



## **Burnley Borough Council Petition Scheme: DRAFT**

### **How to petition Burnley Council: an overview**

Burnley Council welcomes petitions. They are an important way by which people can let us know their concerns. Anyone who lives, works or studies in the Borough, including under 18's, can sign or organise a petition and trigger a response.

Petitions can be created, signed and submitted online, via the Council's community engagement website:

<http://www.feedbackonline.org.uk/petitions.aspx>

Paper petitions can be delivered to:

**Committees Team**  
**Burnley Borough Council**  
**Town Hall**  
**Manchester Road**  
**Burnley BB11 1JA**

All petitions sent or presented to the Council will receive an acknowledgement from the Council within 5 working days of receipt. This acknowledgement will set out what we plan to do with the petition.

When we receive correspondence that is not explicitly described as a petition by the sender, we will nevertheless treat it as such if it seems to us that that the intention of the sender is to petition the Council.

Petitions can also be presented to a meeting of the Full Council, the Council's Executive or an appropriate committee as part of your "right to speak." For further information on the right to speak at a council meeting please visit our website (<http://www.burnley.gov.uk/righttospeak>) or contact a member of the Committees Team for more guidance. Maureen Neave or Saima Afzaal will be happy to help you on 01282 477133.

A petition is one of many ways in which you can tell us about a concern. Depending on the circumstances it might be more appropriate, and more straightforward, for you to raise the issue either through your local councillor, or by making a complaint to us, or by making a simple phone call to Customer Services on 01282 425011. The Committees Team would welcome being able to advise you in advance of you organising a petition.

The rest of this document gives more detailed advice on creating petitions and our process for handling them.

## **How to create an e-petition**

The Council welcomes e-petitions which are created and submitted through our official community engagement website: [www.feedbackonline.org.uk](http://www.feedbackonline.org.uk)

The petition organiser will need to register with [www.feedbackonline.org.uk](http://www.feedbackonline.org.uk) before being able to create a petition online. When you create your online petition, you will be asked how long you would like your petition to be open for signatures. Most petitions run for 6 months, but you can choose a shorter timeframe up to a maximum of 6 months.

It may take 5 working days before your e-petition is published online. This is because we have to check that the content 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 5 working days to explain. You will be able to change and resubmit your petition if you wish.

Once an e-petition is made available for signatures, your name will appear on the website as the creator of the petition.

When we contact you to tell you that your petition is available for signatures, we will give you advice on how to promote your online petition.

Our response to your petition will be emailed to everyone who has signed it, and will also be published on the [feedbackonline.org.uk](http://www.feedbackonline.org.uk) website.

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

You can see all the e-petitions currently available for signature here:

<http://www.feedbackonline.org.uk/petitions.aspx>

When you sign an e-petition you will be asked to provide your name and a valid email address. When you have submitted this information you will then be sent a message to the email address you have provided. This email will include a link which you must click in order to confirm the email address is valid. Once this step is complete your 'signature' will be added to the petition. Visitors to the e-petitions' page on the website will be able to see your name in the list of those who have signed it. Your email address will not be visible.

## How do I submit a paper petition?

Paper petitions submitted to the Council must include the following.

- 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 signature of any person supporting the petition.
- The contact details, including an address, of the petition organiser. This is the person we will contact to explain how we will respond to the petition. If no petition organiser is identified, we will explain how we deal with the petition via the [feedbackonline.org.uk](http://feedbackonline.org.uk) website.

Please deliver your petition to the reception at the Town Hall on Manchester Road. If sending by post, please write to:

**Committees Team  
Burnley Borough Council  
Town Hall  
Manchester Road  
Burnley BB11 1JA**

We will acknowledge receipt of your petition within 5 working days. 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 within the timeframe above.

## What will the Council do when it receives my petition?

For both completed paper petitions and e-petitions, an acknowledgement will be sent to the petition organiser within 5 working days of receipt. It will let the organiser know what we plan to do with the petition and when they can expect to hear from us again. The Council will endeavour to assist petitioners by providing details of Council policy and procedure, and the reasons behind decisions, so that petitioners are fully informed of the Council's position in creating their petition.

If we can do what your petition asks for, the acknowledgement may confirm that we have taken the action requested. The petition will then be closed. If the petition has enough signatures to trigger a Full Council debate or a senior officer giving evidence (for further details please see below), 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.

Other procedures apply if the petition relates to either:

- a planning or licensing application
- an issue for which there is a petitioning process set out in law (for example requesting a referendum on having an elected mayor)
- a matter where there is already an existing right of appeal, such as council tax banding and non-domestic rates.

**Petitions which are considered to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate will not be accepted. 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.**

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 [www.feedbackonline.org.uk](http://www.feedbackonline.org.uk), 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). When you sign an e-petition you will receive this information by email.

A list of petitions that have been received or are collecting signatures via the [feedbackonline.org.uk](http://feedbackonline.org.uk) website will be also be posted outside the Town Hall.

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

This depends on the circumstances in each case, but your petition could lead to us:

- taking the action requested in the petition
- considering the petition at a meeting of the Full Council or the Council's Executive
- referring the petition to one of the Council's overview and scrutiny committees<sup>1</sup> for consideration
- holding an inquiry into the matter
- undertaking research into the matter, including consulting more widely with the community
- holding a public meeting
- holding a meeting with the petitioners
- calling a referendum
- writing to the petition organiser setting out our views about the request in the petition

## **Full Council debates**

If a petition contains more than 1,500 signatures it will be debated by the Full Council. This means that the issue raised in the petition will be discussed at a meeting at 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. Under the "right to speak" the petition organiser, or another representative, can take 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, or to commission further investigation into the matter. Where the issue is one on which the Council Executive are required to make the final decision, the Full Council will decide whether to make recommendations to inform that decision. The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of this decision. The outcome will also be published on our website.

## **Requesting that a Council officer gives evidence**

Your petition may ask for a senior council officer to give evidence at an open public meeting about something for which the officer is responsible as part of their job. For example, your

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<sup>1</sup> \*Overview and scrutiny committees are committees of councillors who are responsible for scrutinising the work of the Council. These committees have the power to hold the Council's decision makers to account.

petition may ask a senior council officer to explain progress on an issue, or to explain the advice given to elected members to enable them to make a particular decision. If your petition contains at least 750 signatures, the relevant senior officer will be required to give evidence at the most appropriate overview and scrutiny committee. Depending on the circumstances, the request to hear evidence from an officer may still be satisfied even if fewer than 750 signatures are received. A list of the senior staff that can be called to give evidence can be found on the Council's website: <http://www.burnley.gov.uk/managers>

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 Executive Member to attend the meeting. 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 the Committees Team up to 3 working days before the meeting.

## **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, the petition organiser has the right to request that a Council overview and scrutiny committee review 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.

If you would like a committee to reconsider your petition please contact the Committees Team. The relevant committee will usually hear the petition at its next meeting, although on some occasions this may not be possible. Should the committee determine that the Council did not deal with your petition adequately, it may use any of its powers to deal with the matter. These powers include doing an investigation, making recommendations to the Council Executive and arranging for the matter to be considered at a meeting of the Full Council.

Once the appeal has been considered the petition organiser will be informed of the outcome within 5 working days. The results of the review will also be published on our website.

## **Need help?**

Please contact:

**Committees Team**  
**Burnley Borough Council**  
**Town Hall**  
**Manchester Road**  
**Burnley BB11 1JA**  
[democracy@burnley.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@burnley.gov.uk)  
**01282 477133**