



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11TH NOVEMBER 2024

PETITIONS GUIDANCE

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATION.

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a draft guidance document for members of the public in relation to the creation and receipt process of petitions submitted to Council.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Committee:

- 2.1 Consider and comment on the draft guidance attached as Appendix 1 of the report
- 2.2 Subject to any amendments, determine whether to approve the guidance document to assist Members of the public in respect of petitions to Council;
- 2.3 Subject to 2.2, that the Service Director, Democratic Services publishes the guidance document on the Council website and looks to promote the guidance as part of the Council's Public Participation strategy.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (the Act) places a duty on a Principal Council to make and publish a Petitions Scheme setting out how the Council intends to handle and respond to Petitions (including Electronic Petitions - ePetitions).
- 3.2 The Act outlines that a petition scheme must, in particular, set out—
- i. how a petition may be submitted to the council;
 - ii. how and by when the council will acknowledge receipt of a petition;

- iii. the steps the council may take in response to a petition received by it;
 - iv. the circumstances (if any) in which the council may take no further action in response to a petition;
 - v. how and by when the council will make available its response to a petition to the person who submitted the petition and to the public.
- 3.3 In October 2023, the Council endorsed revisions to its current Petitions scheme, which outlined a new tiered approach to petition responses, dependent on the number of signatures received. A link to the Council’s petition scheme can be viewed [here](#).
- 3.4 The table below sets out the signature thresholds:

Tier	Number of Signatures	Response
1	1-500	Response from the relevant Director / Head of Service
2	500 +	Response from the relevant Cabinet Member and publication of response on the dedicated Council webpage
3	1000+ Hybrid petition – Electronic and or paper	As above, with a petition being referenced for information only on a Council agenda. When noting petitions, Council may determine the referral of the matter to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

4 GUIDANCE

- 4.1 As part of the report to Council, Members endorsed the ‘development of a petition scheme ‘guidance booklet’ to assist members of the public in taking forward a petition and for this booklet to be developed by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee’
- 4.2 A draft guidance document is attached at appendix 1 of this report for members consideration.

- 4.3 The guidance document looks to assist members of the public in both creating, compiling and submitting a petition to council, regardless of its form (paper / electronic).
- 4.4 Through use of the functionality within the Modern.Gov system, officers within the Council business unit have also developed the functionality on the Council website for online petitions to be created, a practice shared by other Local Authorities. The guidance advises that although other forms of petitions are accepted (through other online platforms / paper format) the petition must contain a set criteria, to allow it to be included in line with the Council's petitions scheme.
- 4.5 Step by step instructions, with visual aids such as screen shots are included in the document to assist the public in their petition.
- 4.6 Subject to Members comments in relation to the draft guidance, once approved, the guidance document will be made available bilingually on the Council website and promoted as part of the public participation strategy. A glossary of terms will also be produced to assist in the documents accessibility.
- 4.7 The Council's current [petition](#) page will continue to be utilised to provide the public a further insight into the outcomes of a petition, to ensure transparency.
- 4.8 Petitions relating to live planning applications will continue to be dealt with under the current planning petitions process, as the Council has one of the most generous public speaking arrangements of a planning committee for the public. In addition any petition received that relates to a live consultation will be included with the consultation process and not form part of the Council's petition scheme.

5 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The receipt of petitions provides the public to further engage in the democratic process, promoting equality and diversity in the views of others. The Council's petitions scheme promotes the acceptance of hybrid petitions, therefore ensuring there is no digital exclusion.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 Not required.

7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 None

8 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021

9 LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.

9.1 The Council's petition scheme will support the ability for the public to become involved in key matters.

9.2 Ensuring appropriate governance arrangements are in place is also essential to the smooth operating and sustainability of the Council when undertaking Council Business and the proposals in relation to petitions will allow for further transparency to the public.

9.3 The Council's petitions scheme links to the Future Generations Well-being goals of a more equal Wales and a Wales of cohesive communities.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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COMMUNICATION.**

Background Papers

Democratic Services Committee – [17th July 2019](#)

[Constitution Committee – 5th June 2023.](#)

[Council – 25th October 2023.](#)