

Introduction

Barking and Dagenham Council is committed to letting its residents make a difference in the way their borough is run. Traditionally, the petition is one of the most popular ways that residents can get their views heard. At first, signatures were gathered on paper; more recently, online.

The Council still encourages people to sign petitions to get it to make changes to the borough, or the way it delivers its services. This document explains what happens when you submit a petition to the Council.

What is a petition?

A petition is defined as “a formal document appealing to an authority for a right or benefit etc. especially one signed by a large number of people...” They are usually headed with a short statement (the ‘prayer’) setting out the petitioners’ request (“We the undersigned...” or similar), followed by the petitioners’ signatures and addresses. Although petitions would usually be expected to contain a large number of signatures, any document in this sort of format is still a petition, even one signed by just a few people. For the purposes of this procedure, a letter signed by more than one person from separate addresses should also be treated as a petition.

The Council expects that petitions, whether on paper or online, will all meet some minimum standards. They must include:

- a clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition, stating what action the petitioners wish the Council to take
- the name and address of the signatory
- a signature (if the petition is on paper) or a valid email address (if the petition is online)
- the name, address and contact details of the person who started the petition, known to the Council as the “lead petitioner”

Petitions can be submitted to the Council in three formats:

- on paper, the traditional method of petitioning
- using the Council’s own [e-petitioning](#) facility
- using an external online petitioning facility, such as those offered by Facebook and Twitter

Who can sign my petition?

You can get anyone to sign your petition. However, the Council will only consider a signature to be valid if:

- it is accompanied by the signatory’s full name and address
- the address of the signatory is inside the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
- it only appears once on each petition

Please note that the Council may check the names and addresses of signatories with its own records. Any names that are found to be in breach of the above conditions will be removed and the totals adjusted.

What can I petition the Council about?

The Council tries to consider all petitions and give an appropriate response, no matter what the topic. However, the Council will not consider or respond to a petition that:

- is about a matter that is the responsibility of a Council quasi-judicial Board, including the Development Control Board and the Licensing and Regulatory Board
- is about an issue that is subject to a formal statutory process
- is from a Council employee
- is the same as, or very similar to, a petition that has already been received by the Council
- is about the day-to-day operation of a school (although the Council may pass these petitions to the relevant school's Governing Body)
- is about something outside the Council's direct control, including those issues controlled by national or European government
- is about a contract held by the Council
- is about a matter that is the subject of legal proceedings or is about a matter that the Council is in some other legal dispute with any party referred to within the body of a petition or party to it
- is about an individual or body where there is a right to recourse to a review or right of appeal prescribed under any enactment
- is about something that has already been the subject of a report or debate at a public Council meeting
- is considered by the Council to be of a vexatious or derogatory nature, or contrary to any provision of any code, protocol, legal requirement or rule of the Council or is otherwise considered improper or inappropriate
- has invalid signatures, names, addresses or email addresses, or duplicated entries, to the extent that it undermines the legitimacy of the petition

Where should I send my petition?

As they are an important way of communicating with the Council, all petitions are addressed to the Chief Executive, and handled by staff in their office. You should therefore send your petitions to:

The Chief Executive
Town Hall
Barking
IG11 7LU

Alternatively, you can hand them into the Town Hall (Barking) or the Civic Centre (Dagenham) in person.

If your petition is electronic, you should email the details to:

- petitions@lbbd.gov.uk

What happens to my petition?

What the Council does with your petition depends on its topic and the number of signatures it has received. Either way, a Council officer will contact you as lead petitioner within 10 working days and let you know what the Council intends to do.

As long as your petition is valid, and meets the criteria and exclusions set out above, it will receive a formal response from a Council officer. It will also be published on the Council's website, although all names and addresses will be removed, as will your contact details as lead petitioner.

However, if your petition receives sufficient signatures, it may automatically trigger a debate at a public Council meeting. The valid signature threshold for all petitions (whether paper or online) is currently:

1500 signatures

Again, the Council may carry out its own checks to ensure that all the signatures on your petition are legitimate, removing any that are not. You should be aware this may affect the total number of valid signatures your petition receives, which may mean that your petition no longer meets the required threshold.

What happens if my petition triggers a formal debate?

If your petition meets the requirements above, the matter will be allocated to one of the Council's scrutiny select committees – a formal meeting of Members of the Council – for a public debate. The Council will then follow these steps:

- A Scrutiny Officer will write to you as lead petitioner at least 10 working days before the meeting, telling you which select committee your petition has been allocated to, and inviting you to attend a meeting at which your petition will be debated. This will usually be the next available meeting of the committee but, depending on the committee's work load, may be a later meeting. You will normally be given 10 working days' notice of the meeting. In the case where the subject of the petition is likely to lead to the discussion of confidential information bound by Access to Information legislation, the reasons will be made public in accordance with the provisions of [Part B Article 12 of the Constitution](#) (PDF 99K).
- The Chief Officer responsible for the area of work covered by your petition may also contact you to discuss your petition in more detail. They may ask to meet with you before the select committee meeting, to gather more evidence to support your petition, or to see if an agreement can be reached without holding a member debate.
- Should you not reach agreement, the debate will proceed. You will need to attend the select committee at the allocated time and present your petition to the meeting. If you are unable to attend, you must designate a representative to present the petition on your behalf. If no one attends to present the petition, the petition may be dismissed by the select committee without any further action being taken.
- At the meeting, you will be directed by the Chair of the meeting, who will be one of the councillors present. Your petition will be heard as part of a written report,

presented by the Chief Officer which will cover the issues you have raised in your petition.

- You will have up to 10 minutes to make your case. The Chief Officer will then present their findings, also taking up to 10 minutes. Members of the select committee will then take around 10 minutes to question you and the Chief Officer.
- The Chair will indicate when the debate is over, at which point the select committee will take one of the following actions:
 1. Note your petition, but take no further action
 2. Support your petition and make recommendations to the appropriate Council committee or officer
 3. Decide that further information is required before a decision can be reached, and agree to take that decision at a later date
- You will be informed of the committee's decision by the Chair at the meeting, unless they choose option 3, in which case you will be notified of their decision in writing.

Appeal

The select committee's decision is final, and there is therefore no right of appeal