



## TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL PETITIONS SCHEME

### 1. PETITIONS

- 1.1** Tewkesbury Borough Council welcomes petitions and recognises that petitions are one way in which people can let the Council know their concerns. All petitions sent, or presented, to the Council will receive an acknowledgement from the Council within 10 working days of receipt. This acknowledgement will set out what the Council plans to do with the petition. The Council will treat something as a petition if it is identified as being a petition, or if it seems to the Council that it is intended to be a petition.
- 1.2** Paper petitions can be sent to Democratic Services, The Council Offices, Gloucester Road, Tewkesbury, Glos, GL20 5TT.
- 1.3** Petitions can also be presented to a meeting of the Council or Executive Committee. Scheduled meetings of the Council take place 8 times a year and the Executive Committee meets on a regular basis, the dates and times can be found at <http://minutes.tewkesbury.gov.uk/mgCalendarMonthView.aspx?GL=1&bcr=1> . If you would like to present a petition to the Council, or would like your Councillor, or someone else, to present it on your behalf, please contact Democratic Services on 01684 272021, at least 10 working days before the meeting, for an explanation of the process. If the petition has received 100 signatures or more it will also be scheduled for a Council debate. Should this be the case, the petition organiser will be advised as to whether this will happen at the same meeting, or a later meeting, of the Council.

## **2.0 WHAT ARE THE GUIDELINES FOR SUBMITTING A PETITION?**

### **2.1** 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.

### **2.2** Petitions should be accompanied by contact details, including an address, for the petition organiser. This is the person that Democratic Services will contact to explain how the Council 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, Democratic Services will contact signatories to the petition to agree who should act as the petition organiser.

### **2.3** Petitions which are considered to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate will not be accepted. In the period immediately before an election or referendum it may be necessary to deal with petitions differently – if this is the case Democratic Services will explain the reasons and discuss the revised timescale which will apply. If a petition does not follow the guidelines set out above, the Council may decide not to do anything further with it. In this case, Democratic Services will write to the petition organiser to explain the reasons.

## **3.0 WHAT WILL THE COUNCIL DO WHEN IT RECEIVES MY PETITION?**

### **3.1** An acknowledgement will be sent to the petition organiser within 10 working days of receiving the petition. It will let the organiser know what the Council plans to do with the petition and when the organiser can expect to hear from the Council again. It will also be published on Tewkesbury Borough Council's website.

### **3.2** If the Council can do what the petition asks for, the acknowledgement may confirm that the action requested has been taken 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 the organiser when and where the meeting will take place. If the petition needs more investigation, the organiser will be advised of the planned steps.

### **3.3** 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 is on a matter where there is already an existing right of appeal, such as Council Tax banding and non-domestic rates, other procedures apply and this scheme will not be relevant.

- 3.4** The Council will not take action on any petition which it considers to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate and will explain the reasons for this in the acknowledgement of the petition.
- 3.5** To ensure that people know what the Council is doing in response to the petitions received, the details of all petitions (including names and addresses) submitted to the Council will be published on Tewkesbury Borough Council's website, except in cases where this would be inappropriate. Petitions will remain on the website for a period of at least one year. Whenever possible the Council will also publish all correspondence relating to the petition (all personal details will be removed).

#### **4.0 HOW WILL THE COUNCIL RESPOND TO PETITIONS?**

- 4.1** The Council's 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 the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee \*
  - calling a referendum
  - writing to the petition organiser setting out the Council's views about the request in the petition

\* Overview & Scrutiny Committees are Committees of Councillors who are responsible for scrutinising the work of the Council – in other words the Overview & Scrutiny Committee has the power to hold the Council's decision-makers to account. Tewkesbury Borough Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee consists of 15 Members of the Council who are tasked with scrutinising the work of the Executive Committee and holding the Members of that Committee to account.

**4.2** In addition to these steps, the Council will consider all the specific actions it can potentially take on the issues highlighted in a petition. The table below gives some examples:

<b>Petition Subject</b>	<b>Appropriate Steps</b>
Alcohol related crime & disorder	If your petition is about crime or disorder linked to alcohol consumption, the Council may, among other measures, consider the case for placing restrictions on public drinking in the area by establishing a Designated Public Place Order or, as a last resort, imposing an Alcohol Disorder Zone. When an Alcohol Disorder Zone is established the licensed premises in the area where alcohol related trouble is being caused is required to contribute to the costs of extra policing in that area. The Council's response to your petition will set out the steps it intends to take and the reasons for taking this approach.
Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)	As the elected representatives of the local area, and the Licensing Authority, the Council has a significant role to play in tackling anti-social behaviour. The Council, in conjunction with its partners in the local Community Safety Partnership, has set out minimum service standards for responding to issues of anti-social behaviour. When responding to petitions on ASB, the Council may consider, in consultation with its local partners, all the options available including the powers and mechanisms to intervene as part of its role as Licensing Authority. For example, the Council will work with the Neighbourhood Policing Team in the affected area to identify what action might be taken, including what role CCTV might play, consider identifying a dedicated contact within the Council to liaise with the community and neighbourhood partners on issues of ASB in the area in question and, where appropriate, the Council will alert the Community Safety Partnership and Overview & Scrutiny Committee to the issues highlighted in the petition.

