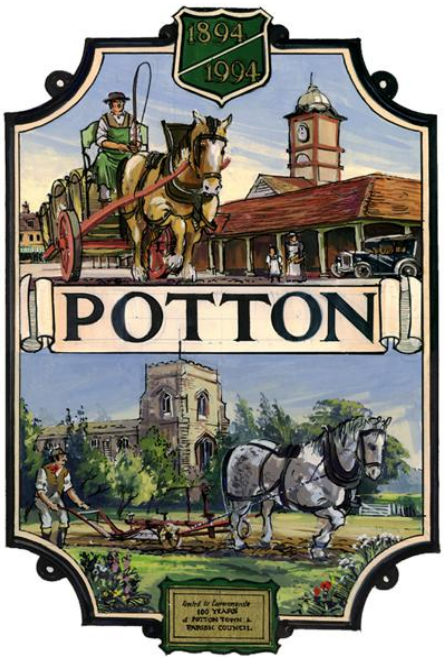
Potton Town Council



Petitions Policy

Jonathan Whitehurst
Town Clerk

Adopted: 3rd September 2024 Next review date: September 2027

Petitions Policy

Potton Town Council welcomes petitions, and recognises that they are one way in which people can let us know of their concerns. All petitions sent or presented to the Town Council will receive an acknowledgement which will set out what action we plan to take.

What are the guidelines for submitting a petition?
Petitions submitted to the Town Council must be with regard to an issue it can potentially action and include:

- A clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition and what action the petitioners would like the Town Council to take;
- The name and address and written/electronic signature of any person supporting the petition, all of whom must live, work or own property in the Town/Parish;
- A minimum of 20 valid signatures of the ward population;
- Contact details, including a postal address of the petition organiser. This is the person we will contact to explain how we will respond to the petition. The contact details of the petition organiser will not be placed on the website. If the petition does not identify a petition organiser, we will contact the first five signatories to the petition to agree who should act as the petition organiser.

How do you create a petition?
You can create a petition to be submitted by gaining "wet" signatures on a traditional paper petition, or by using an online e-petition platform. There are numerous ready-made petition websites available on the internet, and advice can also be found on https://campaignbootcamp.org/resources/how-to-set-up-a-petition.

How do you submit a petition?
Petitions can be sent to the Town Council at the following postal or email address:
Potton Town Council
Brook End
Potton
Bedfordshire SG19 2QS
Email: enquiries@pottontowncouncil.gov.uk

You can submit a hard/paper copy or digital format as an email file attachment or downloaded onto physical media (CD, DVD).

Parishioners who are unable to give a wet or electronic signature to the petition may write to the Town Council in support of the petition, which will be added by the Town Clerk.

When to submit a petition
If you would like to present your petition to the Town Council and have it discussed at a next meeting, please submit it to the Town Clerk at least one week before the advertised meeting date so it can be included on the agenda.

If your petition is submitted to the Town Council at a meeting during the Public Participation Session, it will not be discussed at that meeting, but deferred to the following meeting's agenda.

The dates of meetings are published on the Town Council website: https://pottontowncouncil.gov.uk/agendaminutes/

What will the Council do when it receives your petition?
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 you can expect to hear from us again.

If the Town Council can do what the petition asks, the acknowledgement may confirm:

- Any action taken, the action requested, and the petition will be closed.
- If the petition is to be decided at a Town Council meeting, 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.

If your petition is about something over which the Parish Council has no direct control (for example, poor state of roads) we will consider making representations on behalf of the petitioners to the relevant council/organisation. This might consist of simply forwarding the petition to the other body, but could involve other steps. In any event we will notify you of the action we have taken.

To ensure that people know what the Town Council is doing in response to the petitions we receive, the details of all the petitions submitted to us and the action taken in response to them will be published on our website, except in cases where this would be inappropriate. Whenever possible, we will also publish all correspondence relating to the petition (although all personal details will be removed in line with General Data Protection Regulations).

The Town Council will check the petitioner's details and erase/strike off any duplicated or invalid petitioners listed.

Discussion of a Petition at a Town Council Meeting
The petition organiser will be invited to speak for not more than 5 minutes. No Town Councillor shall speak on a petition at which the petition is presented other than at the discretion of the Chairman.

Following the presentation, the petition will be discussed by Councillors for a maximum of 15 minutes (longer if the Council agrees to extend the time). The Town Council will decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting. It may decide that the:

- Petition may be "Accepted" and the item may be actioned by the Town Council i.e. to take the action the petition requests.
- Petition is "Rejected" because it fails to gain the support of at least 20 other parishioners,; has a higher proportion of parishioners registering a rejection than supporting the petition, or the Town Council takes a collective view opposite to the petition's organiser and decides not to take the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate.
- Petition is rejected by the Town Council as it is materially the same as a previous petition received and considered by the Town Council in the previous 12 months.

The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of the final decision of the Town Council within seven working days.

Petitions which are considered to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate will not be accepted. If your petition does not follow the guidelines set out above, the Town Council may decide not to do anything further with it. In this case, we will write to you to explain the reasons.

What You Can Do if You Feel that Your Petition has not been Dealt with Properly?

If you feel that we have not dealt with your petition properly, you can complain to the Town Council, and this will be dealt with in accordance with the Town Council's Complaints Procedure https://pottontowncouncil.gov.uk/policies/.