



Wolverhampton Homes'

Petitions and E-Petitions Scheme

Introduction

Your feedback is very important to us, as it helps us to improve our services and make sure they're inclusive to everyone.

We welcome petitions and recognise that they are just one way in which people can tell us their concerns and help shape our policies and procedures. Petitioning provides direct access to elected Councillors and other key policy makers. It can raise awareness of a specific campaign and bring items to our attention that we may not have considered before. The petitions process is a key part of our commitment to being open and transparent and involving you in the services we deliver and the things we do.

Background

Our petitions process is the same as that used by City of Wolverhampton Council.

Main features

1. Anyone who lives, works or studies in the City of Wolverhampton, including those under the age of 18, can sign or organise a petition. The principal petitioner will receive a direct response. Government guidance recommends that councils and their managing agents such as Wolverhampton Homes, be as flexible as possible in administering petitions. We are encouraged where appropriate to take account of signatures of people who do not supply the relevant information.
2. Petitions submitted to us must include the following information:
 - Details of the principal petitioner. Include name, a contact address to where all correspondence will be sent and (if possible) an email address and a phone number. This is the person we will contact to explain how we will respond to the petition;
 - Clear and concise details of what action you want us to take.
 - Any extra information relevant to your petition, including the reasons why you consider the action requested to be necessary. This information will be made available to the relevant service or scrutiny body prior to consideration of your petition and should be limited to no more than three sides of A4.
 - A summary of actions you have already taken to try and resolve the issues, including details of people you have approached for help, including any elected representatives, our staff, council employees or other agencies such as the police.
3. Petitions submitted to us should raise issues relevant to services which we have responsibility for and are of public interest.
4. We may consider petitions submitted even if they relate to a matter on which a decision has already been made by us or the City of Wolverhampton Council.

5. Petitions should be submitted in good faith and be decent, honest and respectful. We're unable to consider petitions about:

- Personal or commercial issues
- Specific or individual employee relations matters
- Disciplinary or grievance matters
- Matters which are subject to formal or statutory appeal processes or are sub judice, which means they are under consideration by a judge or court
- Individual housing issues

6. Petitions should not include:

- Offensive, unreasonable, inflammatory, sarcastic or provocative language
- False or defamatory statements
- Information which is protected by an interdict or court order
- Commercially sensitive or confidential material
- The names or information relating to individuals who are subject to a criminal accusation that might easily identify them

7. We will not act on any petition which we consider is covered by any of the above.

Petitioners may not ask us to make a formal judgement on any matters of personal or commercial interest which should be determined by a court or other tribunal. Petitioners must also be able to demonstrate that there is a public interest in what they are asking for.

8. Petitions which are the same or substantially very similar to other petitions and which are submitted by or on behalf of the same person or organisation, will not be considered unless more than two years have passed since the original petition was considered. In cases of dispute, senior management will decide whether a petition is appropriate. For advice regarding these issues, please contact our Customer Feedback Team.

9. 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 for this and discuss the revised timescale with you. If a petition does not follow the guidelines set out above, we may decide not to act on it. In that case, we will write to you to explain our reasons.

How do I submit a petition?

10. Petitions must be signed by ten or more people from five or more identifiable households within Wolverhampton.

11. To process the petition, each petitioner must clearly state their name, address – including postcode, and a signature.

Paper Petitions

13. Paper petitions should be submitted using the official form which is available on our website at www.whomes.org.uk/petition or by contacting the Customer Feedback Team.

Please post petitions to:

Wolverhampton Homes
Customer Feedback Team
Bilston Town Hall
Church Street
Bilston
Wolverhampton
WV14 0AP

Please note that we can only accept petitions submitted using the official form.

E-petitions

14. We welcome e-petitions which are created and submitted through the City of Wolverhampton Council's website: <https://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/your-council/decision-making/petitions>

E-petitions must follow the same guidelines as paper petitions.

15. When you sign an e-petition you will be asked to provide your name, address and a valid email address. This will trigger an email containing a link which you must click to confirm your email address is valid. Once this is done your 'signature' will be added to the petition. People visiting the e-petition will be able to see your name in the list of those who have signed it, but your contact details will not be visible.
16. You will also need to decide how long you would like your petition to be open for signatures. Petitions can be open for a maximum of 12 months. When you create an e-petition, it may take up to five working days before it is published online. This is because we must check that the content of your petition is appropriate and conforms to the conditions outlined above in points 1-10, before it is made available for signature.
17. If we feel we cannot publish your petition for some reason, we will contact you within the five working days to explain. You will be able to change and resubmit your e-petition if you want to.
18. When your e-petition has reached its end date, you will need to submit it to Democratic Services via the website, for processing as this is not done automatically.

