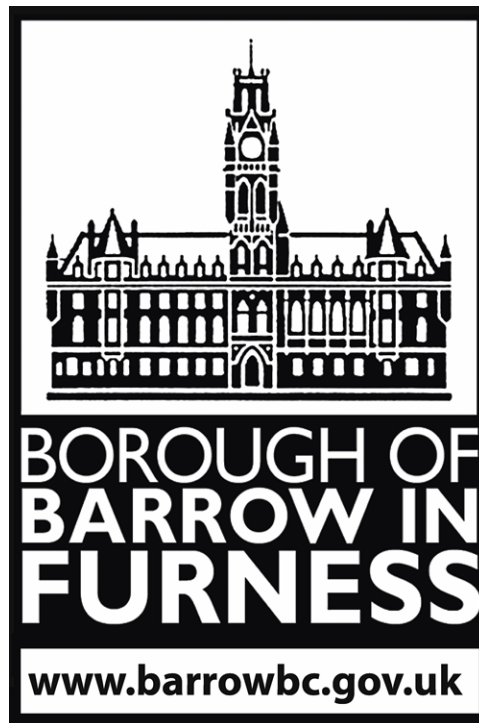


Barrow Borough Council Petition Scheme



December 2010

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Background and scope

1. Barrow Borough Council Petition Scheme (The Scheme) has been developed in accordance with the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 and applies to most petitions submitted to the Council that have 50 or more signatures. Please note though that some petitions are not covered by the Scheme and these are described in paragraphs 15 and 16 below.
2. The scheme applies to both paper and E-petitions, and guidance for the submission of both forms of petition is included.
3. Any petition that contains less than 50 signatures, or does not meet the guidelines within the scheme, is treated as standard correspondence and receive a reply from the relevant Council officer.

Guidelines for Submitting Petitions

4. The Council welcomes petitions and recognises that petitions are one way that people can tell us about their concerns or priorities.
5. Petitions may be created, signed and submitted either on paper or online through the Council's E-petitions facility.

Paper petitions can be sent to:

Democratic Services

Barrow Borough Council

Town Hall

Duke Street

Barrow-in-Furness

LA14 2LD

6. 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; and
 - the name and address and signature of any person supporting the petition.
7. Petitions must be accompanied by contact details, including a postal address, for the petition organiser. The petition organiser can be anyone who lives, works or studies in the Borough of Barrow-in-Furness. This is the person the Council will contact to explain how we will respond to the petition.

E-petitions

8. The Council welcomes e-petitions which are created and submitted through our website at www.barrowbc.gov.uk/petitions.
9. As with paper petitions petition organiser must provide their name and contact details, including a postal address and email address. You will

also need to decide how long you would like your petition to be open for signatures, up to a maximum of 6 months.

10. When you create an e-petition, it may take up to ten 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.
11. If we feel we cannot publish your petition for some reason, we will contact you within ten working days to explain. You will be able to change and resubmit your petition if you wish. If you do not do this within a further ten working days then a summary of the petition and the reason it has not been accepted will be published under the 'rejected petitions' section of the website.
12. A petition acknowledgement and response will be emailed to everyone who has signed the e-petition and elected to receive this information. The acknowledgment and response will also be published on this website.

How do I 'sign' an e-petition?

13. You can see all the e-petitions currently available for signature on our website at www.barrowbc.gov.uk/petitions.
14. 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.

Excluded Petitions

15. We will not take 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.
16. 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. Further information on all these procedures and how you can express your views is available on our website (Planning Meetings, Licensing Applications) or by contacting Democratic Services.

How we will respond to petitions?

Acknowledgement and Processing

17. An acknowledgement will be sent to the petition organiser within 10 working days of receiving the petition. It 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, except in cases where this would be inappropriate.
18. If your petition is about something over which the Council has no direct control (for example the local railway or hospital) we 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 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 explain the reasons for this.
19. 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. 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.
20. You can find more information on the services for which the Council is responsible on our website at www.barrowbc.gov.uk .
21. Where a petition is received on the same or similar topic as one the Council has received in the last six months it will not be treated as a new petition. The Council will acknowledge receipt of the petition within 10 working days and include details of its response to the previous petition on the topic.
22. Where the Council is still considering a petition on the same or similar topic, the new petition will be amalgamated with the first received petition.
23. We will write to the petition organiser at each stage of the petition's consideration.
24. Whenever possible we will also publish all correspondence relating to the petition (all personal details will be 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.
25. 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 debate at a meeting of Executive Committee or Council, or a senior officer 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.

