



Cyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol

**Blaenau Gwent**

County Borough Council

## *Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Petition Protocol*



*Blaenau Gwent – a place that is fair, open and  
welcoming to all by working with and for our  
communities*

## **Introduction**

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council welcomes petitions and recognises that they are one way in which individuals, community groups and organisations can express their views and concerns about something for which the Council is responsible.

Petitions can be submitted to the Council in written form or via an e-petition, with this protocol covering both options.

Petitions will not be accepted from other on-line petition systems.

## **What is a petition?**

Petitions are one of the most direct ways to suggest how something could change in Blaenau Gwent. Petitions can:

- Raise awareness of an issue;
- Bring about a change in Council policy or a different way of delivering services;
- Lead to, or influence, a debate in the Council;
- Prompt a Committee or individual Member of the Council to take further action themselves, for instance by asking questions.

Before submitting a Petition, residents are encouraged to:

- Contact the Council to see whether an ordinary service request would resolve the issue.
- Contact a relevant ward Member (s) to see whether they can help. Details on how to contact your local Member are available on the Council's website:

<https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/council/councillors-and-committees/councillor-directory/>

## **Who can raise / sign / submit a petition?**

Anyone aged 10 or above who lives, works or studies in the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council area can raise, submit or sign a petition.

The name and contact details of the person that started the Petition (Lead Petitioner) is required, to allow contact between the Council and the Lead Petitioner. Only the Lead Petitioner will be contacted in relation to the Petition. The contact details of the Lead Petitioner will not be placed on the website.

If the petition does not identify a Lead Petitioner the Council will contact the first signature on the petition to agree who should act as the Lead Petitioner.

Please note that you can only sign an e-petition / Petition once. The list of signatories will be checked by Officers and any duplicate signatures or inappropriate responses will be removed.

Petitions can be submitted in one of the following ways:

- E-petitions can be created, signed and submitted using the following link <https://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/ieLogon.aspx?RPID=4339227&HPID=4339227&Forms=1&LLL=0>
- To create, sign or submit a petition you will need to provide a few basic details, including a valid email address, for verification purposes.
- Petitions can also be sent via email to – [Committee.services@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:Committee.services@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)
- Paper petitions can be sent to:  
The Head of Democratic Services  
Democratic Services Section  
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council  
General Offices  
Ebbw Vale  
NP23 6DN

Submitting a Paper Petition - the Petition wording must be set out in full on each sheet (or side of a sheet) where signatures are asked for. The Petition will be returned if the wording is unclear. Appendix 1 sets out the "Petition Template Form". The Form provides the main information required when submitting a Petition.

The requirements of this Petition Protocol will apply to whichever of the above submissions is used. Please ensure you follow this protocol in order to submit a Petition.

### **What should a Petition include?**

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 (or stop taking). It must relate to something the Council has responsibility for or can reasonably and proportionately influence to create an improvement in the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of the local area.
- the name and address and individual signature of any person supporting the Petition.
- contact details, including an address, for the Lead Petitioner.
- If the petition has been sent to anyone else as well as the County Borough Council.

If the Council receives a Petition that does not relate to something under the Council's control or direct influence, it will be returned to the Lead Petitioner with an explanation of the decision as to why the Council cannot progress the matter further.

The minimum number of valid signatures should be at least 50 (including the petition organiser) for a petition to be accepted as valid. The petition will be considered as follows:

- 50 - 200 signatures - Response from the relevant Director / lead Member (treated as normal correspondence) .
- At least 200 signatures - Referred to the Leader / Cabinet and or Scrutiny Committee for a response.
- At least 500 signatures - Referred for a debate at a meeting of the Full Council.

## **What happens next?**

When the Council receives a petition acknowledgment of receipt will be provided within 10 working days and this will include a link to the petition. The acknowledgment will set out what the Council plan to do in response to the petition, how you may be involved and when you can expect to hear from us again.

