

WIRRAL BOROUGH COUNCIL - PETITION SCHEME

INTRODUCTION

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 14 days of receipt. This acknowledgement will set out what we plan to do with the petition.

Paper petitions can be sent to:

The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management, Town Hall, Brighton Street, Wallasey, Wirral, Merseyside. CH44 8ED

Or be created, signed and submitted on line (when this facility is available).

Petitions can also be presented to a meeting of the Council. These meetings are all scheduled at the beginning of the Municipal Year in May. Dates and times can be found at www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/council-and-democracy

If you would like to present your petition to the Council, or would like your Councillor to present it on your behalf, please contact the Council's Democratic Services Manager, Shirley Hudspeth (Tel no. 0151 691 8559 email: shirleyhudspeth@wirral.gov.uk) at least five clear working days before the meeting and she will talk you through the process.

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 would like the Council to take.
- The name, address and signature of any person supporting the petition. Petitions should be accompanied by contact details, including an address 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 Council's website. If the petition does not identify a petition organiser, we will contact signatories to the petition to agree who should act as the petition organiser.

Petitions which are considered to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate will not be accepted. 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 we will write to you to explain the reasons.

WHAT WILL THE COUNCIL DO WHEN IT RECEIVES MY PETITION?

We will send an acknowledgement to the petition organiser within 10 working days of receiving the petition. It will let him/her know what we plan to do with the petition and when he/she can expect to hear from us again. It will also be published on our website. If the Council can do what your petition asks for, the acknowledgement may confirm that we have taken the action requested and the petition will be closed. If the petition has enough signatures to trigger a Council debate, or a senior officer 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, we will tell you the steps we plan to take.

If the petition applies to a planning or licensing application, is a statutory petition (for example requesting a referendum on having an elected mayor), 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. If you require information on any of these matters you should in the first instance contact Shirley Hudspeth (Tel no. 0151 691 8559 email: shirleyhudspeth@wirral.gov.uk).

We will not take any action on any petition which we consider 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 we are doing in response to the petitions we receive, 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 we will also publish all correspondence relating to the petition (with personal details removed). When you sign an e-petition you can elect to receive this information by email. We will not send you anything which is not relevant to the e-petition you have signed unless you request it.

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 enquiry into the matter
- Undertaking research into the matter
- Holding a public meeting
- Holding a consultation
- Holding a meeting with petitioners
- Referring the petition for consideration by the relevant Council * Overview and Scrutiny Committee or the **Scrutiny Programme Board
- Writing to the petition organiser setting out our views about the request in question

* Overview and Scrutiny Committees are Committees of Councillors who are responsible for scrutinising the work of the Council – in other words they have the power to hold the Council's decision makers to account.

** The Scrutiny Programme Board is made up of Councillors including the Chairs of all the Overview and Scrutiny Committees. They have the power to hold Council decision makers

to account where the issue is within the remit of more than one Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

In addition to these steps the Council will consider other specific actions it may be able to take on the issues highlighted in a petition. 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 www.wirral-lsp.org 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 for you. You can find more information on the services for which the Council is responsible here www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services

If your petition is about something that another Council is responsible for, we will give consideration to what the best method is for responding to it. It might consist of simply forwarding the petition to the other Council, but could involve other steps. In any event we will always notify you of the action we have taken.

FULL COUNCIL DEBATES

If a petition contains more than 1,500 signatures it will be debated by the full Council unless it is a petition asking for a senior council officer to give evidence at a public meeting. 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 five minutes to present the petition at the meeting and the petition will then be discussed by Councillors for a maximum of 15 minutes. The Council will decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting. The Council may decide to take the action the petition requests, or 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 the Council's website.

OFFICER EVIDENCE

Your petition may ask for a senior Council officer to give evidence at a public meeting about something for which the officer is responsible as part of their job. For example your petition may ask a senior Council officer to explain progress on an issue or to explain the advice given to elected Members to enable them to make a particular decision.

If your petition contains at least 750 signatures the relevant senior officer will give evidence at a public meeting of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee. If the subject matter of the petition falls within the remit of more than one Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the senior officer will give evidence at a public meeting of the Council's Scrutiny Programme Board. A list of the senior staff that can be called to give evidence can be found here

www.wirralexecutiverecruitment.com/sections/about_the_council/organisational_structure_mme.

You should be aware that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or the Scrutiny Board may decide that it would be more appropriate for another officer on that list to give evidence instead of any officer named in the petition – for instance if the named officer has changed jobs. Committee Members will ask the questions at this meeting but you will be able to suggest questions to the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee/Scrutiny

Programme Board by contacting Committee Services committeeservices@wirral.gov.uk up to five clear working days before the meeting.

E-PETITIONS

The Council welcomes e-petitions which are created and submitted through our website (when the on-line facility is implemented). E-petitions must follow the same guidelines as paper petitions. The petition organiser will need to provide us with their name, postal address, post code and email address. You will also need to decide how long you would like your petition to be open for signatures. Most petitions run for six months but you can choose a shorter or longer timeframe, up to a maximum of 12 months.

When you create an e-petition, it may take 10 working days before it is published online. This is because we have to check that the content of your petition is suitable before it is made available for signature. However, we will make every effort to ensure that your petition is published as soon as possible. If we feel we cannot publish your petition for some reason, we will contact you within this time to explain why. You will be able to change and re-submit 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 please contact the Democratic Services Manager (details above) 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 implemented). When you sign an e-petition you will be asked to provide your name, address, post code 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 complete 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.

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 Overview and Scrutiny Committee/Scrutiny Programme Board review the steps that the Council has taken in response to your petition. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee/Scrutiny Programme Board will consider your request within 30 days of receiving it. Should the Overview and Scrutiny Committee/Scrutiny Programme Board 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 recommendation to the Council and Cabinet and/or 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 five working days. The results of the review will also be published on our website.