

## THURROCK COUNCIL PETITION SCHEME

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council welcomes petitions and recognises that these are one way in which people can let us know their concerns.
- 1.2 All petitions sent to or presented at a meeting of the Council will receive an acknowledgement within 10 working days of receipt and this will set out what we plan to do with the petition.
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 Paper copies of petitions should be sent to:
- Democratic Services  
Civic Offices  
New Road  
Grays  
Essex  
RM17 6SL
- Petitions can be presented to a meeting of the Full Council. These meetings usually take place each month (except during April (in the year of an election), August and December). Dates and times of meetings of the Council can be found at:
- <http://democracy.thurrock.gov.uk/thurrock/MeetingsCalendar.aspx>
- 1.5 In addition, petitions may also be presented to the following meetings:
- (a) The Cabinet
  - (b) Overview and Scrutiny Committees
  - (c) The Standards and Audit Committee
  - (d) The General Services Committee
  - (e) The Corporate Parenting Committee
- 1.6 If you would like to present your petition to a meeting of the Council, the Cabinet or to a meeting of a particular Committee, as detailed in 1.5 above, or would like your Councillor or someone else to present it on your behalf, please contact Democratic Services, on (01375) 652107 **no later than 12.00 noon on the working day before that meeting** and they will talk you through the process.
- 1.7 If your petition has received 1500 signatures or more it will also be scheduled for a debate at a meeting of Council, unless it is a petition that cannot be dealt with through this Scheme (see paragraphs 4.1 to 4.3). If a petition is scheduled for a debate at a meeting of the Council, we will discuss with the petition organiser when this will take place.
- 1.8 You can also submit petitions to the Cabinet and other committees (including Overview & Scrutiny). Details of when these meetings take place can also be found on the Council's website.
- 1.9 The Council also offers a facility where a Petition can be created, signed and submitted online and this can be found at:

<http://consult.thurrock.gov.uk/portal/petitions>

---

## 2. What are the guidelines for submitting a petition?

- 2.1 All Petitions must identify and be accompanied by contact details, including an address, for the petition organiser. This is the person we will contact to explain how we will respond to the petition.
- 2.2 The contact details of the petition organiser will not be placed on the website.
- 2.3 Petitions submitted to the Council must:
- (a) contain the name, a valid address and the signature of at least 10 local government electors for the administrative area of Thurrock who support the petition. If a petition does not contain the signatures of 10 local government electors in Thurrock, proof of residence in the borough may be checked through Council Tax records, as a secondary measure.
  - (b) include a clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition. It should state what action the petitioners wish the Council to take
  - (c) relate to a matter for which the authority has responsibility and which affects the authority or its area
  - (d) not, in the opinion of the Monitoring Officer, be trivial, defamatory, offensive, be substantially the same as a petition which has been considered under these Rules within the previous 12 months, name or clearly identify an employee of the authority, or involve the disclosure of confidential or exempt information.
- 2.4 Petitions which are considered 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.
- 2.5 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.
- 2.6 If your petition does not reach the minimum requirement of 10 signatures (as detailed in paragraph 2.3(a) above), particularly if the issue relates to a small locality, we will seek to advise you of other ways in which your views could be considered.
- 2.7 If you wish to present your petition to a specific meeting of the Council, the Cabinet or any committee meeting (including Overview & Scrutiny), you should provide us with details of the subject of the petition, the number of signatures and your contact details by **no later than 12.00 noon on the working day before that meeting**, to enable it to be submitted.

Please note that petitions submitted by the petitioner to meetings of the Council or a relevant committee 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 passed to the appropriate councillor or officer for proper consideration.

- 2.8 Any Member or member of the public presenting a petition shall be entitled to address the Council or relevant committee on the matter which is the subject of the petition for up to two minutes. Unless the petition relates to a matter which is to be determined by Council itself, it shall then be referred to the Cabinet, Cabinet Member or Committee, as appropriate, without debate.

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

- 
- 3.1 An acknowledgement will be sent to the petition 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. This may also be published on our website.
  - 3.2 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. If the petition has enough signatures to trigger a Council debate (see paragraph 7.1), or a senior officer giving evidence (see paragraph 8), 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.
  - 3.3 Where the Monitoring Officer is of the opinion that the subject matter of the petition relates to a matter which is, or will shortly be, the subject of statutory or non-statutory consultation by the authority or is to be reported to a forthcoming meeting of a Committee of the Council, he/she may elect to include the petition in the responses to that consultation, or, report the petition to the relevant Committee for consideration in the ordinary determination of that matter.
  - 3.4 Where a petition received at a meeting of the Full Council is referred to the Cabinet, a Cabinet Member or a Committee, the Monitoring Officer shall advise the petition organiser accordingly. The petition shall be considered by the Cabinet, Cabinet Member or Committee at their next convenient meeting or occasion.
  - 3.5 We reserve the right to verify signatures as required. Please ensure you include a valid address and postcode that relates to your home address (if you live or study in Thurrock) or work address (if you work or run a business in Thurrock). These signatures will be taken into account when identifying if there are enough signatures from people who live, work or study in Thurrock to trigger a full council debate or call an officer to account at an Overview and Scrutiny meeting.