Responding to the Issue

26. 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
- debating the petition at a meeting of elected members
- undertaking research into the issue
- holding a public meeting or undertaking other consultation
- holding a meeting with petitioners
- referring the issue for consideration by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee¹
- calling a referendum²
- making a written response to the petition setting out our response

27. Local Ward Councillors will be informed of all valid petitions received for their area and will be consulted on the appropriate response. (Valid petitions are those that contain 50 or more signatures and are not subject to the exclusions described in paragraphs 8 and 9.)

28. Where further consideration of the issue is required the way we consider a response will be dependent on the number of signatories to the petition. The table below summarises the Councils approach:

| Number of signatories | Response |
|-----------------------|---|
| less than 50 | Response from Officer (Petition treated as standard correspondence). |
| 50 – 499 | Response from the Chief Executive or appropriate Director. (Following consultation with the Local Ward Councillor(s) as described at paragraph 27) |
| 500 – 999 | Referred for consideration by Executive Committee and/or Officer(s) called to provide evidence at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (see section 7), where such action is requested in the petition. |
| At least 1,000 | Debated at a meeting of the full Council (see page 5). |

¹ The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is a committee of Councillors who are responsible for scrutinising the work of the Council – in other words, the overview and scrutiny committee has the power to hold the Council's decision makers to account.

² A referendum is where an issue of public policy is the subject of a direct election.

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29. Where the petition is referred to the Executive Committee the petition organiser will be invited to make a written statement in support of the petition.

Exceptions

30. 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 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.

Full Council Debates

31. If a petition contains more than 1,000 signatures it will be referred to the Full Council for debate, unless it is a petition asking for a senior Council officer to give evidence at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (See footnote on page 4).
32. Where the petition is referred to the Full Council the petition organiser will be invited to make a written statement in support of the petition or to present the petition at the meeting.
33. If the organiser wishes to present the petition at the meeting, confirmation must be given to the Democratic Services Manager at least 10 working days before the meeting.
34. If the petition organiser chooses to present the petition at the meeting then he or she will be given five minutes to do so, and the petition will then be discussed by Councillors.
35. The Council will try 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.
36. The Council will decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting. They may decide to support the action the petition requests, or not, or refer the matter to the Executive or Overview and Scrutiny Committee for further consideration. The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of this decision.

Petitions Asking Senior Officers to Provide Evidence

37. Your petition may ask for a senior council officer to give evidence at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee about something for which the officer is responsible as part of their job. For example, your petition may ask a senior officer to explain progress on an issue, or to explain the advice given to elected members to enable them to make a particular decision.

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38. If your petition requests such action and contains at least 500 signatures, the relevant senior officer will give evidence at a public meeting of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
 39. Only Chief Officers and Deputy Chief Officers of the Council can be petitioned to give evidence. A full list of these Officers is provided on our website at www.barrowbc.gov.uk/petitions .
 40. You should be aware that the Overview and 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 Councillor to attend the meeting.
 41. 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 ten working days before the meeting.

What can I do if I feel my petition has not been dealt with properly?

42. If you feel that we have not dealt with your petition properly, the petition organiser has the right to request that the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee review the steps that the Council has taken in response to your 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.
43. The Committee will try to consider your 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 we have not dealt with your petition adequately, it may investigate the matter, make recommendations to the Executive or arrange for the matter to be considered at a meeting of the Full Council.
44. Once the Committee has completed its review the petition organiser will be informed of the results within 5 working days. The results of the review will also be published on our website.

What other action can I take to engage with the Council?

45. Apart from petitions, there are many ways in which you can contact the Council and tell us what you think about the local area and services. Visit www.barrowbc.gov.uk/consultation or send an email to consultation@barrowbc.gov.uk to find out more.
46. You can also contact your local Councillor with any questions or concerns. Details of your local Councillor and how to contact them can be found on our website at www.barrowbc.gov.uk .