

Petitions Scheme

These procedures form Ryedale District Council's Petitions Scheme, which will be reviewed on an annual basis and may be amended from time to time subject to the appropriate approvals. The Council has a duty to comply with the Petitions Scheme and respond to all petitions.

What is a petition?

Petitioning is one way that individuals, community groups and organisations can participate in the democratic process, by raising issues of public concern with the Council and allowing Councillors to consider the need for change either within the area or on a wider scale.

A petition is a formal written or an e-petition request signed by many people appealing to Ryedale District Council for some action in respect of a particular cause.

In addition to paper petitions, Ryedale District Council offers an online petitioning service known as an e-petition. This means that your petition can be made available to a potentially much wider audience giving you the opportunity to gather names in support.

What can petitions achieve?

Petitions sent in to the Council can have positive outcomes that lead to change or inform debate.

For example, petitions can:

- bring an issue to the attention of the Council, for example, street cleansing, refuse collections, fly tipping, recycling, affordable housing, introducing an alcohol restriction area or enforcing dog fouling regulations.
- show strong public approval or disapproval of something that the Council is doing.

What issues can a petition relate to?

Petitions should be relevant to a matter over which the Council has responsibility of or has some influence. Please note that issues relating to other authorities or agencies will not be accepted by Ryedale District Council. For further information on what the respective functions and responsibilities of Ryedale District Council and other local authorities are please click here

http://www.ryedale.gov.uk/system_pages/ryedale_information/other_local_authorities/relationship_with_other_authro.aspx

Can I raise a petition?

To raise a petition you should be an interested party who either lives, works or studies in the authority's area.

Who is the Petition Organiser?

The person who raises the petition is known as the Petition organiser and is often the first signatory to sign the petition.

Can I sign a petition?

People signing petitions (signatories) do not have to be residents in Ryedale, but should live, work or study in the authority's area.

How do I start a petition?

There is no particular process for starting a paper petition. Generally you and other key petitioners will gather signatures until a date you have decided in advance. You may wish to contact the Council to check if your petition's content/subject is acceptable within the scheme.

To produce an e-petition, you must register your petition on the Ryedale District Council website http://www.ryedale.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/consultations/petitions.aspx.

Once you have successfully registered your e-petition you will automatically receive an acknowledgment from the authority. The e-petition will then be published on line.

If your petition is not within the remit of Ryedale District Council you will be informed who/which is the most appropriate organisation for you to submit your petition.

What should my petition contain?

A petition should include a brief title and a short, clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition. It should clearly state what action the petitioner wishes the Council to take. The petition will be returned to you to explain further if it is unclear. Further details about what the petition should include are listed below.

Who should I send my petition to?

A paper petition should be sent to

The Petitions Officer
Democratic Services
Ryedale District Council
Ryedale House
Malton
North Yorkshire
YO17 7HH

Email: democraticservices@ryedale.gov.uk

Details of the petition will be entered on the authority's petition website.

An e-petition should be sent via Ryedale District Council's website

http://www.ryedale.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/consultations/petitions.aspx

In order for the petition to be considered;

Paper petitions must clearly display:

- the title/subject of the petition;
- the petition organiser's contact address (which we will write to about the petition);
- the name, address and signature of anyone supporting the petition.

E-petitions must follow the e-petitions online form and must clearly display:

- the title/subject of the petition;
- the petition organiser's contact address (which we will write to about the petition) – this is recorded when you register to use the e-petitions facility;
- the name of any person supporting the petition;

When the e-petition has been submitted, the council will then liaise with the petition organiser about the type of petition they wish to submit (see below) and the closing date for signatures.

The contact details of the petition organiser are essential. For e-petitions, although the name and address of any person supporting the petition is required for checking purposes, only the name will be displayed.

What are the types of Petitions?

