

## **Terms and conditions**

We hope our online petition facility will enable as many people as possible to make their views known. All petitions will be accepted and published on this website, providing they meet the criteria below.

Petitioners may freely disagree with the Council or call for changes of policy. We will not attempt to exclude critical views and decisions to accept or reject will not be made on a party political basis.

However, to protect this service from abuse, petitions should meet some basic criteria:

- A title or subject of the petition.
- A short statement saying what the petition is about and it must state the action you wish the council to take.
- It must have a minimum of 250 signatures of people who live, work or study in West Norfolk, otherwise the Council reserves the right not to respond to it in accordance to our petition scheme.
- If you want a senior council officer to answer questions about matters raised in your petition at a meeting of one of the council's Overview and Scrutiny Panels then it must contain at least 2500 signatures and give grounds for the request.
- The name of the person submitting the petition (known as the petition organiser).
- The contact address of the petition organiser. We will use this address for any communications concerning the petition.
- It must have the name and an address for any person signing the petition.
- An online petition must use the Councils online petition tool and each signatory must supply an email address in addition to a postal address.
- The start and end dates for collecting signatures to the petition must also be specified in advance for online petitions.

### **We will not deal with petitions that:**

- include a matter which in our opinion is vexatious, abusive or contains otherwise inappropriate comments e.g. containing swearing or other insults or anything that is false or potentially defamatory.
- do not comply with data protection, libel, equalities and anti-discrimination legislation.
- concern employment matters for Borough Council staff.
- For issues, such as planning and licensing decisions or council tax banding and non-domestic rates, there is already an established way for communities to have their say, so these are not included in our petition scheme
- Are substantially the same as a similar petition considered by the Council in the preceding 12 months.

### **We reserve the right not to take action on:**

- Party political material. Please note, this does not mean you can't petition on controversial issues. For example, this party political petition would not be permitted: "We petition the Leader of the Council to change his party's policy on

something” but this non-party political version would be: "We petition the Leader of the Council to change the Council's policy on ....".

- information which may be protected by an injunction or court order (for example, the identities of children in custody disputes);
- material which is potentially confidential, commercially sensitive, or which may cause personal distress or loss;
- any commercial endorsement, promotion of any product, service or publication;
- the names of individual officials of public bodies, unless they are part of the senior management of those organisations;
- the names of family members of elected representatives or officials of public bodies;
- the names of individuals, or information where they may be identified, in relation to criminal accusations;
- language which is intemperate, provocative, racist, sexist, homophobic etc. This is language to which people reading it could reasonably take offence because we believe it is possible to petition for anything politely;
- petitions that are similar to and/or overlap with an existing petition or petitions;
- has previously been dealt with as a petition within the last 12 months
- statements that don't actually request any action ;
- wording that is impossible to understand;
- statements that amount to advertisements;
- petitions which are solely intended to be humorous
- issues for which a petition is not the appropriate channel (for example, correspondence about a personal issue);
- Freedom of Information or Environmental Information requests. This is not the right channel for FOI requests; information about the appropriate procedure can be found at on the Council's web site at [www.west-norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.west-norfolk.gov.uk)
- During politically sensitive periods, such as just before an election, we have to be extra careful to ensure that all political parties enjoy a level playing field. At such times, if your petition contains politically controversial material we may decide not to accept it or defer consideration of it until after the election. If this is the case, we will explain the reasons and the revised timescale which will apply.

We will strive to ensure that petitions that do not meet our criteria are not accepted, but where a petition is accepted which contains misleading information we reserve the right to post an interim response to highlight this point to anyone visiting to sign the petition.