THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL
PETITION SCHEME

The Council welcomes petitions and recognises that petitions are one way in which people can let us know their concerns. All petitions sent or presented to the Council will receive an acknowledgement from the Council within 10 working days of receipt. This acknowledgement will set out what we plan to do with the petition. Paper petitions can be sent to:

Democratic Services Manager
Three Rivers District Council
Three Rivers House
Northway
Rickmansworth
WD3 1RL

Or be created, signed and submitted online on the E-Petitions page on the website.

What are the guidelines for submitting a petition?

Petitions submitted to the Council must include a clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition.
• it should state what action the petitioners wish the Council to take
• the name and address and signature of any person supporting the petition

Petitions should be accompanied by contact details, including an address which must be a work, study place or home address within the District, for 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, the Council will contact signatories to the petition to agree who should act as the Petition Organiser.

Petitions which are considered by the Petitions Officers, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Group Leaders to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate will not be accepted.

In the period immediately before an election or referendum the Council may need to deal with your petition differently. If this is the case the Council will explain the reasons and discuss the revised timescale which will apply.

If a petition does not follow the guidelines set out above, the Council may decide not to do anything further with it. In that case, a letter will be sent explaining the reasons.

What will the Council do when it receives my petition?

An acknowledgement will be sent to the Petition Organiser within 2 working days of receiving the petition. Within 10 workings days the Petition Officer, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Group Leaders, will send a further letter letting the Petition Organiser know what the Council plans to do with the petition and when the Petition Organiser can expect to hear from us again. The Petition will also be published on our website.

If the Council can do what the petition asks for, the acknowledgement may confirm that the Council has taken the action requested and the petition will be closed.

If the petition has enough signatures to trigger a Council debate, or the Chief Executive or a Director giving evidence, then the acknowledgement will confirm this and tell you when and where the meeting will take place.

If the petition needs more investigation, the Council will tell you the steps it plans to take. If the petition applies to a planning or licensing application, is a statutory petition, or on a matter where there is already an existing right of appeal, such as Council Tax banding and Non-Domestic rates, other procedures apply. Your petition will be acknowledged and you will be informed why your petition will not be dealt with and what other steps you may wish to take.

The Council will not take action on any petition which is considered to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate and will explain the reasons for this in our acknowledgement of the petition. To ensure that people know what the Council are doing in response to the petitions received the details of all the petitions submitted to us will be published on our website, except in cases where this would be inappropriate.

Whenever possible the Council will also publish all correspondence relating to the petition (all personal details will be removed). When you sign an e-petition you can elect to receive this information by email.

The Council will not send you anything which is not relevant to the e-petition you have signed, unless you choose to receive other emails from us.

How will the Council respond to petitions?

Our 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 Council meeting
• holding an inquiry into the matter
• undertaking research into the matter
• holding a public meeting
• holding a consultation
• holding a meeting with petitioners
• considering at Executive Committee or other relevant Committee
• referring the petition for consideration by the Council's Call-In and Policy & Scrutiny Committee*
• writing to the Petition Organiser setting out our views about the request in the petition
*Policy & Scrutiny Committees are Committees of Councillors who are responsible for scrutinising the work of the Council and have the power to hold the Council's decision-makers to account.

In addition to these steps, the Council will consider all the specific actions it can potentially take on the issues highlighted in a petition. Provided below are some examples.

Petition Subject - Appropriate Steps

Alcohol-related crime and disorder

If your petition is about Crime or Disorder linked to alcohol consumption, the Council will, among other measures, consider the case for placing restrictions on public drinking in the area by establishing a designated public place order or, as a last resort, imposing an alcohol disorder zone. When an alcohol disorder zone is established the licensed premises in the area where alcohol related trouble is being caused are required to contribute to the costs of extra policing in that area. The Council's response to your petition will set out the steps intended to be taken and the reasons for taking this approach.

Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

As the elected representatives of your local area, and Licensing Authority, the Council has a significant role to play in tackling anti-social behaviour. The Council, in conjunction with our partners in the local crime and disorder partnership has set out minimum service standards for responding to issues of anti-social behaviour. When responding to petitions on ASB, we will consider, in consultation with our local partners, all the options available to us including the wide range of powers and mechanisms we have to intervene as part of our role as licensing authority.

