

REGENERATION, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

18 DECEMBER 2014

PETITIONS

Report from: Robin Cooper, Director Regeneration, Community & Culture

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Summary

To advise the Committee of any petitions (including e-petitions) received by the Council which fall within the remit of this Committee including a summary of the response sent to petitioners by officers.

1. Budget and policy framework

1.1 In summary, the Council's Petition Scheme requires the relevant Director to respond to the lead petitioner usually within ten working days of receipt of a petition by the Council. Overview and Scrutiny Committees are always advised of any petitions falling within their terms of reference together with the officer response. There is a right of referral of a petition for discussion by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee by the petitioners if they consider the Director's response to be inadequate. Should the Committee determine that the petition has not been dealt with adequately it may use any of its powers to deal with the matter. These powers include instigating an investigation, making recommendations to the Cabinet and arranging for the matter to be considered at a meeting of the full Council.

1.2 The petition scheme is set out in full in the Council's Constitution at:

<http://www.medway.gov.uk/thecouncilanddemocracy/constitution.aspx>

1.3 Any budget framework implications will be set out in the specific petition response.

2. Background

2.1 The Council's Petition Scheme provides that petitions received by the Council relating to matters within the remit of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee will

be referred immediately to the relevant Director for consideration at officer level.

- 2.2 Where the Director is able to fully meet the request of the petitioners a response is sent setting out the proposed action and timescales for implementation. The petition organiser may request to refer the matter to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee if s/he is not satisfied with the answer and has given reasons for their dissatisfaction.
- 2.3 For petitions where the Director is unable to meet the request of petitioners or where there are a range of alternative responses the petition will be referred to the next relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee for discussion.

3 Completed petitions

- 3.1 A summary of responses relevant to this Committee that have been accepted by the petitioners are set out below.

Subject of petition	Response
Petition about the noise from the loudspeakers around the netball facility at Rainham Girls School,	A meeting between Cllr O'Brien, Cllr Hewett, the lead petitioner and representatives from the school was held on 21 August 2014 and a follow up meeting was scheduled for October. Following the meeting in August the school contacted all users of the netball facility, as agreed, and informed them that the loudspeaker facility should no longer be used. It has since transpired that the users of the facility have followed this instruction and the loudspeakers have not been used at tournaments which have since taken place. Therefore the October follow up meeting was not required at this stage.
Petition against the use of residential properties in Medway as juvenile halfway houses for juveniles from other parts of the country especially 54 College Avenue, Gillingham, Kent.	This juvenile halfway house is not used by Medway Council's Services and is operated by a private company. Kent Police advised that research conducted between 28.04.14 and 31.08.14 relating to this address identified a number of incidents some of which resulted in recorded crimes. Kent Police will continue to respond to and investigate reports of criminal activity and anti-social behaviour but are unable to comment on the closure of the premises. Medway Council can intervene regarding noise nuisance from inside the property. The establishment of noise nuisance is assisted initially by the completion of diary sheets by affected residents and the diary has to be completed for 14 days and then returned to the Environmental Protection Team who assess whether the case can be taken forward for investigation.

<p>An e-petition requesting the Council to create a speed hump in front of Gillingham Park opposite numbers 7 and 9 Oxford Road, Gillingham.</p>	<p>Whilst speeding, inconsiderate and dangerous driving are a matter of serious concern, the basis upon which Medway introduces road safety improvements is casualty reduction. According to the collision history of Oxford Road there has been one personal injury to a driver caused by a car colliding with an unleashed dog. There are many areas of Medway with a poorer safety record and therefore receive a higher priority for safety measures. It is therefore not possible for speed deterrent measures to be introduced at this time. The collision record for this road will continue to be monitored and a speed indication device will be erected on a temporary basis.</p>
<p>An e-petition requesting that the Council provide a detailed assessment and strategy with a view to the traffic using Medway City Estate running more efficiently during all hours especially at peak times.</p>	<p>The Council is aware of the issues raised by the petition. New measures have been introduced during peak times such as the 30mph speed limit in the Medway Tunnel to slow the traffic and increase the number of vehicles exiting from the Estate. With regard to the future, funding has been secured to undertake significant improvements on the A278 between the Medway Tunnel and the Four Elms roundabout including incorporating solutions to address the issue of traffic exiting the Estate. Further initiatives are also being investigated, for example, an experimental foot ferry from Sun Pier, Chatham to the Estate.</p>

4 Petitions referred to this Committee

- 4.1 The following petition has been referred to the Committee, as the lead petitioner has indicated that he is dissatisfied with the response received from the directorate.

A petition regarding the removal of unsuitable trees from the property boundaries on the south side of Kingsfrith Park Playing Field

- 4.2 This petition was presented to Council on 16 October 2014 by Councillor Rodney Chambers, OBE.

The petition stated:

“Petition to Medway Council requesting the removal of unsuitable large trees (e.g. sycamores etc.) which have been planted too close to our property boundaries on the south side of Kingsfrith Playing Field and are causing severe problems.”

- 4.2 The lead petitioner has since requested that the petition be referred to the meeting on the Committee on 29 January 2015 as he is unable to attend this meeting due to an unavoidable prior appointment.

5 Risk Management

- 5.1 The Council has a clear scheme for handling petitions set out in its Constitution. This ensures consistency and clarity of process, minimising the risk of complaints about the administration of petitions.

6 Financial and Legal Implications

- 5.1 Any financial and/or legal implications arising from the issues raised by the petitions are set out in the comments on the petitions.

7 Recommendation

- 6.1 The Committee is requested to:
- (a) note the petition responses and appropriate officer actions in paragraph 3 of the report; and
 - (b) to note the request for the petition to be referred to the meeting of the Committee to be held on 29 January 2015.

Background papers

None

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