Under Performing Health Services	The Council may work with local health partners to consider the matter raised in the petition including, where appropriate, exploring what role the Local Involvement Network (LINK) might have in reviewing and feeding back on the issue (the LINK is run by local individuals and community groups and independently supported – their role is to find out what people want in terms of local health services, monitor those services and to use their powers to hold them to account). The County Council Health Community & Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee will also be alerted to the petition and, where the matter is sufficiently or potentially serious, the issue will be referred to that Committee for consideration.
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**4.3** If the petition is about something over which the Council has no direct control (for example, the local railway or hospital) the Council will consider making 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 the petition. If the Council is not able to do this for any reason (for example, if what the petition calls for conflicts with Council Policy), then the petition organiser will be advised accordingly. More information on the services for which the Council is responsible can be found on the Council’s website at [www.tewkesbury.gov.uk](http://www.tewkesbury.gov.uk).

**4.4** If the petition is about something that a different Council is responsible for, consideration will be given to 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 the petition organiser will be notified of what action has been taken.

## **5.0 FULL COUNCIL DEBATES**

**5.1** If a petition contains more than 100 signatures it will be debated by the 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 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 the following meeting. 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 fifteen minutes. The Council will decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting. The Council may decide to take the

action that 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. Where the issue is one on which the Council's Executive Committee is required to make the final decision, the Council will decide whether to make recommendations to inform that decision. The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of this decision. This confirmation will also be published on the Council's website.

## **6. OFFICER EVIDENCE**

**6.1** A 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, the petition may ask a Senior Council Officer to explain progress on an issue, or to explain the advice given to Members to enable them to make a particular decision.

**6.2** If your petition contains at least 100 signatures, the relevant Senior Officer will give evidence at a public meeting of the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Members of the Council's Corporate Management Team may be called to give evidence in this respect. The organiser should be aware that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee may decide that it would be more appropriate for another Officer to give evidence instead of any Officer named in the petition – for instance if the named Officer has changed jobs. The Committee may also decide to call the relevant Lead Member to attend the meeting. Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee will ask the questions at this meeting, but the petition organiser will be able to suggest questions to the Chairman of the Committee by contacting Democratic Services no later than three working days before the meeting.

## **7. WHAT CAN I DO IF I FEEL MY PETITION HAS NOT BEEN DEALT WITH PROPERLY?**

**7.1** Should the petition organiser feel that the Council has not dealt with the petition properly, the petition organiser has the right to request that the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee reviews the steps that the Council has taken in response to the petition. It is helpful to everyone, and can improve the prospects for a review, if the petition organiser gives a short explanation of the reasons why the Council's response is not considered to be adequate.

**7.2** The Overview & Scrutiny Committee will endeavour to consider the request at its next meeting, although, on some occasions, this may not be possible and consideration will take place at the following meeting. Should the Committee determine that the Council has not dealt with the petition adequately, it may use any of its powers to deal with the matter. These powers include instigating an investigation, making recommendations to the Executive Committee and arranging for the matter to be considered at a meeting of the Council.

**7.3** 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 the Council's website.

## **8.0 E-PETITIONS**

**8.1** The Council welcomes e-petitions which are created and submitted through the website [www.tewkesbury.gov.uk](http://www.tewkesbury.gov.uk) . E-petitions must follow the same guidelines as paper petitions. The petition organiser will need to provide the Council with their name, postal address and email address.

**8.2** Once registered, the organiser will be asked for the title of the petition. The system will automatically search to see if there is already a petition in operation that deals with the same issues. If there is, the organiser will be asked to review that petition or to decide if their petition covers a new area. After this has been ascertained, the organiser of the petition will be asked to provide further details, including the options for signatories i.e. agree, agree/disagree or agree/disagree/don't know. The organiser will also need to decide how long the petition should be open for signatures. The system will default to allow for a period of 2 months but this can be overridden and extended for up to 12 months in line with the requirements of the organiser.

**8.3** When an e-petition is created, it will take up to five working days before it is published online as the suitability of the content must be checked before it is made available for signature.

**8.4** If for some reason the Council is unable to publish the petition, the organiser will be contacted within the 5 day period.

**8.5** When an e-petition has closed for signature, it will automatically be submitted to Democratic Services. In the same way as a paper petition, an acknowledgement will be sent within 10 working days.

## HOW DO I 'SIGN' AN E-PETITION?

- 8.6**
- Go to the Council's website at [www.tewkesbury.gov.uk](http://www.tewkesbury.gov.uk).
  - Click on Council and Democracy
  - Click on Committee Agenda, Minutes and Reports and then e-petitions
  - A list of the e-petitions that are currently active will be displayed
  - Click on the appropriate petition and then "sign a petition".
  - Contact details will need to be provided (name, address and email address) but only the name will be displayed on the website.
- 8.7** A petition may gather names and addresses both in electronic and paper form, although repeat names will be removed. Both petitions must run for the same period of time and must be submitted together.
- 8.8** The Council accepts no liability for the petitions published on the website and the views expressed in the petitions do not necessarily reflect those of the Council.
- 8.9** For further information, help and advice on how to submit an e-petition, contact Democratic Services on 01684 272021 or email [democraticservices@tewkesbury.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@tewkesbury.gov.uk).