



PETITIONS POLICY (Labour Group Review)

WRITTEN BY:

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Town Council welcomes and encourages its community to provide feedback and offers many opportunities and ways to do so as a matter of course.

1.2 Petitioning is one way that individuals, community groups and organisations can participate in the democratic process, by raising issues of public concern with the Town Council and allowing Councillors to consider the need for change.

OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

2.1 The purpose of this document is to provide clarity in relation to the best way to submit a petition and how this will then be processed by the Town Council.

CONSIDERATION WHEN STARTING A PETITION

3.1 Petitions should be relevant to a matter over which the Town Council has powers ~~or~~ duties, **or influence**. **Details of powers and duties undertaken by the Town Council** can be found on our website: www.biddulph.co.uk

3.2 The lead petitioner (person raising the petition) and all signatories should live within the boundaries of Biddulph (within one of the five wards: Biddulph North, Biddulph South, Biddulph East, Biddulph West and Biddulph Moor); **or have strong and demonstrable links to the Town**.

3.3 A petition will not be received by the Town Council where the issue it concerns has been the subject of a petition in the last six months ~~or a decision of the Town Council in the last six months~~.

3.4 Petitions can be circulated and signed via a paper copy or electronically via a petition website.

3.5 Before organising a petition, the lead petitioner is encouraged, **but not obliged**, to contact the Town Council to check that the petition's content is acceptable to present at a Council meeting.

INFORMATION TO INCLUDE IN A PETITION

4.1 Petitions **should** contain:

- i) A brief title and short, clear, concise statement covering the subject of the petition;
- ii) The lead petitioner's name and contact information;
- iii) The name, address (including postcode) and signature of anyone supporting the petition. Please note, sample checks will be carried out in order to authenticate the address of petitioners;
- ~~iv) Confirmation that those signing the petition are over 18 years of age (i.e. are electors within the parish);~~
- ~~v) Have a start date and a finish date of a maximum of three months.~~

V) Petitions should be undertaken in a timely manner

4.2 A petition **must not** include:

- ~~i) Potentially libellous, false or defamatory statements;~~
- ~~ii) Matters which are subject to prescribed statutory requirements, such as changes to governance arrangements;~~
- iii) Information protected by a court order, or in accordance with any other enactment;

- iv) Matters which are subject to appeal processes or legal actions;
- v) Material which is commercially sensitive, confidential or which may cause personal distress or loss;
- ~~vi) The names of individual officials of public bodies;~~
- vii) The names of individuals, or information where they may be easily identified, in relation to criminal accusations.

HOW TO SUBMIT A PETITION

5.1 Petitions can be submitted via email, office@biddulph-tc.gov.uk

or posted to:

Chief Officer

Biddulph Town Council

Biddulph Town Hall, High Street

Biddulph, Staffordshire

ST8 6AR.

5.2 **All petitions must be received by the Chief Officer no later than seven working days before that meeting.**

5.3 Petitions **are** to be presented to a meeting of the Town Council by the lead petitioner **or**, ~~during the public session, must be received by the Chief Officer no later than seven working days before that meeting.~~

alternatively, petitions can be presented to a meeting of the Council by a Councillor on behalf of the lead petitioner. ~~Petitions presented by Councillors need to be submitted to the Chief Officer no later than seven working days before the day of the meeting.~~

PETITIONS PRESENTED TO COUNCIL

6.1 The Council will treat something as a petition if it is identified as such, or if it seems to that it is intended to be a petition. ~~A petition will be treated as such if it has at least 50 signatories or petitioners.~~

6.2 Petitions containing less than 500 validated signatures are to be presented to a meeting of the Town Council by the lead petitioner during the public session. The petition organiser (or an appointed deputy) will be given five minutes to present the petition at the meeting and the petition will then be discussed by members for a maximum of 15 minutes.

~~6.2 Petitions with 50-499 signatures~~

~~A petition with between 50 and 499 identifiable signatures shall be reviewed by the Town Clerk, Town Mayor, Deputy Town Mayor and relevant members (e.g. the appropriate committee members or ward members) to determine the appropriate course of action.~~

~~At the discretion of the Town Mayor, a petition may be referred to Council or the appropriate committee for debate as per petitions with in excess of 500 signatures.~~

~~The petition organiser will receive a written confirmation of the decision, this may be by email.~~

6.3 Petitions with 500+ signatures

A petition with 500 or more identifiable signatures will be put forward for debate, as a separate agenda item, at the next suitable meeting of the Full Council or the relevant committee.

~~Where a petition is debated by committee, the Chairman of the committee shall report on this to the next appropriate Full Council meeting.~~

The petition organiser (or an appointed deputy) will be given five minutes to present the petition at the meeting and the petition will then be discussed by members for a maximum of 15 minutes.

The Council will determine how to respond to the petition at this meeting; usually this shall be to:

- a) action the petition requests
- b) not action the petition requests for reasons put forward in the debate
- c) commission further investigation into the matter

The petition organiser will receive a written confirmation of the decision, this may be by email.

6.4 Once the petition has been accepted it will become a public document accessible via the relevant meeting agenda on the Town Council website. Lead

petitioners should take care not to include any information or signatures that should not be made public.

6.5 At a meeting, the Town Council may move that the petition be referred to a future meeting for consideration. The Town Council will not as a rule change policy as a result of a petition alone but a petition may be used as evidence to decide on future policies together with other information collected by the Town Council.

6.6 Petitions may be delayed if received during or immediately before the six weeks prior to an election, as local authorities have strict rules on publishing material which may support any political party or a point of view which may be associated with any political party.

6.4 Petitions that do not follow these guidelines will not be accepted. In these cases, the lead petitioner will be informed in writing of the reasons why a petition cannot be accepted.