

Protocol at Council in relation to the Petition Scheme (May 2010)

Full council debates

1. If a petition contains more than 3,000 signatures it will be debated by the full Council unless it is a petition asking for a senior council employee to give evidence at a public meeting. 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 Council, Budget Meeting or at Extraordinary Meetings of the Council, which are not convened to consider the subject matter of the petition.
2. 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. The right to speak will be limited as follows:
 - i. Lead Petitioner/Petition Organiser (either a Member of the public or a Councillor) [5 minutes]
 - ii. Executive Member (or nominee) [5 minutes]
 - iii. Majority Opposition Group [5 minutes]
 - iv. Minority Opposition Group [5 minutes]

(Note: During the debate, the Chairman will have the discretion to re-allocate any time remaining (up to 15 minutes) should Members not take up their full allocation.)

Following the debate, the Leader of the Council will then summarise what will happen next with the petition.

3. 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, refer the issue to the Executive or to commission further investigation into the matter, for example by a relevant committee. The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of this decision which will also be published on our website.

(Note: many petitions will relate to matters which are the responsibility of the Executive or another committee or forum, rather than Council. Legislation still requires that each such petition is debated at Council, but Council will have no power to take an effective decision on the matter. Council can refer the matter to the Executive for decision, and it can refer the matter to an Overview and Scrutiny Committee for review, but it cannot take an operative decision on the matter.)

4. Where the issue is one on which the Executive is required to make the final decision, the council will decide whether to make recommendations to inform that decision.