Your petition could result in one or a combination of the following:

- raising publicity for and awareness of an issue.
- implementing the action requested in the petition.
- considering the petition at a Full Council meeting.
- undertaking research into the matter.
- referring the matter to Cabinet, a Scrutiny Committee or other Committees.
- responding to the petition organiser setting out the council's view on the request set out in the petition.
- some other appropriate response.

When you create an ePetition, it may take 5 working days before it is published online. This is to check that the content is suitable before it is made available for signature. If it is suitable, the Council will ensure that the ePetition is displayed in Welsh & English on the website.

If it is considered that your ePetition cannot be published for any reason, the Council will contact you within this time to explain. You will be able to change and resubmit your petition if you wish. If you do not do this within 5 working days, a summary of the ePetition and the reason why it has not been accepted will be published under the 'Rejected Petitions' section of the website.

When an ePetition has closed for signature, a copy of your Petition will be forwarded to the relevant Head of Service & relevant Cabinet Member.

Where a Petition is in respect of a particular local issue affecting a specific ward(s) then the Democratic Services Team will notify the appropriate Member(s).

The Petition will be published on the Council's Petitions Register on the Council's website.

If the Council considers it can meet what the Petition asks for, the acknowledgement may confirm what action has been taken on the request and the Petition will be closed.

To ensure that people know what the Council are doing in response to the Petitions received, the details of all the Petitions submitted, including those pending action will be published on the Council's website.

## **What Petitions will not be accepted by the Council?**

Petitions must be in relation to something which falls under the remit of the Council. The Head of Democratic Services will have discretion as to whether a Petition meets the criteria set out in the Petitions Protocol. No further action will be taken in response to a Petition that fails to meet the criteria.

If your petition is about something over which the Council has no direct control we will consider making representations on behalf of the community to the relevant body. Where possible we will work with these partners to respond to your petition. If we are not able to do this for any reason, then we will explain this to you.

The Council recognises that petitions are also submitted in support of or to object to planning applications. For the avoidance of doubt, those petitions are not covered by this policy. Petitions submitted to the Development Management Team will continue to be a material consideration in the planning process and inform the decision whether to approve or refuse planning permission. However, they are not subject to the protocols outlined in this document.

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.

So 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, together with the acknowledgment and notification of the response (except in cases where this would be inappropriate).

A Petition will not be accepted by the Council if:

- It duplicates another, concurrent Petition. In this case, signatures will be added to the first such Petition to be received by the Council.
- It repeats or is substantially the same as one submitted within the previous 12 months. It is advised that details of previous Petitions are checked on the website at the start of your Petition **xxxx**
- it refers to employee matters as these will be addressed via existing internal frameworks.
- 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.
- the petition does not follow the guidelines, the council may decide not to do anything further with it. In this case, we will write to you to explain the reasons.
- It is considered to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate.
- Is defamatory, discriminatory or otherwise offensive or contains false statements
- It becomes apparent that any local elector's name, address or signature has been added to the Petition without their explicit consent.
- It is not in relation to a matter for which the Council has a responsibility or which does not affect the administrative area or citizens of the Council.
- It would require the disclosure of confidential or exempt information in response.
- It relates to the personal circumstances or conduct of any officer and Member or conditions of service of employees.
- It relates to an individual, particular group or business or the petitioner's own particular circumstances.
- Names individuals or provides information where they may be easily identified and is contradictory to GDPR regulations.
- It would be unlawful for the Council to consider.

- It relates to a matter which is the subject of legal or enforcement proceedings or an appeal to a court or tribunal or to a Government Minister or the National Assembly or an investigation by the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales.
- Relates to planning or licensing decisions and where there is an appeals procedure in place.
- Refers to a complaint about the conduct of a Member – complaints need to be made to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales [PSOW] [How to complain](#)
- It relates to the activities and aims of a political party or organisation.
- It would require the expenditure of a disproportionate amount of time, money or effort to prepare the answer.
- A Petition seeks to overturn a lawfully made decision.
- Contains advertising statements or is nonsense.
- It can be more appropriately dealt with as part of a consultation response in which case it will be referred to the appropriate Council body and included as part of the consultation documentation.
- Is either a Freedom of Information [FOI] request, a comment, compliment or complaint, in these cases the following need to be used:
- Freedom of Information Requests [Freedom of Information Requests | Blaenau Gwent CBC \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](#)
- Submitting comments, compliments and complaints [Compliments & Complaints | Blaenau Gwent CBC \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](#)

If a petition is considered unacceptable the petition organiser will be advised and provided with the reasons for its rejection.

