

Bridgend County Borough Council

Petition Scheme

Petitioning is one way that individuals, community groups and organisations can participate in the democratic process, by raising issues of public concern with the Council and allowing Elected Members to consider the need for change within the County Borough. It is acknowledged that petitions can have positive outcomes that lead to change or inform debate.

Before considering whether or not to raise a petition, you may want to discuss your issue with your local Ward Councillor who may be able to help you with it or explain how to make representations on a particular subject to the right person at the Council. Details on how to contact your local County Borough Councillor are available on the Council's website.

Who can raise a petition?

Anyone who lives, works or studies in the County Borough can sign or submit a petition, including those under the age of 18. Petitions can be presented by yourself or a Councillor.

Petitions should normally have at least 100 signatures in order to validate them. However, if your petition contains less than the required signatories but you are able to demonstrate that, in relation to a particularly local issue of concern, it was simply not possible to obtain the required signatures, the Monitoring Officer may still consider your petition under this Scheme.

What are the guidelines for submitting a petition?

The Council will consider all petitions that fall within the scope of this Scheme. Petitions can be submitted to the Council either on paper or electronically. The requirements of the Scheme apply to both paper and e-petitions.

Petitions submitted to the Council must include:

- a clear, short statement covering the subject of the petition. The petition will be returned if it is unclear;
- What action the petitioners wish the Council to take;
- Confirmation that it relates to a matter for which the Council has responsibility and which affects the Council or its area;
- The name and address and signature of those supporters. The Council reserves the right to seek to verify each signature appended to a petition. This can be significant when establishing whether a petition has obtained the requisite number of signatures to trigger a specific process. Please ensure each signatory has given a valid address and postcode;
- Contact details, including an address for the petition organiser.

Paper petitions can be sent to:

Democratic Services, Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB

You may wish to contact Democratic Services in order to ensure that your petition meets the criteria set out above, prior to commencement of collecting signatures, as only admissible petitions can be considered by the Council.

E-petitions can be submitted via the Council's system which can be found on the Council's website. Petitions will not be accepted from other external on-line petition systems. Unless otherwise agreed following discussions with the petition organiser, an e-petition will remain open for signatures for a period of 30 days but you can choose a shorter or longer timeframe in consultation with Democratic Services.

To submit an e-petition you will need to complete the online registration on the Council's petition page. Registration is simple requiring a few details in case we need to contact you. The Council accepts no liability for the petitions on these web pages. We will review the wording of the petition to ensure it is appropriate before it is published. You can run an online petition at the same time as a paper petition, combining the two before sending them to the Council, although repeat names should be omitted by the petition organiser. You should send the paper petition at the same time as the closing date of the online petition so that all of the signatures are counted. When an e-petition has closed it will automatically be submitted to Democratic Services.

'Signing' an e-petition

You can see all the e-petitions currently available for signature on the Council's website. When you sign an e-petition you will be asked to provide your name, your postcode and a valid email address for verification purposes. Once this step is complete you will have been added as a signatory to the petition. People visiting the e-petition will be able to see your name but your contact details will not be visible.

What will the Council do when it receives my petition?

An acknowledgement will be sent to the petition organiser within 10 working days of receiving the petition. It will let them know what the Council plan to do with the petition and when you can expect to hear from the Council.

It might be that the issue raised by your petition is admissible in principle, but there are some aspects of the wording which fall outside the rules. In these situations Democratic Services will contact you to suggest ways in which you can change the wording so that it complies fully with the rules before it is published.

A copy of the petition will also be sent to the Monitoring Officer, the relevant Corporate Director, any Elected Member who represents an area affected by the petition and to the relevant Cabinet Member.

Once the petition has been accepted it will become a public document accessible via the website, unless it is inappropriate to do so. You should take care not to include any information that should not be made public.

The Head of Democratic Services shall maintain a register of all petitions received.

How will the Council respond to my petition?

The 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:

- raising publicity for, and an awareness of an issue
- submission of petition to a Cabinet meeting having regard to Executive functions
- taking the action requested in the petition (either under officer delegated powers or otherwise as appropriate in all the circumstance)
- taking the matter to full Council so the petition can be considered

- holding an inquiry
- commissioning research
- writing to the petition organiser setting out the Council's views on the request in the petition
- referring the petition to an Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- holding a meeting with the petitioner organiser
- holding a public meeting
- forwarding your petition to / lobbying another Body if it is something that the Council has no direct control over
- in matters that are dealt with by delegated authority, the responsible officer will respond to the petition
- some other appropriate response

The Council's response may also depend on the number of people who have signed the petition:

Number of signatories	Response
Fewer than 100	Response from the relevant Directorate (treated as normal correspondence).
100 or more	Response from the relevant Cabinet Member (treated as normal correspondence)
At least 500	Response from the relevant Cabinet Member and the response published on the Council's website.
At least 750	Referred for a debate at a meeting of the Full Council

The Council will always inform you of the action taken.

If your petition contains less than the required signatories but you are able to demonstrate that, in relation to a particularly local issue of concern, it was simply not possible to obtain the required signatures, the Monitoring Officer may still consider your petition under this scheme.

