

## Section 21

### Wyre Forest District Council Petition Scheme

#### 1. Petitions

- 1.1 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 5 days of receipt. A response will be sent within 14 days of receipt which will set out what we plan to do with the petition.

Paper petitions can be sent to:

Democratic Services  
Wyre Forest House  
Finepoint Way  
Kidderminster  
Worcestershire  
DY11 7WF

or by email to: [committee.section@wyreforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:committee.section@wyreforestdc.gov.uk)

- 1.2 Petitions can also be presented to a meeting of the Council, the dates and times of which can be found here:  
<http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/meetings/com55.htm>
- 1.3 If you would like to present your petition to the Council, or would like your Councillor to present it on your behalf, please contact Democratic Services on 01562 732763 or by emailing the address above at least 5 working days before the meeting and they will talk you through the process.

#### 1.4 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.

- 1.5 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 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.



1.6 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.

**1.7 What will the Council do when it receives my petition?**

An acknowledgement will be sent to the petition organiser within 5 days of receiving the petition. Within 14 days of receiving the petition, a response will be sent to the petition organiser which will let them know what we plan to do with the petition and when they can expect to hear from us again. It will also be published on our website.

1.8 If we 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 Director giving evidence, 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.

1.9 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.

1.10 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 (all personal details will be removed).

**2. How will the Council respond to petitions?**

2.1 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



- referring the petition for consideration by a Council Scrutiny Committee\*
- calling a referendum
- writing to the petition organiser setting out our views about the request in the petition

\*Scrutiny Committees are committees of Councillors who are responsible for scrutinising the work of the Council and Cabinet – in other words, the Scrutiny Committee has the power to hold the Council's decision makers to account.

- 2.2 In addition to these steps, the Council will consider all the specific actions it can potentially take on the issues highlighted in a petition.
- 2.3 If your petition is about something over which the Council has no direct control (for example the local railway or hospital), we will consider whether 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. You can find more information on the services for which the Council is responsible on the Council website at: <http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk>
- 2.4 If your petition is about something that a different 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.

## 2.5 Full Council Debates

If a petition contains more than 987 signatures (1% of the estimated population of the District), it will be debated by the full Council unless it is a petition asking for a Director 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. They 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 petitions webpage.



## 2.6 Officer Evidence

Your petition may ask for a Member of the Corporate Leadership Team to give evidence at a public meeting about something for which their Directorate is responsible. For example, your petition may ask a Director to explain progress on an issue, or to explain the advice given to elected members to enable them to make a particular decision.

- 2.7 If your petition contains at least 493 signatures (0.5% of the estimated population of the District), the relevant Director will give evidence at a public meeting of a Scrutiny Committee.
- 2.8 Details of the Corporate Leadership Team can be found here:  
<http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/the-council/what-we-spend-and-how-we-spend-it/chief-officer-information.aspx>
- 2.9 You should be aware that the Scrutiny Committee may decide that it would be more appropriate for another Director to give evidence instead of the Director named in the petition. In exceptional circumstances a Director may appoint a senior officer to attend the meeting in their place. 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 Democratic Services up to three working days before the meeting.
- 2.10 If you feel that we have not dealt with your petition properly, the petition organiser has the right to request that a Scrutiny Committee review the steps that the Council has taken in response to your petition.
- 2.11 The committee will consider your request at the next possible meeting. 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 Cabinet and arranging for the matter to be considered at a meeting of the full Council.
- 2.12 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.



### 3. E-petitions

The Council welcomes e-petitions which are created and submitted through our website.

E-petitions must follow the same guidelines as paper petitions – see above. The petition organiser will need to provide us with their name, postal address and email address. You will also need to decide how long you would like your petition to be open for signatures. You can choose a shorter or longer timeframe, up to a maximum of 12 months.

When you create an e-petition, it may take five 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.

If we feel we cannot publish your petition for some reason, we will contact you within this time to explain why not. You will be able to change and resubmit your petition if you wish. If you do not do this within 10 working 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 relevant Officer. In the same way as a paper petition, you will receive an acknowledgement within 10 working days.

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

#### **How do I 'sign' an e-petition?**

When you sign an e-petition you will be asked to provide your name, your postcode 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.

