

## Torfaen County Borough Council

### Protocol for Public Petitions

#### 1 Introduction

Torfaen Council recognises and values the contributions of local people. Public participation is essential to ensure that the needs and aspirations of local people are at the heart of decision making.

Torfaen County Borough Council wants to hear from people who live, work and use the services of the Council about the things that matter to them.

Petitions and E-Petitions are one way for people to let us know their concerns and are part of the Council's ongoing commitment to listening to and acting on the views of the public.

Petitions, including those submitted online, require a minimum of 100 signatures. However, the Council or Chief Executive may exercise discretion to accept a petition in instances where there are fewer than 100 signatures, especially if there is evident local backing for the initiative.

Petitions can be presented to a meeting of the full Council. The dates of these meetings are shown on our website (<https://moderngov.torfaen.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?Committeeld=137>)

Paper Petitions can be sent to us at the following address:

Head of Democratic Services  
Torfaen County Borough Council  
Civic Centre  
Glantorfaen Road  
Pontypool  
Torfaen  
NP4 6YB  
Email: [DemocraticServices@Torfaen.gov.uk](mailto:DemocraticServices@Torfaen.gov.uk)

A petition template is shown at appendix 1 of this protocol and this will help you to see what information we need in order to consider your petition under the terms of this protocol.

e-petitions can be created, signed and submitted online by following this link <https://moderngov.torfaen.gov.uk/mgEPetitionListDisplay.aspx?bcr=1>

You are welcome to present your petition to a meeting of full Council, but if you would prefer somebody else to present it, you could either contact your local councillor or you can contact a member of Democratic Services via their email address [DemocraticServices@torfaen.gov.uk](mailto:DemocraticServices@torfaen.gov.uk) or phone (01495 762200 and it can be arranged for the Presiding Member to present the petition on your behalf.

Petitions submitted to full Council will not be discussed in detail at that point, unless there is an agenda item specifically relating to that issue. Petitions received at full Council will be passed to the relevant executive member/officer for proper consideration before a response is prepared and reported back to a subsequent Council meeting.

Petitioners and supporting signatories to petitions are only valid if you either live or work in Torfaen. The Council reserves the right to verify signatories as required. Petitioners should ensure that a valid address and postcode is included for all supporting signatories and this must relate to their home address (if living in Torfaen) or work address (if working or run a business in Torfaen). These details will be taken into account when identifying if there are enough signatories from people who live or work in Torfaen for a petition to be accepted.

## 2 **What should a petition include?**

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 (or stop taking)
- the name and address and individual 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 what we will do in response to the petition. If the petition does not identify a petition organiser, we will contact the first signature on the petition to agree who should act as the petition organiser.

The council will usually accept the petition at its next meeting, although on some occasions if this is not possible, the petition will be accepted at the following meeting.

## 3 **Your petition may be rejected if the Council considers it to fall into one of the following:**

- Where a person or organisation (or someone on their behalf) has submitted a petition which is the same or substantially the same as one submitted within the previous 12 months.
- Employee matters will not be dealt with through the petitions process as they will be addressed via existing internal frameworks.
- In the period immediately before an election or referendum we may need to deal with your petition differently - if this is the case, we will explain the reasons and discuss the revised timescale which will apply.
- If a petition does not follow the guidelines, the council may decide not to do anything further with it. In this case, we will write to you to explain the reasons.

- Petitions will not be accepted if they are considered to be vexatious, abusive, or defamatory.
- discloses confidential or exempt information, including information protected by a court order, government department or where its publication may constitute a criminal offence.
- discloses material, which is otherwise commercially sensitive.
- 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.
- names individuals, or provides information where they may be easily identified, e.g. individual officers of public bodies,
- makes criminal accusations,
- contains advertising statements,
- refers to an issue which is currently the subject of a formal Council complaint, Public Services Ombudsman for Wales complaint or any legal proceedings.
- relates to the Council's planning or licensing functions as there are separate statutory processes in place for dealing with these matters, or the any matter where there is an appeals procedure in place.
- does not relate to an issue upon which the Council has powers or duties or on which it has shared delivery responsibilities.
- relates to statutory petitions, or petitions relating to Local Authority Referendums which falls under the Local Authorities (Referendums) (Petitions and Directions) (Wales) Regulations 2001,

Your petition should be relevant to an issue that the Council has powers or duties or on which it has shared delivery responsibilities. It should also be submitted in good faith and be decent, honest and respectful.

We will explain our reasons in writing if your petition has not been accepted.

#### 4 **How will the Council respond to petitions?**

If your petition is about something over which the council has no direct control, we will consider making representations on behalf of the community to the relevant body. Where possible we will work with these partners to respond to your petition. If we are not able to do this for any reason, then we will explain this to you.

If your petition is about something that a different council is responsible for, we will consider what the best method is for responding to it. This 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.

So 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, together with the acknowledgment and notification of the response (except in cases where this would be inappropriate).

## 5 **E-petitions**

The Council welcomes e-petitions being created and submitted through its Website

E-petitions must follow the same guidelines as for paper petitions and in addition:

- Petition organisers and subscribers must provide a valid email address as well as their name and address; and
- The period for which the petition shall be open to subscription must be determined at the outset.

The petition organiser will need to provide their name, postal address and email address, and will need to decide how long the petition is to be open for signatories.

When you create and submit an e-petition, it may take 10 working days before it is published online. The petition will be acknowledged within 10 working days and this will include a link to the petition on the Council's website.

When the e-petition reaches its end date, it will be closed to further signatures and it will automatically be submitted to Democratic Services where it will be processed in the same way as a paper based petition.

If it is considered that your petition cannot be published for any reason, the Council will contact you within this time to explain. 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.

E-petitions that have been created through websites other than the Councils can be submitted to the Council but will still need to meet the criteria as set

If you would like to present an e-petition to a meeting of the Full Council, please contact the Democratic Services Team for any further advice or support via their email address [DemocraticServices@torfaen.gov.uk](mailto:DemocraticServices@torfaen.gov.uk)

## 6 **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, please contact the Monitoring Officer (address below) who will review your complaint and will advise you of the action which is intended. Please provide a short explanation of the reasons in your communication with us.

Monitoring Officer  
Torfaen County Borough Council  
Civic Centre  
Glantorfaen Road  
Pontypool  
Torfaen  
NP4 6YB

Petition Template

Please use this suggested template, additional pages should also include the petition subject at the top of the page.

Please also refer to the petitions scheme available at [www.torfaen.gov.uk](http://www.torfaen.gov.uk) for further information about how we deal with petitions at the Council.

Contact Details of the Lead Petitioner (the person the Council will contact regarding responses to the petition)

Full name:			
Address for Correspondence:			
Telephone no:			
Email address:			
Live/work (Please indicate all that apply):			
Signature			
<b>Petition Subject</b>			
<b>We the undersigned petition the council to:</b>			
<b>Summary of action already taken (if applicable)</b>			
<b>Name</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Email address</b>
