

Should we have a petition about petitions?

21 January 2024



While Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's ePetition platform offers residents a voice in local decision-making, a closer examination of the data reveals a challenging picture. From September 2016 to the present, the Council's ePetition system has faced difficulties in garnering community support and has seen a high rate of rejections, often on vague grounds.

Debate Requests - An Uphill Battle for Support

- a) Petition Requests Submitted for Full Council Debate: 13
- b) Permitted: 4
- c) Successfully Reached Required Number of 1500 for Debate: 1

The stark reality emerges when analyzing the numbers. Despite 13 petition requests for Full Council debate, only four were permitted, with a solitary petition managing to secure the necessary support. The challenges in mobilizing community backing for debates raise questions about the effectiveness of the ePetition platform in truly representing resident concerns.

Rejected Petitions:

1. Continued designation of Hook Road Arena as Green Belt land
Reason for Rejection: Relates to the Council's Planning or Licensing functions, separate statutory processes in place.
2. Railings outside the Metro Bank and Lester Bowden's
Reason for Rejection: Relates to a matter for which this Council is not responsible or cannot influence.
3. Petition to EEBC regarding height and density regulations for Proposed building developments
Reason for Rejection: Relates to a matter for which this Council is not responsible or cannot influence.
4. Subject matter not specified in petition submission
Reason for Rejection: Does not meet the requirements of the Council's ePetition Scheme.
5. Objection to the Epsom Hospital Development Scheme
Reason for Rejection: Does not meet the requirements of the Council's ePetition Scheme.
6. Hook Road speed limit & cameras
Reason for Rejection: Relates to a matter for which this Council is not responsible or cannot influence.
7. Keep Epsom and Ewell Green Belt
Reason for Rejection: Does not meet the requirements of the Council's ePetition Scheme.
8. Fairview Road temporary homes for the homeless
Reason for Rejection: Relates to the Council's Planning or Licensing functions, separate statutory processes in place.
9. Compulsory Purchase Order for Horton Cemetery
Reason for Rejection: Does not meet the requirements of the Council's ePetition Scheme.

Dismayed at the Council's refusal, made on the basis it was for the Strategy and Resources Committee not the Council (sic), The Friends of Horton Cemetery set up their own petition on change.org

The rejection of petitions, often on grounds as vague as not complying with the ePetition Scheme requirements, underscores the challenges residents face in navigating the system. This pattern raises skepticism about the transparency and accessibility of the ePetition platform.

Scrutiny and Accountability

The removal of the Council Officer appearance request from the Petition Scheme in May 2023 marks a significant shift in the dynamics of accountability, leaving residents with fewer avenues to question and scrutinize Council decisions.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's ePetition system, while ostensibly a tool for community engagement, faces challenges

in attracting support and exhibits a high rate of rejections. The rejection of petitions on rather vague grounds raises questions about the system's accessibility and transparency, prompting a critical examination of the Council's commitment to genuinely amplifying resident voices.

For more information and to explore current and past ePetitions, visit www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk.

Image: The Surgeons Petition or The Barbers Triumphant: Science Museum, London. (CC BY 4.0)