Ordinary Petitions	Has to contain at least 100 signatures Should not be related to possible Councillor misconduct or where there is an existing right of appeal, for example Council Tax banding, non-domestic rates
Consultation Petitions	These petitions are in response to an invitation from the authority for representations on a particular proposal or application, for example on planning or licensing applications
Statutory Petitions	These petitions are submitted under a specific statute (Acts of Parliament), for example a petition to review Parish Councils This petition will be reported to the next available meeting of the Council in accordance with the statutory requirements
Petition for Debate	Has to contain at least 750 signatures (500 signatories where the petition relates to a local issue, affecting no more than 2 electoral wards within authority's area) This petition will be reported and debated at a meeting of the Council
Petitions to Hold an Officer to Account	Has to contain at least 500 signatures These petitions will be considered at a meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Petitions must relate to the Chief Executive, a Director or a Head of Service

What type of petitions will not be accepted by Ryedale District Council

- Duplicate Petitions
- Repeat Petitions - if it is received within 6 months on the same matter
- Rejected Petitions – petitions which are considered rude, offensive, defamatory, scurrilous or time-wasting, or do not relate to something which is the responsibility of the authority or over which the authority has some influence
- Matters which are subject to prescribed statutory requirements, such as changes to governance arrangements e.g. an elected mayor;
- Information protected by a court order (e.g. the identities of children in custody disputes); or in accordance with any other enactment;
- Matters which are subject to appeal processes or legal actions (e.g. planning appeals, enforcement action or other legal actions in court etc);
- Material which is commercially sensitive, confidential or which may cause personal distress or loss;
- Material containing the names of individual officials of public bodies;
- Material containing the names of individuals, or information where they may be easily identified, in relation to criminal accusations;
- Where the petition raises issues of competence or misconduct of a Council Officer

Once submitted Ryedale District Council will endeavour to approve e-petitions within 2 working days.

When your petition has been accepted it will become a public document accessible via the website within 5 working days. The petition organiser should take care not to include any information or signatures that should not be made public.

Petitions that do not follow these guidelines will not be accepted. In these cases, you will be informed in writing of the reasons why a petition cannot be accepted. If you are not satisfied with the reason for your petition being rejected the matter can be further considered by the Corporate Director.

In the six weeks before an election, local authorities cannot publish any material which may support any political party or a point of view which may be associated with any political party.

The role of Ward Councillors

When a petition is received that relates to a local matter a copy of the petition will be sent to the relevant Ward Councillor.

The Ward Councillor will also be invited to address the decision taker i.e. the relevant person or committee or Council for no more than 3 minutes

Promoting the e-petition

As with paper petitions, the responsibility for publicising the e-petition lies with the petition organiser.

What happens once the signatures have been collected?

The petition organiser should decide when he or she has collected sufficient names and submit it to the Council for consideration.

For e-petitions, the petition organiser will set a closing date. Once that closing date has been reached, the e-petition will be submitted automatically.

What is the process for submitting the Petition?

A paper petition should be sent to Ryedale District Council at the address above.

As soon as the closing date is reached for an e-petition, it will automatically be submitted to the Council.

Petition organisers may wish to set their petition's time limit so that it is finished in time for a particular Council meeting, for example Full Council, Policy and Resources Committee, Ward meeting. Details of the dates of Council and Committee meetings may be viewed on the Council meeting pages at <http://democracy.ryedale.gov.uk>

If you are running a paper petition along side an e-petition, both parts of the petition must be received by the Council before they can be submitted for consideration.

How many names should be on the Petition?

Ordinary Petitions	At least 100 signatures
Petition for Debate	At least 750 signatures (500 signatories where the petition relates to a local issue, affecting no more than 2 electoral wards within authority's area)
Petitions to Hold an Officer to Account	At least 500 signatures

What happens after the petition is submitted?

Once the petition has been submitted to the Council, it will be referred on to the appropriate service for consideration who may be able to resolve the petitioners' request directly, for example if the petition relates to fly-tipping the authority can arrange for it to be cleared up directly.

Within 5 working days the petition organiser will receive a substantive response setting out who the petition will be reported to for consideration, when and where that will take place inviting the petition organiser to attend and to address the meeting for up to 3 minutes.

A public file for the petition will be opened on Ryedale District Council website setting out the subject matter of the petition, the date of receipt and number of petitioners. This will also include the petition organiser's contact details.