Full Council

If the petition has enough signatures to trigger a debate at full Council then 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 the petition is presented to a meeting of full Council the following will apply:

The Council will endeavour to consider the petition at its next meeting, although on some occasions this may not be possible and consideration will then take place at a following meeting. Petitions may not be submitted to the Annual Meeting, any Extraordinary meeting of the Council or at the Council's budget setting meeting. No more than one petition will be considered per ordinary meeting of Council.

The petition organiser will be notified of the date and the time of the Council meeting and will be contacted by Democratic Services to advise them of the process in accordance with the Constitution. The item will be published on the Council agenda detailing the subject of the petition. The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of the Council's decision. This confirmation will also be published on the Council's website.

At the meeting of Council the petition organiser (or any person authorised by him/her) may outline the request, the reason for the request provided that in any event the organiser may not speak for more than three minutes. The relevant Cabinet Member will then be given a right of reply and the petition will be discussed by the Council. The petition organiser will be granted a right of reply for a further period not exceeding three minutes at the end of the debate and before a final decision or vote is taken. The debate will be 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 requires, take no further action or request further investigation i.e via a scrutiny review into the matter or refer to the relevant Directorate to respond. If the issue is one that requires the Executive or another Committee of the Council to make the final decision, the Council will decide whether to make recommendations to inform that decision.

No further action will be taken

The Monitoring Officer will have discretion to decide whether a petition meets the criteria set out in the Scheme.

The circumstances in which it may be determined that no further action will be taken in response to the petition are:

- Petition is not clear
- Petition is not within the remit of the Council
- Incomplete or invalid information such as no full address
- Not enough valid signatures
- Repeat petitions – a petition will not be considered where it is received within 6 months of another petition being considered by the Council on the same matter
- A petition will be rejected if in the opinion of the Petition Officer it contains inflammatory, abuse or provocative language, is rude, defamatory or vexatious
- Identical or too similar to a petition submitted in the past 6 months
- Discloses confidential or exempt information in accordance with Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972
- Discloses material which is commercially sensitive, or which may cause personal distress or loss
- Contains advertising statements
- Petitions that are essentially Freedom of Information requests, comments, compliments or complaints will not be allowed
- Refers to a matter which is the subject of a formal council complaint or legal proceedings
- Relates to an issue where there is already a right of appeal
- Relates to a specific and individual planning or licensing decision. Such ‘petitions’ will be referred to the relevant Officer or Committee in accordance with existing procedures for representations
- Where more than one petition is received, each supporting the same outcome on one matter, the petition requesters will be advised to combine the petitions
- Where a petition is submitted in response to a public consultation being run by the Council, the petition will be acknowledged as part of that process, and will be considered along with other consultation response. The Council will not necessarily respond to the petition separately in this case
- Matters which are subject to prescribed statutory requirements, such as changes to governance arrangements e.g. an elected mayor

- Information protected by a court order (e.g. the identities of children in custody disputes) or in accordance with any other enactment
- the petition includes the names of individual officials of public bodies
- the petition includes names of individuals, or information where they may be easily identified, in relation to criminal accusations
- In the six weeks before an election local authorities cannot publish any material which may support any political party or a point of view which may be associated with any political party.
- Petitions which raise alleged Councillor misconduct will not be considered under the Scheme.

It may be inappropriate for the Council to deal with certain petitions during periods when it is subject to restrictions, such as immediately before elections or referendums. In these circumstances the petition organiser will be informed when the petition will be considered, or when any material relating to it will be published on the Council's website. In this circumstance, we will contact to explain the situation to you and discuss the revised timescale which may apply.

Petitions that fall outside of the criteria of the Scheme will be treated as correspondence and sent to the relevant service area for a response. The Corporate Director will have discretion and flexibility to decide how to reply to this correspondence so that they are able to take appropriate action to respond to the request.

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

If you feel that we have not dealt with your petition properly, the petition organiser has the right to request a review of the steps that the Council has taken in response to your petition. If your petition was considered and a response given by officers then please send your concerns to the Council via the Council's Corporate Complaints Process which can be accessed via the Council's website. If your petition was considered and debated at Full Council, then please request a referral to the Monitoring Officer who will consider how best to respond, depending on the nature of the concerns, please email: cabinet_committee@bridgend.gov.uk.

Alternatives to submitting a petition

The Council is always interested in your feedback on our services or how we can work together with our partners to improve things in our County Borough. If after reading this Scheme you no longer feel a petition is the most appropriate avenue for your communication, there are a number of other ways in which you can have your say including:

- Writing to the appropriate Cabinet Member or Senior Officer
- Contacting your local Ward Councillor
- Responding to a consultation
- Make a complaint to us
- Making a suggestion through the Council's website
- Asking a question at Council or speaking at meetings of the Council and its Committees.

If you have a complaint about the Council, we would like to ensure this is sorted out as soon as possible. If you have a problem with a Council service please try and talk to a member of staff, as they may be able to resolve it straight away.

Privacy Policy

The Council is the Data Controller for personal information collected in respect of both the Council's e-petition facility and for paper petitions.

Following a period of 28 days after the Council has responded formally, all signatories on a petition will be erased, unless during that period, the petition organiser has requested a review. However, should you wish your name to be removed before this time please contact the Data Protection Officer via foi@bridgend.gov.uk.

Review

The terms and conditions of the Council's Petition Scheme will be reviewed from time to time and may be amended.