

REGENERATION, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

29 SEPTEMBER 2015

PETITIONS

Report from: Richard Hicks, Director, Regeneration, Community and Culture

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Summary

To advise the Committee of any 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 10 working days of the receipt of the petition by the Council. Overview and Scrutiny Committee 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 consideration 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 Cabinet and arranging for the matter to be considered at a meeting of the Council.
- 1.2 The petition scheme is set out in full in the Council's Constitution at: <http://www.medway.gov.uk/councilanddemocracy/council/constitution.aspx>
- 1.3 Any budget framework implications will be set out in the specific petition response.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council's Constitution 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
Objecting to the alteration of bus route 116.	Arriva have advised that services 113, 114 and 116 have been amalgamated into a new 'loop' service which still provides links from Hempstead, Parkwood and Rainham to Gillingham, Medway Hospital, The Universities and Dockside. Also, for the first time it now operates via Twydall and Tesco at Rainham Mark so provides new links. These bus services are commercially run routes undertaken by a private sector organisation and the Council is unable to insist that any private company put in place a particular service to a particular area. However, the Council's Integrated Transport Service will forward the information within the petition to Arriva with a request to respond to the lead petitioner as soon as possible.
Objecting to the recent changes to the bus service 116. This no longer services the London Road, Rainham with a direct route to Medway Maritime Hospital	This bus service is a commercially run route undertaken by a private sector organisation and the Council is unable to insist that any private company put in place a particular service to a particular area. However, the Council's Integrated Transport Service will forward the information within the petition to Arriva with a request to respond to the lead petitioner as soon as possible. In addition, an urgent meeting with Arriva has been requested to discuss residents' concerns and request a review of the changes that they have implemented.
Resurfacing of pavement on Mills Terrace	Although the carriageway at this location has recently been resurfaced, it is not included within the 2015/16 programme for pavement resurfacing works. At a recent site visit, the pavement on the south side was assessed as priority rating 1 (where 1 is the highest priority) and will therefore be a high

Subject of petition	Response
	contender for inclusion in the resurfacing works programme for 2016/17, or sooner should additional funds become available. The pavement on the north side was assessed as priority rating 3 and is therefore unlikely to receive resurfacing works within the next two years. The Highways Inspection Team will arrange for any urgent repairs to Mills Terrace to be carried out.
Petition to ensure our communities are kept safe in the face of unprecedented cuts to both police and Council budgets	The safety of Medway's communities remains a priority for both Medway Council and Kent Police who have a long record of working in partnership together with other agencies to tackle crime, disorder and antisocial behaviour. Medway remains a safe place to live, work, study and visit. The trend in crime continues to reduce across the crime types and a recent study found it to be the 7th safest place in the country to be a student. Medway's Community Safety Partnership is currently preparing its annual strategic assessment of crime and disorder and will shortly be developing a fresh community safety plan, focusing on having the biggest impact on combating those issues that affect people the most.

4. Petitions not yet concluded

- 4.1 Responses have been sent to the lead petitioners of the following petitions. If a request to refer any of these petitions is received in line with the Council's petitions scheme, they will be referred back to the next meeting of this committee.

Subject of petition	Response
Petition asking if Medway Council would welcome the addition of the 'Medway World Peace Festival' community based project to the wide range of cultural opportunities available within Medway?	Further information has been requested on this community based project to enable a full response to be given.

5. Petitions referred to this Committee

- 5.1 The following petitions have been referred to this Committee because the lead petitioners have indicated that they were dissatisfied with the response received from the directorate.

5.2 A petition objecting to the withdrawal of buses 181 and 701

- 5.3 This petition was received by the Council on 8 July 2015 and was also presented at the meeting of Council on 12 August. The petition states:

We are against the loss of the above services which will leave some people with a walk of over half a mile to the nearest bus stop. There has been a bus service via the Walderslade Road for over 60 years.

- 5.4 The Director of Regeneration, Community and Culture responded to the lead petitioner on 10 July 2015 as follows:

“Whilst I share your concerns, unfortunately these services are commercially run routes undertaken by a private sector organisation. We are unable to insist that Arriva or any other private company put in place a particular service to a particular area.

However, I have taken on board your comments, and have passed a copy of your petition to officers in our Integrated Transport Service who will forward the information on to Arriva with a request to respond to you as soon as possible”.

- 5.5 On 17 July 2015, the lead petitioner requested that the matter be reviewed by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The letter stated:

I understand that Arriva is in the private sector and must make a profit, though this doesn't make any sense as there are even more buses on routes through the council estates, sometimes three buses are to be seen together in King George Road. So profit is being wasted.

We are asking if two of the many buses <177> can be re routed along the Walderslade Road turning up Chestnut Avenue to then rejoin the original route, maybe to be called 178. This doesn't cost more and could pick up many extra people and make even more profit for the company. Though the people of the one mile by half mile strip (over 400 people) which have been forgotten by the bus companies, pay their rates and the very high bus fares, they of course expect a service by both of you, because a lot of the people are in private houses they still hope that when older and no longer driving to have a service.

- 5.6 The Director has further commented as follows:

In response to concerns raised at the Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 6 August 2015, representatives of Arriva

have accepted an invitation to attend this meeting and a report on this is included elsewhere on the agenda.'

5.7 A petition seeking the reinstatement of the 181 bus service

5.8 This petition was presented at the meeting of Council on 12 August. The petition states:

We are petitioning for the reinstatement of the 181 bus service due to many older members of the community feeling isolated and unable to go out.

5.9 The Director of Regeneration, Community and Culture responded to the lead petitioner on 24 August 2015 as follows:

"Whilst I share your concerns, unfortunately these services are commercially run routes undertaken by a private sector organisation. We are unable to insist that Arriva or any other private company put in place a particular service to a particular area.

However, I have taken on board your comments, and have passed a copy of your petition to officers in our Integrated Transport Service who will forward the information on to Arriva with a request to respond to you as soon as possible. We have also requested an urgent meeting with Arriva to discuss residents' concerns and to request a review of the changes that they have implemented".

5.10 On 27 August 2015, the lead petitioner requested that the matter be reviewed by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The letter stated:

I do understand Arriva's position but my query with them is we have our first pick up at 10.30am and only two buses daily; our last bus from Chatham is at 12.10pm. I would also like to ask Arriva why they have six 177 buses each hour, could they not allocate two of those buses to us? People living in King George Road are isolated and cannot get to local shops or doctors surgery and how do they get back? We can use the 177 if needed, but we then have to walk from Chestnut Avenue to King George Road. I also understand that from September 7th we are to have a 179 at 9.05 in the mornings; we would like to know their route. Why not 9.30am? I like many others am in my eighties and would clearly like some answers.

5.11 The Director has further commented as follows:

In response to concerns raised at the Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 6 August 2015, representatives of Arriva have accepted an invitation to attend this meeting and a report on this is included elsewhere on the agenda.

6. Risk Management

- 6.1 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.

7. Financial and Legal Implications

- 7.1 Any financial implications arising from the issues raised by the petitions are set out in the comments on the petitions.
- 7.2 Overview and Scrutiny Rule 22.1 (xiv) in the Council's Constitution provides that the terms of reference of this Committee include the power to deal with petitions referred to the Committee under and in accordance with the Council's petition scheme.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1 The Committee is requested note the petition responses and appropriate officer actions in paragraphs 3 and 4 of the report.
- 8.2 Consider the petition referral requests and the Director's comments at paragraph 5 of the report

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Appendices

None

Background papers

None