If the Council rejects your Petition or you feel that the Council has not dealt with your Petition properly, please make a complaint via the Council's Corporate Complaints Process [Compliments & Complaints | Blaenau Gwent CBC \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](#)

The Council reserves the right to verify signatories as required. Petitioners should ensure that a valid address and postcode is included for all Petitioners that relates to a home address (if living in Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council area) or work address (if working or run a business in Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council area). These details will be taken into account when identifying if there are enough signatories from people who live or work in the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council area to trigger a debate.

### **Petitions which warrant evidence and debate at a Scrutiny Committee**

If your petition contains at least 200 signatures, the relevant senior officer will give evidence at a public meeting of the relevant overview and scrutiny committee. You should be aware that the Scrutiny Committee may decide that it would be more appropriate for another officer to give evidence instead of any specific officer named in the petition – for instance if the named officer has changed jobs. The Committee may also decide to call the relevant Cabinet Member to attend the meeting.

Committee Members will ask the questions at this meeting, but we will let you know the specific arrangements for the meeting and how you may be involved. The Scrutiny

Committee will make a report on its findings which may include recommendations for action to the Cabinet, or the Council.

### **Petitions requiring full Council debate**

If a petition is signed by more than 500 people it will be debated by the full Council (unless it is a petition asking for a senior council officer to give evidence at a public meeting). This means that the subject raised in the petition will be discussed at a meeting which all Council Members can attend.

If the Petition has enough signatories to trigger a debate at a meeting of Council, then the acknowledgment will confirm this and advise when and where the meeting will take place. 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. *Petitions **will not** be considered at the Annual Meeting of Council, Extraordinary Council, Special Council or at the Budget Setting Council meeting.*

If the Lead Petitioner wishes to attend Council they will be 3 minutes to address the Council on the subject of the petition.

The relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holder will then be given 3 minutes for a right of reply and the petition will then be discussed by Members. The relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holder has a further right of reply, for no more than **3** minutes, at the end of the debate on the matter.

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, for example by a relevant Committee.

Where the issue is one on which the Council's Cabinet are required to make the final decision, the Council will decide whether to make recommendations to inform that decision.

The Lead Petitioner will receive written confirmation of the decision as soon as practicable following the decision having been made. This confirmation will also be published on the Council's website.

### **Data protection and GDPR**

If you create and submit an e-petition or sign an e-petition you will be asked to provide personal information. Personal information is also needed when you sign a paper petition.

The Council is the data controller for personal information collected for both e-petitions and paper petitions. The following link is to the Council website regarding Data Protection and Privacy [Data Protection & FOI | Blaenau Gwent CBC \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/Data-Protection-FOI)

Following a period of 21 days after the Council has responded formally, a paper petition will be destroyed and all e-signatories on an e-petition will be erased, unless during that period, the petition organiser has requested a review.

## Appendix 1

How to submit petitions by email or in paper format. Please use this template. Additional pages should also include the petition subject at the top of the page and also the page number and total of pages for example page 7 of a 10 page petition would show the following: 7 of 10 pages.

### Petition to Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

#### Contact details of the Petition organiser

<b>Full Name</b>	
<b>Address for Correspondence:</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> line _____ 2 <sup>nd</sup> line _____ 3 <sup>rd</sup> line _____ Postcode _____
<b>Home Telephone No.</b>	
<b>Mobile No.</b>	
<b>Email Address</b>	
<b>Live/Work/Service User/ Study (please indicate all that apply)</b>	
<b>Signature</b>	