19. Your e-petition will be considered by Wolverhampton Homes in the same way as a paper petition.

Next Steps

20. An acknowledgement will be sent to the principal petitioner with details of what we plan to do with the petition and when they can expect to hear from us again.
21. When you sign an e-petition you can choose to receive this information by email. We will not send you anything which is not relevant to the e-petition you have signed, unless you choose to receive other emails from us.
22. If we can do what your petition asks, the acknowledgement may confirm that we have taken the action requested and the petition will be closed.
23. The petition will be considered by the relevant service, scrutiny body or by the council depending on the number of signatures. The acknowledgement will confirm this and tell you what will happen next.

Petitions with fewer than 2,499 signatures	Considered and responded to by employees within 28 days. A performance report against this will be reported to Audit and Service Delivery Committee.
Petitions with 2,500 to 4,999 signatures	Considered by our Audit and Service Delivery Committee with recommendations made for action by lead officers or senior management as appropriate.
Petitions with more than 5,000 signatures	Reviewed and responded to at the next meeting of the council.

24. If the petition is about an issue or issues that are our responsibility and where there is an existing legal or statutory process, or on a matter where there is already an existing right of appeal, other procedures will apply. For advice regarding these issues, please contact the Customer Feedback Team.
25. Once received, the Customer Feedback Team will refer the petition with less than 2,499 signatures to the relevant Head of Service (HOS) or nominee to investigate the issues detailed in the petition. The HOS will consider the petition and decide what action should be taken. The HOS will respond within 28 working days.
26. The relevant HOS or nominee will advise Wolverhampton Homes' Chair of the Board and any affected ward councillors.
27. Where a petition has more than 2,500 signatures but less than 4,999, the HOS will prepare and present a report to the next Audit and Service Delivery Committee. The petition will be considered, and any recommendations will be referred to lead officers or senior management. The principal petitioner will be invited to Audit and Service Delivery Committee. You can nominate someone else to attend on your behalf.

Full Council Debates

The principal petitioner will be given five minutes to present the petition at the meeting and the petition will then be discussed by Councillors for a maximum of 40 minutes. The council will decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting. It 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 Cabinet is required to make the final decision, the council will decide whether to make recommendations to inform that decision. The principal petitioner will receive written confirmation of this decision.

Audit and Service Delivery Committee

29. All petitions submitted to us with fewer than 2,499 valid signatures will be responded to by a Head of Service.
30. Petitions with 2,500 to 4,999 valid signatures will be considered by Audit and Service Delivery Committee.
31. The principal petitioner will be invited to appear before Audit and Service Delivery Committee to speak in support of the petition and answer questions that members of Audit and Service Delivery Committee (ASDC) may ask. Alternatively, written evidence can be provided in support of the petition and ASDC may consider your petition in your absence. The relevant HOS or nominee will attend the meeting and present a report.
32. ASDC will consider each petition to ensure the appropriate action was taken in respect of each admissible petition. Any recommendations made during the meeting will be referred to the appropriate lead officer or senior management.
33. A summary of the debate and any recommendations will be recorded in the minutes. A copy of the minutes will be sent to the principal and second petitioner within ten working days of the meeting.

How will Wolverhampton Homes respond to petitions?

34. 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 one of our meetings
 - Holding an inquiry into the matter
 - Undertaking research into the matter
 - Holding a public meeting
 - Holding a consultation
 - Holding a meeting with petitioners
 - Where it contains between 2,500 and 4,999 signatures or where officers decide that it is the most appropriate course of action, referring the petition for consideration by Audit and Service Delivery Committee

- Where the petition contains more than 5,000 plus signatures, referring it for consideration by the full council meeting
- Writing to the principal petitioner, setting out our views about the request in the petition.

What can I do if I feel my petition has not been dealt with properly?

35. If the principal petitioner is not satisfied with the process followed, they may appeal in writing to the council's Scrutiny Board by notifying the Scrutiny and Systems Manager of their intention to appeal within 20 working days of being notified of our decision on the petition.
36. Scrutiny Board may ask the relevant HOS to report on the steps taken in response to a petition and may make recommendations to the appropriate Cabinet Member.

Contact

For more information and advice on the petitions process, please contact the Customer Feedback Team:

Email: complimentsandcomplaints@wolverhamptonhomes.org.uk

Telephone: 01902 552907

Write to:

Wolverhampton Homes
Customer Feedback Team
Bilston Town Hall
Church Street
Bilston
Wolverhampton
WV14 0AP