For example, we will work with the neighbourhood Policing team in the affected area to identify what action might be taken, consider identifying a dedicated contact within the Council to liaise with the community and neighbourhood partners on issues of ASB in the area in question and, where appropriate, we will alert the Community Safety Board and the Leisure and Community Safety Policy & Scrutiny Committee to the issues highlighted in the petition.

Non-Council Business

If your petition is about something over which the Council has no direct control (for example the local railway or hospital) we will aim to make representations on behalf of the community to the relevant body. The Council works with a large number of local partners and where possible will work with these partners to respond to your petition. If we are not able to do this for any reason (for example if what the petition calls for conflicts with Council policy), then we will set out the reasons for this to you.

If your petition is about something that a different Council is responsible for, consideration will be given to the best method for responding to the petition, which might consist of simply forwarding the petition to the other Council, but could involve other steps. In any event the Council will always notify you of the action we have taken.

Full Council debates

If a Petition for Debate contains 100 signatures or more it will be debated at full Council. This means that the issue raised in the petition will be discussed at a meeting which all Councillors can attend. The Petition Organiser will be given 3 minutes to present the petition at the meeting and the petition will then be discussed by Councillors for a maximum of 30 minutes. The Council will decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting. It may decide to take the action the petition requests, not to take the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate, or to commission further investigation into the matter, for example by a relevant Committee. The Petition Organiser will receive written confirmation of this decision. This confirmation will also be published on our website.

Officer evidence

Your petition may ask for the Chief Executive or a Director to give evidence at a public meeting about something for which they are responsible as part of their job. For example, your petition may ask them to explain progress on an issue, or to explain the advice given to elected members to enable them to make a particular decision.

If the petition contains at least 100 signatures, the Chief Executive or Director will give evidence at a public meeting of the Council's Policy and Scrutiny Committees. Officers that can be called are the Chief Executive or a Director.

Committee Members will ask the questions at this meeting, but you will be able to suggest questions to the Chair of the Committee by contacting the Democratic Services Manager up to three working days before the meeting. You can do this by e-mail at committeeadmin@threerivers.gov.uk or telephone 01923 727248.

E-petitions

The Council welcomes e-petitions which are created and submitted through our website and must follow the same guidelines as paper petitions. The Petition Organiser will need to provide us with their name, postal address and email address. The maximum time that petitions can remain open for is three months. When you create an e-petition, it may take five working days before it is published online. This is because the Council, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Group Leaders, has to check that the content of your petition is suitable before it is made available for signature.

If we feel we cannot publish your petition for some reason, we will contact you within this time to explain. You will be able to change and resubmit your petition if you wish. If you do not do this within 14 days, a summary of the petition and the reason why it has not been accepted will be published under the 'rejected petitions' section of the website.

When an e-petition has closed for signature, it will automatically be submitted to the Democratic Services Manager. In the same way as a paper petition, you will receive an acknowledgement within 10 working days. If you would like to present your e-petition to a meeting of the Council (if it has the requisite number of 25 signatures), please contact the Democratic Services Manager on 01923 727248 within five days of the petition closing.

A petition acknowledgement and response will be emailed to everyone who has signed the e-petition and elected to receive this information. The acknowledgement and response will also be published on this website.

How do I 'sign' an e-petition?

You can see all the e-petitions currently available for signature. When you sign an e-petition you will be asked to provide your name, your postcode (which has to be within the District) and a valid email address. When you have submitted this information you will be sent an email to the email address you have provided. This email will include a link which you must click on in order to confirm the email address is valid. Once this step is completed, your 'signature' will be added to the petition. People visiting the e-petition will be able to see your name in the list of those who have signed it but your contact details will not be visible.

Ordinary Petitions

Paper petitions or e-petitions that have 25 signatures (but less than 100 signatures) should be received by the Petition Officer who in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Group Leaders will determine which Ordinary Petitions should be presented to a Committee or to Full Council.

What can I do if I feel my petition has not been dealt with properly?

If you feel that we have not dealt with your petition properly, the Petition Organiser has the right to request that the Council's relevant Policy & Scrutiny Committee reviews the steps that the Council has taken in response to your petition.

The Committee will consider your request within 30 days of receiving it. Should the Committee determine we have not dealt with your petition adequately, it may use any of its powers to deal with the matter. These powers include instigating an investigation, making recommendations to the Council's Executive Committee and arranging for the matter to be considered at a meeting of the full Council.

Once the appeal has been considered the Petition Organiser will be informed of the results within seven days. The results of the review will also be published on our website.