



PETITIONS POLICY

1. General Petitions Policy

Wareham Town Council welcomes petitions and recognises that petitions are one way in which people can let us know their concerns. All petitions sent or presented to the Town Council will receive an acknowledgement from the Town Council within 10 working days of receipt. This acknowledgement will set out what we plan to do with the petition.

A petition is a formal written request signed by at least 25 people who live, work or study in Wareham (including children and young people) and asks the Town Council to do or not do something.

Petitions can be sent to:

The Town Clerk
Wareham Town Council
Town Hall
East Street
Wareham
BH20 4NS
Email: office@wareham-tc.gov.uk

Petitions can also be presented to a meeting of Full Council. These meetings usually take place on a 6 weekly basis and dates and times of these meetings are available from our website: www.wareham-tc.gov.uk.

Petitions submitted to the Town Council must include:

- A clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition. It should state what action the petitioners wish the Town Council to take.
- The name, address and signature of any person supporting the petition.

To help us deal with your petition it should, if applicable, include a summary of any action already taken to resolve the issue of concern including, for example, details of elected Members that have been approached.

Wherever possible, petitioners of paper petitions, are encouraged to use Wareham Town Council petition form (Appendix 1).

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 the first signatory to the petition to agree who should act as the petition organiser.

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. If a petition does not follow the guidelines set out above, the Town Council may decide not to do anything further with it. In that case, we will write to you to explain the reasons.

Petitions which are the same or substantially the same as petitions which have been considered in the previous twelve months will be dealt with having regard to the consideration and outcome of the earlier petition. This may result in the Town Council declining to take any action on the later petition. It will be for the Town Council to determine whether a petition is the same or substantially the same as an earlier petition.

2. What will the Town Council do when it receives my petition?

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.

If a petition does not trigger the provisions for full Town Council debate, the Town Council will reasonably determine how it will be dealt with and what the process will be. This may be a referral to the appropriate standing committee. The petition may still be referred for a full Town Council debate even though the number of signatures to require such a debate has not been met.

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 Town Council debate, then the acknowledgement 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 a planning or licensing application.

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 our website, 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).

3. How will the Town 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 full Town Council meeting
- Holding an enquiry into the matter
- Undertaking research into the matter
- Holding a public meeting
- Holding a public consultation
- Holding a meeting with petitioners
- Calling a referendum
- Writing to the petition organiser setting out our views about the request in the petition
- Reject the petition

In addition to these steps, the Town Council will consider all the specific actions it can potentially take on the issues highlighted in a petition. The table above gives some examples. It is important to note that these are only examples of how the Town Council may address petitions relating to the issues mentioned but the Town Council will have to determine, on a case by case basis, how individual petitions are dealt with.

If your petition is about something for which the Town Council or its partners have no direct responsibilities (for example the local railway or Dorset Council) we will consider making representations on behalf of the community to the relevant body. The Town Council works with a large number of 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 Town Council policy), then we will set out the reasons for this to you.

If your petition is about something that a different Council or another organisation 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 or organisation but could involve other steps. In any event we will always notify you of the action we have taken.

4. Full Town Council debates and Public Consultation

If a petition contains more than 50 signatures it will be debated by the full Town Council and, if appropriate, offered for Public Consultation. If it contains less than 50 signatures, it may be referred to the appropriate standing committee.

This means that the issue raised by the petition will be discussed at a meeting which all Councillors can attend. The Town 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 5 minutes to present the petition at the meeting and the petition will then be discussed by Councillors for a maximum of 15 minutes, but this period may be extended at the discretion of the Chairman of the meeting.

The Town 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, for example by a relevant committee. The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of this decision. This confirmation will also be published on our website.

5. 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 the Town Council's Procedures Committee review the steps that the Town 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 Town Council's response is not considered to be adequate.

We will make sure that your request for review is dealt with by the Policy Committee or by the committee whose terms of reference most closely reflect the issue to which the petition refers. If that committee has previously been involved with the consideration of the petition we will, if it is appropriate and necessary to do so, arrange for the review to be considered by a differently constituted committee.

The committee will endeavour 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 use any of its powers to deal with the matter. These powers include instigating an investigation or making recommendations to Full Council.

Once the appeal has been considered the petition organiser will be informed of the results within 10 working days. The results of the review will also be published on our website. 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.

Adopted by Wareham Town Council: 03/03/2020

APPENDIX 1

Petition to Wareham Town Council

Petition Policy check list:

1. Any petition must meet the Council's Petition Policy requirements and be signed by at least 25 people for debate at Committee
2. Individuals signing this petition must be persons who either live, work or study in Wareham
3. Petitions signed by at least 50 people will be debated at Full Council and if appropriate, offered for Public Consultation. Please send your petition to: The Town Clerk, Town Hall, East Street, Wareham, Dorset, BH20 4NS. Email: office@wareham-tc.gov.uk
4. Alternatively, you can present your petition to your local Councillor

Contact details of the lead petitioner:

(the person the Council will contact with a response to the petition)

Name (please print)	
Address (please print)	
Telephone Home/work Mobile	
Email address	
Connection to Wareham? (please tick)	Live <input type="checkbox"/> Work <input type="checkbox"/> Study <input type="checkbox"/>
Signature	

We the undersigned petition the Council to:

Summary of action already taken:

Note: To help us deal with your petition it would be helpful if you include a summary of action already taken to resolve the issue of concern.

