



Petitions Policy

Introduction

1. The Weymouth Town Council (WTC) welcomes and encourages its community to provide feedback to the council and offers many opportunities and ways to do so as a matter of course. The Council recognises that petitions are one way in which people can let the council know their concerns. Members of the public may get a quicker answer by asking a question of a WTC Committee first, which might get an immediate response.
2. The Council will treat something as a petition if it is identified as such, or if it seems that it is intended to be a petition. A petition will be treated as such if it has at least 50 signatories or petitioners.
3. Petitions should be addressed to the council and submitted to:
The Town Clerk
Council Offices
Commercial Road
Weymouth
Dorset DT4 8NG
office@weymouthtowncouncil.gov.uk
Petitions should be submitted to the Town Clerk, who will schedule a debate at a future meeting, if the petition meets the criteria below.
4. For most petitions, signatories to petitions will only be considered valid if they are resident within the parish of Weymouth. Signatures from non-residents will only be relevant to a petition on a service provision that would affect non-residents. The Town Clerk will determine if non-resident signatures are appropriate
5. WTC can only act on petitions which relate to WTC services and decisions. For issues such as Dorset Council matters, a petition should be addressed directly to the decision-making body.
6. Petitions submitted to the council must include:
 - a. A clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition and the action the petitioners wish the council to take
 - b. The name, address and signature of any person supporting the petition.
 - c. For online petitions a signature is not required. However, full name and addresses are required to allow names to be verified. E-Petitions should include a mechanism to prevent automated or fraudulent signatures, such as e-mail address validation.
7. Petitions must be accompanied by contact details, including either a postal or e-mail address, for the petition organiser. This is the person the Council will contact to explain how it will respond to the petition.
8. Where possible, qualifying petitions will be debated in public. Should the subject of a petition be deemed confidential or inappropriate, the Town Clerk, Town Mayor, Leader, Deputy Leader and relevant members (e.g., the appropriate committee members or ward members), will decide how best to respond to the petition.

Petitions with 500+ signatures

9. A petition with 500 or more identifiable signatures will be put forward for consideration, as a separate agenda item, at the next suitable meeting of the Council.
10. The Council will determine how to respond to the petition at this meeting; usually this shall be to:
 - (a) To take the action requested (provided the matter is reserved for Full Council in the Constitution)
 - (b) To refer the matter to the appropriate committee for further consideration
 - (c) To refer the matter to for Scrutiny for further investigation
 - (d) To refer the matter to another authority or organisation (if appropriate)
 - (e) To take no further action
 - (f) Holding a public meeting
 - (g) Holding a public consultation
 - (h) Holding a meeting with petitioners
 - (l) Calling a referendum
11. Where a petition is debated by committee, the Chairman of the committee shall report on this to the next appropriate Full Council meeting.
12. The petition organiser will receive a written confirmation of the decision, this may be by email.

Petitions with 50-499 signatures

13. A petition with between 50 and 499 signatures shall be reviewed by the Town Clerk, Town Mayor, Leader, Deputy Leader and relevant members (e.g., the appropriate committee chair or ward members) to determine the appropriate course of action.
14. At the discretion of the Town Mayor, a petition may be referred to Council or the appropriate committee for debate as per petitions with in excess of 500 signatures.
15. The petition organiser will receive a written confirmation of the decision, this may be by email.

General Provisions

16. An acknowledgement will be sent to the petition organiser within ten working days of receiving the petition which will explain what the Council plans to do.
17. Details of the petition will be published on the Council's website, although the contact details of the petition organiser will not be included.
18. A petition will not normally be considered if a similar petition was considered within the previous six months of WTC debating the previous petition.
19. When more than one petition is received seeking the same (or similar) outcome, they will be treated separately, but only the petition organiser of the first petition to be received will be invited to address the relevant meeting.

20. Petitions may not be presented to the Annual Meeting of the Council nor to extra-ordinary meetings which are not called for the purpose of receiving the petition.
21. Petitions which are considered to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate will not be accepted.

Date agreed: 12.01.22

Date for review: - January 2024