petition to a meeting of the Council, please contact the Democratic Services Manager on 01293 438549 within ten working days of receipt of the acknowledgement.

How Do I 'Sign' an E-Petition?

Visit our [website](#) to view the e-petitions currently available for signature.

When you sign an e-petition you will be asked to provide your name, address, postcode, a valid email address and confirm that you live, work or study within the Borough of Crawley. The details will only be visible to the Principal Petitioner and those Council officers administering the e-petitions facility.

What Can I Do If I Feel My Petition Has Not Been Dealt With Properly?

If you consider that the Council has not dealt with your petition properly and failed to act adequately in its response to the petition, the Principal Petitioner should submit a complaint under the Council's Complaints procedure (as set out in Part 5 of the Council's Constitution).

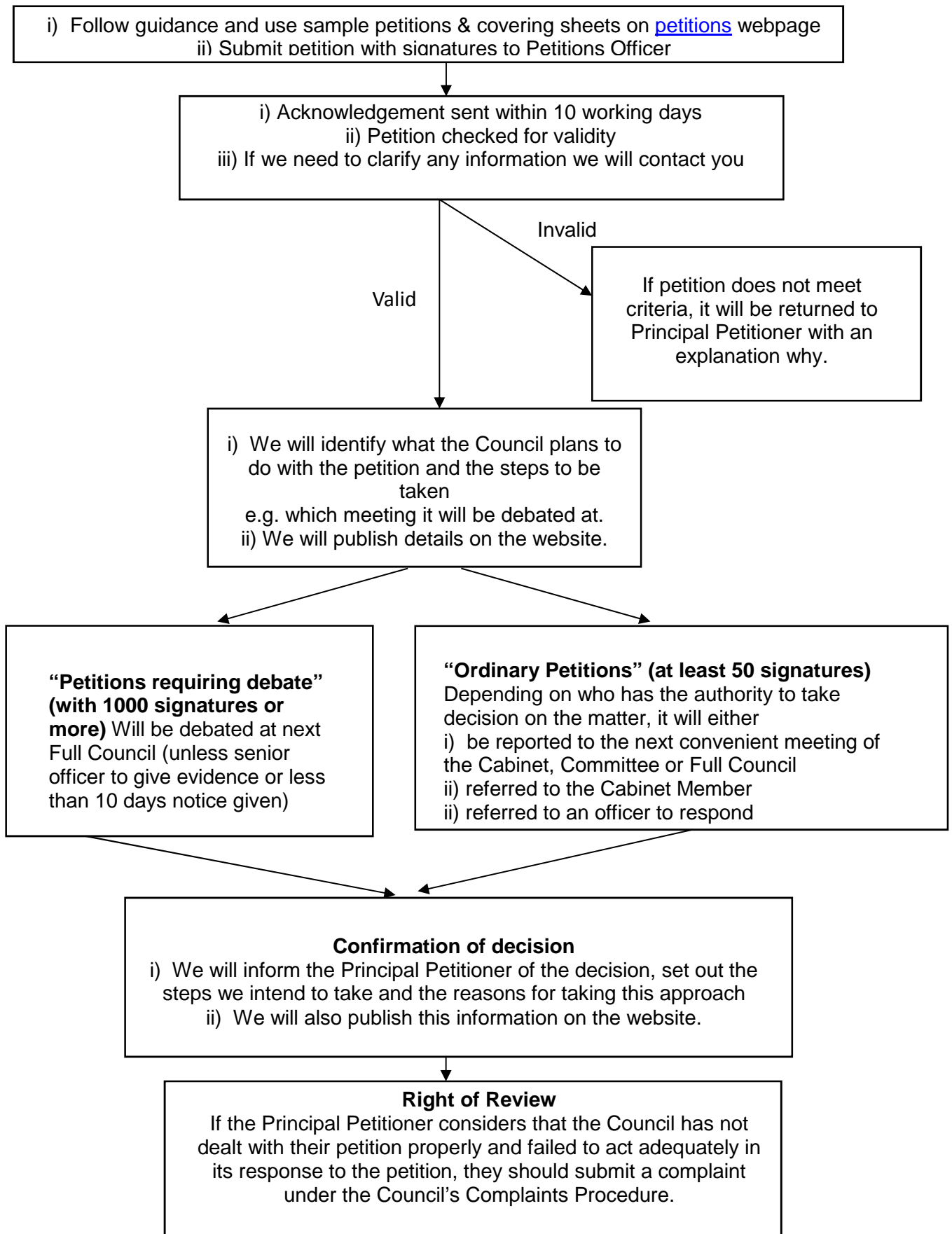
Petitions Which Will Not Be Reported

- **Duplicate Petitions**
Where more than one petition is received in time for a particular meeting, each supporting the same outcome on one matter, each Principal Petitioner will be treated as an independent Principal Petitioner, but only the Principal Petitioner of the first petition to be received will be invited to address the relevant meeting.
- **Repeat Petitions**
A petition will not normally be considered where they are received within 6 months of another petition being considered by the authority on the same matter.
- **Rejected Petitions**
Petitions will not be reported if in the opinion of the Petitions Officer, they are rude, offensive, defamatory, scurrilous or time-wasting, or do not related to something which is the responsibility of the authority, or over which the authority has some influence.
- **Consultations**
A petition will not be considered if it applies to a consultation process which is being carried out by the Council, an acknowledgment will confirm that the petition will need to be considered as part of the consultation process and details of the section or lead officer will be provided.

What Happens to an Ordinary Petition?

The Petitions Officer will arrange for each ordinary petition to be reported to the next convenient meeting of the Cabinet, Council or of a Committee or Sub-Committee of Council which has the power to take decisions on the matter.

Paper Petitions



E-Petitions

