

Bolton Borough Council Petition Scheme

The petitions process allows members of the public to have direct influence on the political process and to raise concerns that are important to them.

Members of the public can submit petitions on the following:-

- Issues relating to the Borough Council's responsibilities
- Issues which affect the Borough or communities in Bolton, as long as the Council is in a position to exercise some degree of influence
- Anything relating to an improvement in the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of the Borough to which any of the Council's partners could contribute.

The Council will respond to all petitions it receives. We will be as flexible as we can when handling your petitions, that it is considered quickly, and in the most appropriate way.

Essentially, there are 2 types of petition:

- **Ordinary petitions**

These must be signed by at least 25 people, but the Council will use its discretion where there are fewer than 25 signatories in cases where there is clear local support for action (e.g. where those affected are only from a small area).

- **Petitions requiring debate**

Petitions which contain 4,000 signatures or more will normally be debated by the full Council.

How do I submit petitions?

Petitions can be either paper or electronic. All petitions sent or presented to the Council will receive an acknowledgement from the Council within 2 working days of receipt. This acknowledgement will set out what we plan to do with the petition.

We will treat as a petition for the purposes of this scheme anything which identifies itself as a petition, or which a reasonable person would regard as a petition, and which is signed by the appropriate qualifying persons. Paper petitions can be sent or e-mailed to Democratic Services, Bolton Borough Council, Chief Executive's Department, Town Hall, Bolton, BL1 1RU or you can submit an [e-petition on-line](#).

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, address and signatures of any person supporting the petition (the address can be an address where a signatory lives, works or studies). The Council will validate 10% of all signatures received by comparing signatures/addresses/e-mail addresses against records held by the Council.
- 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 organisers.

Paper petitions must include a signature and a signatories name and address. This can be an address where the signatory lives, works or studies.

If the petition is an electronic form it must be made using the Council's e-petitions facility.

Before submitting a petition you should first check with your Local Councillor or with the Council, to see if the Council is already acting on your concerns and the Council is the most appropriate body to receive your petition, as sometimes your petition may be more appropriate for another Public Body.

Who can submit a petition?

Anyone who lives, works or studies in Bolton including under 18s, can sign or organise a petition.

What will the Council do when it receives my petition?

We will acknowledge the petition within 2 working days of receiving it, and let the petition organiser 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 the website.

If the petition needs more investigation, we will tell you the steps we plan to take.

In the vast majority of cases your petition will be submitted to one of the Council's formal Member meetings where elected Councillors will decide how to respond to the petition.

Full Council Debates

If a petition contains more than 4,000 signatures it will normally be debated by the full Council if deemed appropriate. This means that the issue raised in the petition will be discussed at a meeting which all Councillors can attend. The petition organiser (or a nominee) will be given up to a maximum of 5 minutes to present the petition at the meeting, and the petition will then be discussed by Councillors. 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, refer the issue to the Cabinet or commission further investigation into the matter, for example, by a relevant Committee. Where the issue is one on which the Cabinet is required to make a final decision, the full Council should decide whether to make recommendations to inform that decision. The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of this decision.

Petitions asking for a debate at Council will normally be considered at the next meeting of the full Council, but must be received at least 10 working days before the date of the meeting.

Are there any petitions which the Council cannot accept?

We believe that the vast majority of petitions we receive will be accepted, but in certain circumstances may not be accepted, including:

- If the petition applies to a planning application, is a statutory petition or on a matter where there is already an existing right of appeal or a separate complaints process.

- Any petition which we consider to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate. We will explain the reason for this in our acknowledgement of the petition.
- 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.

If we decide that a petition is not acceptable, then we will let the Petition organiser know our reasons.

If a petition relates to the responsibilities of one of our partners, then the petition will be forwarded to that partner for them to deal with, unless the petition is to an improvement in the economic social or environmental wellbeing of the Borough. In those cases the petitions will be considered under the Council's scheme.

How will the Council respond to petitions?

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
- Carrying out consultation
- Holding a meeting with the petitioners
- Referring the petition for consideration by the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee
- Writing to the petition organiser setting out our 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 decision makers to account.”

To ensure that people know what we are doing in response to the petitions we receive, details of all the petitions submitted to us will be published on our website. Whenever possible we will publish all correspondence relating to the petition (all personal details will be removed).

In addition to these steps, the Council will consider all the specific actions it can potentially take on the issues highlighted.

E-petitions

THE Council welcomes e-petitions which are created and submitted through our website www.bolton.gov.uk. E-petitions must follow the same guidelines as paper petitions. The petition organiser will need to provide us with their name, postal address and e-mail address. You will also need to decide how long you would like your petition to be open for signatures. Most petitions run for 6 months but you can choose a shorter or longer time frame up to a maximum of 12 months.

When you create an e-petition it may take 5 working days before it is published on line. This is because we have to check that the contents of your petition is suitable before its made available for signature.

If we feel we cannot publish your petition for some reason, we will contact the Petition organiser within this time to explain. You will be able to change and re-submit your petition if you wish. If you do not do this within 14 working days, a summary of the petition and the reasons why it was not being accepted would be published under the “rejected petitions section of the website”.

When an e-petition has closed for signature you will receive an acknowledgement within 5 working days. Your petition will then be dealt with by the Council in the same way as a paper petition. A petition acknowledgement and response will be e-mailed to everyone who has signed the petition and has elected to receive this information. The acknowledgement and response will also published on this website.

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 e-mail address. When you have submitted this information you will be sent an e-mail to the e-mail address you have provided. This e-mail will include a link which you must click on in order to confirm the e-mail 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.

Is there anything else I can do to have my say?

As a Council we try to identify and solve problems at an early state. We are committed to receiving feedback as this helps us to develop and review services. We recognise that petitions are just one way in which people can let us know about their concerns. There are a number of other ways that you can have your say including:-

- Contacting your local Councillors
- Attending Area Forums and asking questions
- Making a complaint using the Council's Complaint System