

### Submitting a petition to Midlothian Council

#### Petitions Committee

The Council has established a Petitions Committee to consider and deal with petitions in accordance with its agreed procedures.

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#### Can we help?

This procedure is available in Braille, in large print, on computer disk, on audio tape or in other languages.

If you need the procedure in one of these formats or if you need help filling in the form, please contact us using details below.

#### Who can submit a petition?

Petitions can be submitted by individuals or on behalf of an organisation.

Councillors can't submit petitions but everyone else is free to do so. As long as they meet with the requirements in our document "Midlothian Council Procedure for Dealing with Petitions" they will be considered by the Petitions Committee at the first available meeting of the committee.

- [Midlothian Council procedure for dealing with petitions](#) (PDF)

#### What can petitions be about?

Petitions should be concerned with functions of the Council or issues that are of concern to some or all Midlothian residents.

Petitions may therefore relate to services provided by other bodies such as the police and health board, but petitioners should recognise that the Petitions Committee has limited influence over these bodies.

## **What happens after a petition is submitted?**

### **Receipt and validation of petitions**

Once a petition has been received Council officials will check to see if it is valid.

The following types of petition will not be accepted:

- Petitions about complaints or issues that should go through our normal procedures
- Petitions about individual planning, licensing or other applications (including decisions we have already made) where there are already procedures in place
- Petitions about personal or business interests
- Petitions about employees' terms and conditions of employment which should go through the normal procedures
- Petitions about complaints about the behaviour of individual officers or councillors which should go through the normal procedures
- Petitions which could be defamatory (contain information which is not true), discriminate against someone or contain offensive or inappropriate language
- Petitions which accuse someone of breaking the law or codes of practice
- Petitions which are, or are from petitions who are, trying to cause trouble
- Petitions which are the same or are very similar to petitions that the Committee have already considered in the last 12 months
- Petitions about any decision we have made, or decisions a board, committee, joint committee or officer has made in the last six months
- Petitions which support any political parties

If there is any missing information, such as no contact address, we will speak to you about this and the terms of your petition to bring it in line with the procedures.

### **If your petition is valid**

If your petition is valid we will tell you and give you a reference number.

### **When your petition is heard by the Petitions Committee**

- We will give you 5 working days notice of the date and time when your petition is to be heard by the Petitions Committee.
- Depending on the rules about access to information, we will consider all petitions in public.
- We will ask you to make a statement (that lasts no longer than 10 minutes) to support your petition.
- You can bring one supporter to speak on your behalf.
- You and/or your supporter should be prepared to answer questions by the Committee.

- The Committee can stop you or your supporter speaking if you talk about something which would have made the petition invalid if it was included in the petition, or if you behave in an inappropriate way when you present your petition or statement.
- The Petitions Committee can consider 2 or more petitions together if they are similar or if they deal with the same subject. You will be told beforehand about this and will be asked to make either joint statements or individual statements for each petition.
- Where appropriate, officers of the Council will be present to provide any information about the petition that may be necessary.
- The Petitions Committee will reach a decision about the petition at the meeting and this will be confirmed in writing.
- The Petitions Committee can take longer to consider a petition if they are waiting for more information.

### **What can the Petition Committee decide?**

The Petitions Committee will consider each petition, listen to you, ask you questions and take one of the following actions for each petition:

- No action, in which case we will give you the reasons.
- Pass the petition to the relevant director or other Council Committee to look into, with or without any specific recommendation.
- If the petition relates to another public organisation, we may pass it on to that organisation with or without any specific recommendation.

The Petitions Committee cannot change Council decisions, although they may ask for us to review a policy or procedure.