



# Penrith Town Council

PETITIONS POLICY

2022

## Overview

The Town Council encourages community feedback and recognises that petitions are one way in which people can let the council know their concerns. The petitions process allows members of the public to have direct influence on the political process and to raise concerns that are important to them. Members of the public can submit petitions on the following:-

- Issues relating to the Council's responsibilities
- Issues which affect Penrith if the Council can exercise some degree of influence
- Anything relating to an improvement in the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of Penrith to which any of the Council's partners could contribute.

The Council will respond to all petitions it receives. We will be as flexible as we can when handling your petitions, that it is considered quickly, and in the most appropriate way.

Before submitting a petition you should first check with your Ward Councillor or with the Council, to see if the Council is already acting on your concerns and the Council is the most appropriate body to receive your petition, as sometimes your petition may be more appropriate for another Public Body.

**Public Consultations:** If the petition is concerned with a matter that is currently under consultation then every effort will be made to include it as a response, but to do so it must be received before the end of the consultation period. A template petition is available for you to use at the end of this policy.

If we decide that a petition is not acceptable, then we will let the Petition organiser know our reasons. If a petition relates to the responsibilities of one of our partners, then the petition will be forwarded to that partner for them to deal with, unless the petition is to an improvement in the economic social or environmental wellbeing of the area. In those cases the petitions will be considered under the Council's Petition scheme.

## **Essentially, there are 2 types of petition:**

### **Ordinary petitions**

These must be signed by at least 15 people, but the Council will use its discretion where there are fewer than 15 signatories in cases where there is clear local support for action (e.g. where those affected are only from a small area). The petition will be put forward for debate, as a separate agenda item, at the next suitable meeting of the Council. Where a petition is debated by committee, the Chair of the committee shall report on this to the next Council meeting.

### **Petitions requiring debate**

Petitions which contain 150 signatures or more will normally be debated by the Full Council.

### **How do I submit petitions?**

Petitions can be either paper or electronic. 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.

We will treat as a petition for the purposes of this scheme anything which identifies itself as a petition, or which a reasonable person would regard as a petition, and which is signed by the persons who live or work within the parish of Penrith.

### **Paper petitions can be sent to:**

Unit 1, Church House, 19-24 Friargate, Penrith, Cumbria, CA11 7XR

**or** e-mailed to: [office@penrithtowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:office@penrithtowncouncil.gov.uk)

Petitions submitted to the Council must include a clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition. It should state:

- a. What action the petitioners wish the Council to take.
- b. The name, address and signatures of any person supporting the petition (the address can be an address where a signatory lives, works or studies). The Council will validate 10% of all signatures received by comparing signatures/addresses/e-mail addresses against records held by the Council.
- c. 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 in the public domain. If the petition does not identify a petition organiser, we will contact signatories to the petition to agree who should act as the petition organisers.

## **Guidance**

### **Who can submit a petition?**

Anyone who lives, works or studies in Penrith including under 18s, can sign or organise a petition.

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

We will acknowledge the petition within 5 working days of receiving it and let the petition organiser 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 the website under the "Your Say" section of the site. If the petition needs more investigation, we will tell you the steps we plan to take. In most cases your petition will be submitted to one of the Council's formal committee meetings where elected Councillors will decide how to respond to the petition.

### **Full Council Debates**

If a petition contains more than 150 signatures it will normally be debated by the full Council if deemed appropriate. This means that the issue raised in the petition will be discussed at a meeting which all Councillors can attend. The petition organiser (or a nominee) will be given up to a maximum of 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, refer the issue to a relevant Committee. The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of this decision.

Petitions asking for a debate at Council will normally be considered at the next meeting of the Full Council but must be received at least 10 working days before the date of the meeting.

### **Are there any petitions which the Council cannot accept?**

We believe that most petitions we receive will be accepted, but in certain circumstances may not be accepted, including:

- a. If the petition applies to a planning application, is a statutory petition or on a matter where there is already an existing right of appeal or a separate complaints process that is led by the district council.
- b. Any petition which we consider to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate. We will explain the reason for this in our acknowledgement of the petition.
- c. Where a person or organisation (or someone on their behalf) has submitted a petition which is the same or substantially the same, as one submitted within the previous 12 months.

## **How will the 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:-

- a. Taking the action requested in the petition
- b. Considering the petition at a Council meeting
- c. Holding an inquiry into the matter
- d. Undertaking research into the matter
- e. Holding a public meeting
- f. Carrying out consultation
- g. Holding a meeting with the petitioners
- h. Writing to the petition organiser setting out our views about the request in the petition.

To ensure that people know what we are doing in response to the petitions we receive, details of all the petitions submitted to us will be published on our website. We will publish all correspondence relating to the petition (all personal details will be removed).

## **Is there anything else I can do to have my say?**

As a Council we try to identify and solve problems at an early stage. We are committed to receiving feedback as this helps us to develop and review services. We recognise that petitions are just one way in which people can let us know about their concerns.

There are several other ways that you can have your say including:-

- a. Contacting your local Councillors
- b. Attending meetings
- c. Contacting the Council Office

**Approved: 2019**

**Reviewed: 2022**

**Next Review: 2032**

## Appendix 1 - suggested petition format

# PETITION TO PENRITH TOWN COUNCIL

**PURPOSE OF PETITION:** *(e.g.)* [We, the undersigned object to.../Wish the Council to.../ Are concerned that...]

**LEAD PETITIONER:** *(organiser of the petition)* Mr/s Name, Address, email contact, *(name of organisation represented (if any) e.g.)* Local residents.... Residents' Association name... Neighbourhood Watch...

**If you support this petition please sign below**

	Print Name	Address	Signature
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			