#### **4. Petitions That Cannot Be Dealt With Through This Scheme (Exempt Petitions)**

- 4.1 In order not to duplicate procedures where established processes already exist for people to voice their opinions, the following matters are excluded from this Scheme:
  - (a) Any matter relating to an individual or entity where there is already an existing recourse to a review or right of appeal, such as Council tax banding and non-domestic rates.
  - (b) A statutory petition (for example requesting a referendum on having an elected mayor).
  - (c) Petitions from Council staff, which will be dealt with through the Council's Grievance Procedure or other such applicable Human Resources Policy.
  - (d) Any petitions relating to the day-to-day operation of a particular school(s), which will be referred to the relevant Governing Body of the school(s) concerned for action and a response.
  - (e) Any petitions relating to issues which are outside the Council's direct control, i.e. matters governed by national or European legislation, including any contractual matters.
  - (f) Any petitions which relate to any matter that is the subject of legal proceedings and/or in which the Council is in some other legal dispute with any party referred to within the body of a petition or party to it.

However, a petition that alleges a systematic failure to deliver services in the above areas is within the scope of this Scheme.

- 
- 4.2 We will not take action on any petition, which we consider to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate and will explain the reasons for this in our acknowledgement of the petition.
- 4.3 Any petition that is a duplicate or near duplicate of another petition that the Council has already received will not be able to be considered within a 12 month period. You are advised to check the details of previous petitions on our e-petitions site or contact us for advice at the start of your petition.

## **5. Petitions relating to Planning or Licensing matters and those received in direct response to consultations undertaken by the Council**

- 5.1 A petition in respect of any matter relating to a planning decision, including enforcement action, a development plan document or community infrastructure levy will be dealt with as part of the decision making process for the decision in question and will not follow the processes set out within this Scheme. Any petitions relating to planning decisions should be sent to:

Development Management, Planning & Transportation, Civic Offices, New Road, Grays, Essex, RM17 6SL.

Further information on how to have your say on planning applications is available through following this link:

<http://regs.thurrock.gov.uk/online-applications/>

- 5.2 A petition in respect of any matter relating to an alcohol, gambling or sex establishment licensing decision will be dealt with as part of the decision making process for the decision in question and will not follow the processes set out within this Scheme. Any petitions relating to licensing decisions should be sent to:

Public Protection, Licensing, Civic Offices, New Road, Grays, Essex, RM17 6SL.

- 5.3 A petition in respect of any matter which is subject to public consultation by the Council, for example, those seeking views upon the introduction of highways or parking schemes, should be sent directly to the department undertaking the consultation exercise. Any such petitions received will be dealt with by the department to which the petition has been submitted and will not follow the processes set out within this Scheme.

Any petition falling as described in paragraphs 5.1 and 5.3 may be debated by the Council if the number of signatories is equal to or greater than the threshold set out in paragraph 7.1 of this Scheme.

## **6. How will the council respond to petitions?**

- 6.1 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:
- (a) taking the action requested in the petition
  - (b) considering the petition at a Council meeting
  - (c) holding an inquiry into the matter
  - (d) undertaking research into the matter
  - (e) holding a public meeting
  - (f) holding a consultation
  - (g) holding a meeting with petitioners

- (h) referring the petition for consideration by an Overview and Scrutiny committee\*
- (i) calling a referendum
- (j) writing to the petition organiser setting out our views about the request in the petition

\*Overview and Scrutiny committees are committees of Councillors who are responsible for scrutinising the work of the Council – in other words, the overview and scrutiny committee has the power to hold the Council’s decision makers to account.

6.2 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
(a) Alcohol related crime and disorder	<p>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.</p>
(b) Anti-social behaviour (ASB)	<p>As the elected representatives 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 local crime and disorder partnership have set out minimum service standards for responding to issues of anti-social behaviour, you can find more details about these standards here:</p> <p><a href="https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/anti-social-behaviour/">https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/anti-social-behaviour/</a></p> <p>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 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 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 Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and relevant Overview and Scrutiny committee to the issues highlighted in the petition.</p>

Petition subject	Appropriate steps
(c) Under-performing schools	We will consider, in consultation with local partners, all the options available to us when working with schools to secure their improvement. For example, on our behalf, the school improvement partner will play a pivotal role, challenging and brokering support for poorly performing schools. Where a school is under performing, we will consider whether it is appropriate in the circumstances to issue a warning notice outlining expectations and a timeframe for the school to improve its performance standards. Other measures available to us, where schools fail to comply with a warning notice or are in an Ofsted category of Notice to Improve (requiring significant improvement) or special measures including; appointing additional governors, establishing an interim executive board, removal of the school's delegated budgets, requiring the school to enter into a formal contract or partnership or, only if the school is in special measures, closure.
(d) 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 (LINK) 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 Health & Wellbeing 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.