In order for the petition to be reported to the relevant meeting, it should be received at least 10 working days before the meeting. Feedback and updates will be publicised on the Council's web site once the details are available.

How will the Council respond to my Petition?

The 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 meeting of the authority
- holding an inquiry
- holding a public meeting

- commissioning research
- writing to the petition organiser setting out the authority's views on the request in the petition
- referring the petition to an Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Will the Petition be debated at the Full Council meeting – Petition for Debate?

If the threshold of 750 signatures is achieved this will automatically trigger a debate of the petition at Full Council. The petition organiser will be notified of the date of the meeting and this will also be published on the Council's website.

The petition organiser will also be offered the option of presenting their petition for up to 3 minutes at the beginning of the debate or they may choose to request a Ward Councillor to present it on their behalf. Outcomes of the debate will be published on the Council's Website.

Can I refer a petition to an Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Petition to Hold an Officer to Account?

If your petition has collected 500 signatures you can refer your petition to the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee for a Senior Officer (Head of Service and above) to attend and answer questions about the delivering of public services.

The petition organiser will be invited to submit a list of questions, which they would like to put to the officer at the meeting. The Chairman of the Committee decides whether or not the questions are appropriate in advance of the meeting.

The petition organiser will be invited to address the committee for a maximum of 3 minutes.

What happens to a Consultation Petition?

The petition will be reported to the person or body who will take the decision on the proposal or application at the relevant meeting.

The Council constitution defines who will take different types of decision

http://www.ryedale.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/councillors_democracy_and_ele/policies_and_plans.aspx#constitution

What happens to a Statutory Petition?

Where you submit a petition under a specific statute, the Council will report it to the next available meeting of the Council in accordance with the statutory requirements.

What happens to an Ordinary Petition?

The petition will be reported to the next convenient meeting of Council or of a committee, which has the power to take a decision on the matter.

What happens if I feel the response to be inadequate?

If a petition organiser feels that a response from the Council is inadequate then you can request an appeal to an Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting. The appeal must be submitted to the Petition

Officer within 20 working days of being notified of the authority's decision on the petition. The petition organiser is encouraged to give a short explanation of the reasons why the Council's response is not considered to be adequate.

The petition organiser and Ward Councillor will be invited to address the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting for up to 3 minutes.

Privacy Statement

Your e-petition details will be held in computer readable form to allow the Petition Officer to administer and submit the petition you have signed. Only your name will appear on the website. The other details you give are needed by the Council to validate your support. This is the same information required for a paper petition.

Your details will only be used by the Council and Petition Officer for any petitions that you sign. Your details will not be used for any purposes other than e-petitions, unless you have expressly given permission otherwise.

Personal details will be automatically removed 2 years after the closing date of the e-petition. However, should you wish your name to be removed before this time please contact democraticservices@ryedale.gov.uk

How can I find out more information?

For more information, please contact:

Democratic Services

Ryedale District Council

Ryedale House

Malton

North Yorkshire

YO17 7HH

Email: democraticservices@ryedale.gov.uk

Glossary

E-Petition - a petition which collects names and addresses online, using the e-petitioner system.

Petition Organiser - the person who initiates the petition and decides when it is to be submitted.

Collecting signatures - an e-petition that is collecting names and addresses online.

To be submitted petitions - a petition, which is no longer collecting support online, but has not yet been submitted to the council.

Submitted Petitions - a petition that has been submitted to the council and which they are currently considering.

Concluded petitions - a petition that has been submitted to the council, been considered and reached the point where no further action will be taken.

Useful Links

Ryedale District Council Website

<http://www.ryedale.gov.uk/>

Council Constitution

http://www.ryedale.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/councillors_democracy_and_ele/policies_and_plans.aspx#constitution

Petition Scheme

http://www.ryedale.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/consultations/petitions.aspx

Who is my Ward Councillor

<http://democracy.ryedale.gov.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?bcr=1>

Ryedale District Council's relationship with other authorities

http://www.ryedale.gov.uk/system_pages/ryedale_information/other_local_authorities/relationship_with_other_authro.aspx