

e-Petitions Guidance

What is an e-Petition?

An e-Petition is a web-based electronic petitioning tool which gives a petitioner the option to create an electronic petition instead of using a traditional paper copy petition. It is a quick and easy way to bring issues to the attention of the Council and to influence local decision making. This way, your petition can be made available to a potentially much wider audience, giving you the opportunity to gather more support for your petition.

Who can submit an e-Petition?

An e-Petition can be submitted by a person of any age who lives, works or has an interest in Chorley. To submit an e-Petition you will need to be a registered user. Registration is a simple process that just requires you to provide us with a few details in case we need to contact you about the e-Petition.

The Council could also submit an e-Petition itself to gauge public feeling on a particular issue.

Who can sign an e-Petition?

An e-Petition can be signed by a person of any age who lives, works or has an interest in Chorley. You will need to provide a few basic details, including a valid email address, for verification purposes. You can only sign an e-Petition once. The list of signatories will be checked by officers and any duplicate signatures or obviously frivolous responses will be removed.

What issues can my e-Petition relate to?

Your e-Petition should be relevant to some issue on which the Council has powers or duties or on which it has shared delivery responsibilities. It should also be submitted in good faith and be decent, honest and respectful.

Your e-Petition may be rejected if it:

- Contains intemperate, inflammatory, abusive or provocative language.
- Is defamatory, frivolous, vexatious, discriminatory or otherwise offensive; or contains false statements.
- Is too similar to another petition submitted within the past six months.
- Discloses confidential or exempt information, including information protected by a court order or government department.
- Discloses material which is otherwise commercially sensitive or contains advertising statements.
- Names individuals, or provides information where they may be easily identified, e.g. individual officers of public bodies, or makes criminal accusations.
- Refers to an issue which is currently the subject of a formal Council complaint, Local Ombudsman complaint or any legal proceedings.
- Relates to the Council's Planning or Licensing functions as there are separate statutory processes in place for dealing with these matters. Please contact Democratic Services by calling 01257 515196, or emailing committee.admin@chorley.gov.uk for more information.

During politically sensitive periods, such as prior to an election, politically controversial material may need to be restricted.

The Council accepts no liability for the petitions on its web pages. The views expressed in the petitions do not necessarily reflect those of the Council.

If your petition relates to an issue which is beyond the powers of the Council to address, it may be more appropriate to start an e-Petition on the Number 10 website <http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/>

Common causes for rejection

Petitions that do not follow the criteria will not be accepted. In these cases, the lead Petitioner will be informed in writing of the reason(s) the petition has been refused. If this happens, the lead Petitioner will be given the option of altering and resubmitting the petition so it can be accepted.

What can e-Petitions achieve?

When you submit an e-Petition to the Council it can have positive outcomes that lead to change and inform debate. It can bring an issue to the attention of the Council and show strong public approval or disapproval for something which the Council is doing. As a consequence, the Council may decide to, for example, change or review a policy, hold a public meeting or run a public consultation to gather more views on the issue.

Can I still submit a paper petition?

You can still submit paper petitions in accordance with the Council's Petitions Scheme.

You can have a paper version and an online version, although repeat names will be removed. Both forms should run for the same period of time and must be submitted together. When submitting an e-Petition request, please let us know if you are running a paper petition as well and this can be highlighted on the website.

What information should my e-Petition contain?

Your e-Petition will need to include:

- The subject of the e-Petition.
- A statement setting out what action you would like the Council to take.
- Any information which you feel is relevant to the e-Petition and reasons why you consider the action requested to be necessary.
- A date for when your e-Petition will go live on the website. It may take Democratic Services a few days to check your e-Petition request and discuss any issues with you so please ensure that you submit the request a few days before you want it to go live.
- A date for when your e-Petition will stop collecting signatures. In order to achieve the maximum impact, you may want to set this date so that the e-Petition will be submitted prior to a date on which a debate is to be held or a decision taken on the issue. We will host your e-Petition for up to 6 months but would expect most to be shorter in length than this.
- A choice of options for signatories to choose from, i.e. will you simply be asking people to 'agree' with the petition or will you give them the option to 'agree' or 'disagree'?

As lead petitioner, your name will be displayed with your e-Petition on the website.

Promoting your e-Petition

Whilst the Council will host e-Petitions on its website, it will not generally promote individual e-Petitions. It is therefore down to the lead petitioner to get as many people as possible to sign up. If this is not done then your e-Petition could receive no signatures. Raising awareness of it could be done in a number of ways such as promoting it on local community websites, discussion forums or newsletters. The Council accepts no responsibility for e-Petitions submitted.

What happens when the e-Petition is complete?

When the e-Petition reaches its closing date, people will no longer be able to sign it online. The list of signatories will be collated by Democratic Services and the lead Petitioner will be contacted regarding the submission of the completed e-Petition.

What will happen to the e-Petition once it is submitted?

As long as there are more than ten names the e-Petition will be checked and dealt with under the Council's Petitions Scheme – [click here](#) to see how the Council can respond to petitions.

The details you give us are needed to validate your support but will not be published on the website. On the completion of an e-Petition, your details will be passed on to the principal petitioner. The Council may contact you in relation to any petitions you have signed, unless you have requested not to be contacted when signing the e-Petition.