6.3 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.

You can find more information on the services for which the Council is responsible at:

<https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/>

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

6.5 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.

6.6 To ensure that people know what we are doing in response to the petitions we receive, the details of all the petitions submitted to the Council in a rolling 6-month period will be included as an item of business on the agenda for meetings of the Full Council and published on our website, except in cases where this would be inappropriate.

---

**7. Full council debates:**

- 7.1 If a petition contains more than 1500 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.
- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 The petition organiser 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 15 minutes.
- 7.4 The Council will decide how to respond to the petition at this 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.
- 7.5 Where the issue is one on which the Council Executive is required to make the final decision, the Council will decide whether to make recommendations to inform this. The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of this decision and this confirmation will also be published on our website.

**8. Officer evidence:**

- 8.1 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.
- 8.2 If your petition contains at least 750 signatures, the relevant senior officer will give evidence at a public meeting of the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee. A list of the senior staff that can be called to give evidence can be found in Article 12 within this Chapter.
- 8.3 You should be aware that the Overview and Scrutiny 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 Committee may also decide to call the relevant Cabinet Member to attend the meeting.
- 8.4 Committee members will ask the questions at this meeting, but you will be able to suggest questions to the chair of the committee by contacting Democratic Services on (01375) 652082, up to three working days before the meeting.

**9. E-petitions:**

- 9.1 The Council has launched a facility for e-petitions to be created and submitted through our website. This can be accessed via the following link:
- <http://consult.thurrock.gov.uk/portal/petitions>
- Guidance on how you can use this facility is available on the site itself.
- 9.2 A 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. You can choose a shorter or longer timeframe, up to a maximum of 12 months.
- 9.3 When you create an e-petition, it may take up to five 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.
-

- 
- 9.4 If, for some reason, we feel that we cannot publish your petition, 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.
- 9.5 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 10 working days.
- 9.6 If you would like to present your e-petition to a meeting of the Council, please contact Democratic Services within 10 working days of receipt of the acknowledgement and they will talk you through the process.
- 9.7 A petition acknowledgement and response will be emailed to everyone who has signed the e-petition and elected to receive this information. The acknowledgment and response will also be published on this website.

## **10. How do I 'sign' an e-petition?**

- 10.1 You can see all the e-petitions currently available for signature by following the link below:  
<http://consult.thurrock.gov.uk/portal/petitions>
- 10.2 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.

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

- 11.1 If you feel that we have not dealt with your petition properly, the petition organiser has the right to request that the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee review the steps that the Council has taken in response to your petition. It is helpful to everyone, and can improve the prospects for a review if the petition organiser gives a short explanation of the reasons why the Council's response is not considered to be adequate.
- 11.2 The committee 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. Should the committee 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 executive and arranging for the matter to be considered at a meeting of the full Council.
- 11.3 Once the appeal has been considered the petition organiser will be informed of the results within 5 working days. The results of the review will also be published on our website.

## **12. Other Ways To Have Your Say**

- 12.1 Thurrock Council is always interested in receiving your feedback on our services or how we can work together better with our partners to improve things in the borough.
- 12.2 There are a wide range of ways you can get involved and have your say, from submitting individual comments on specific issues, to participating in consultations and in groups that regularly input to shaping our local services.
- 12.3 You can get involved by writing to us, attending meetings and events or participating online.
- 12.4 To find out more visit our website at <https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/>



12.5 The Council would also like to hear from you if you have any comments or suggestions to help improve our services or if you are particularly pleased with our work.

12.6 For more information about making a complaint or providing comments or suggestions to help improve our services, please see our webpage at:

<https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/complaints>

The Articles listed below are set out in later chapters of the Constitution as shown:

<b>Article 4</b>	<b>The Full Council</b>	<b>See Chapter 2</b>
<b>Article 5</b>	<b>Chairing the Council</b>	<b>See Chapter 2</b>
<b>Article 6</b>	<b>Overview &amp; Scrutiny Arrangements</b>	<b>See Chapter 4</b>
<b>Article 7</b>	<b>The Executive</b>	<b>See Chapter 3</b>
<b>Article 8</b>	<b>Regulatory and Other Committees</b>	<b>See Chapter 5</b>
<b>Article 9</b>	<b>The Standards Functions</b>	<b>See Chapter 7</b>
<b>Article 10</b>	<b>Area Committees and Forums</b>	<b>See Chapter 12</b>
<b>Article 11</b>	<b>Joint Arrangements</b>	<b>See Chapter 12</b>
<b>Article 14</b>	<b>Finance, Contracts and Legal Matters</b>	<b>See Chapter 9</b>

Articles 12 to 13, and 15 to 16, are set out below in this chapter.