

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 3 types of petitions:

1. "Ordinary petitions"
These must be signed by at least 50 people, they are petitions which do not come within any of the following specific types.
2. "Petitions requiring debate"
Petitions which contain 1,000 signatures or more will be debated by Full Council
3. "Petitions to hold Council Officers to account"
Petitions which call for evidence from a senior council officer and have at least 500 signatures will trigger that response.

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 a communication which is signed by or sent to us on behalf of a number of people, or if it seems to us that it is intended to be a petition. 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 and Democratic Services (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 Steve Lappage, 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 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 organiser 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.

Depending on the subject matter your petition will be submitted either to the Council, the Cabinet, one of the Council's Regulatory Committees (excluding planning and licensing) or the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Commission.

There are two exceptions to this:

- If your petition contains more than 1,000 signatories then it must be debated by Full Council
- If your petition is asking for a senior officer to give evidence then it will be at a meeting of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Commission provided it contains at least 500 signatures.

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: steve.lappage@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.

We will not take action on any petition which we consider to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise in appropriate and will explain the reason for this in our acknowledgement of the petition.

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 Overview and Scrutiny Commission*
- 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:

Petition Subject	Appropriate steps
Alcohol related crime and disorder	If your petition is about crime or disorder linked to alcohol consumption, the Council will, among other measures, consider the case for placing restrictions on public drinking in the area by establishing a designated public place order or, as a last resort, imposing an alcohol disorder zone. When an alcohol disorder zone is established the licensed premises in the area where alcohol related trouble is being caused are required to contribute to the costs of extra policing in that area. The Council's response to your petition will set out the steps we intend to take and the reasons for taking this approach.
Anti-social behaviour (ASB)	As the elected representative of your local area, as social landlord and licensing authority, the Council plays a significant role to play in tackling anti-social behaviour. The Council, in conjunction with our partners in the Safer Crawley Partnership have set out minimum services standards for responding to issues of anti-social behaviour, you can find more details about these standards here . When responding to petitions on ASB, we will consider in consultation with our local partners, all the options available to us including the wide range of powers and mechanisms we have to intervene as part of our role as a social landlord and licensing authority. For example, we will work with the neighbourhood policing team in the affected area to identify what action might be taken including what role CCTV might

Petition Subject	Appropriate steps
	play, consider identifying a dedicated contact within the Council to liaise with the community and neighbourhood partners on issues of ASB in the area in question and, where appropriate, we will alert the Safer Crawley Partnership and Overview and Scrutiny Commission on the issues highlighted in the petition.
Under-performing health services	We will work with local health partners to consider the matter raised in the petition including, where appropriate, exploring what role the Local Involvement Network might have in reviewing and feeding back on the issue (the LINK is run by local individuals and community groups and independently supported – their role to find out what people want in terms of local health services, monitor those services and to use their powers to hold them to account). The West Sussex Health and Overview and Scrutiny Committee will also be alerted to the petition and where the matter is sufficiently or potentially serious, the issue will be referred to them to consider for review.

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.

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 five minutes to present the petition at the meeting and the petition will then be discussed by councillors for a maximum of 10 minutes, 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. 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 500 signatures, the senior officer will give evidence at a public meeting of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Commission. Senior Council staff who can be called to give evidence are:

- Chief Executive (Lee Harris)
- Director of Environment and Housing (Peter Browning)
- Director of Community Services (Phil Rogers)
- Director of Resources (David Covill)
- Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Ann-Maria Brown)
- Corporate Policy Manager (Carrie Burton)
- Head of People and Technology (Lucasta Grayson)
- Head of Property (Peter Allen)
- Head of Finance, Revenues and Benefits (Dave Rawlings)
- Head of Strategic Housing and Planning (Diana Maughan)
- Head of Planning and Environmental Services (Angela Tanner)
- Head of Crawley Homes (Karen Dodds)
- Strategic Planning Co-ordinator (Ted Beresford-Knox)
- Head of Amenity Services (Chris Harris)
- Head of Community Services (Nigel Sheehan)
- Head of Arts (Kevin Eason)

Petitions to hold an officer to account will be reported to the next convenient meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission.

In advance of the Committee meeting, the petition organiser 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 Overview and Scrutiny Commission, 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 Steve Lappage, Democratic Services Manager on 01293 438549 or Chris Pedlow, Scrutiny Support Officer on 01293 438697 in advance of the meeting. You should be aware that the Overview and Scrutiny Commission 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 Commission 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 Overview and Scrutiny Commission the Chair will invite the Principal Petitioner to address the Commission for a maximum of 3 minutes on the issue.

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 petition organiser will need to provide us with their name, postal address and email address. You will also need to decide how long you would like your petition to be open for signatures. Most petitions run for six months, but you can choose a shorter or longer timeframe, up to a maximum of 12 months.

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. 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 The Head of Legal and Democratic Services (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 Steve Lappage, Democratic Services Manager on 01293 438549 within ten working days of receipt of the acknowledgement.

A petition acknowledgement and response will be emailed to everyone who has signed the e-petition and elected to receive this information. The acknowledgement and response will also be published on this website.

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, your postcode and a valid email address. When you have submitted this information you will be sent an email to the email address you have provided. This email will include a link which you must click on in order to confirm the email address is valid. Once this step is complete your 'signature' will be added to the petition. People visiting the e-petition will be able to see your name in the list of those who have signed it but your contact details will not be visible.

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, the Principal Petitioner has the right to request that the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Commission Review the steps that the Council has taken in response to your petition. Any request for a Review must be made by notifying the Council's Head of Legal and Democratic Services of your intention to seek a Review within 20 working days of being notified of the authority's decision on the petition. It is helpful to everyone, and can improve the prospects for a Review if the Principal Petitioner gives a short explanation of the reasons why the Council's response is not considered to be adequate.

The Commission will endeavour to consider your request at its next meeting, although on some occasions this may not be possible and consideration will take place at the following meeting. The Principal Petitioner organiser will be invited to attend the meeting and address the Commission for up to 3 minutes on why he/she considers that the Authority's decision on the petition is inadequate. Should the Commission determine we have not dealt with your petition adequately, it may use any of its powers to deal with the matter. These powers include instigating an investigation, making recommendations to the Council's Cabinet and arranging for the matter to be considered at a meeting of the Full council.

Once the appeal has been considered the Principal Petitioner will be informed of the result within 10 working days. The results of the Review will also be published on our website.

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 petition organiser, 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.

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.