

REGENERATION, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

10 DECEMBER 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 the lead 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 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 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 to petitions relevant to this Committee that have been accepted by the petitioners are set out below.

Subject of petition	Response
<p>Proposal to extend the yellow lines at the junction of Castle View Road and Weston Road, Strood.</p>	<p>Officers have carried out a site visit to gain a better understanding of the safety concerns of the area. As a result it had been decided to include this location on the list of sites for the next financial year. This is the earliest opportunity that the request can be progressed. The petition will be used to support the scheme when public consultation is commenced.</p>
<p>Proposal for Knight Avenue, Gillingham, to become part of Medway Council's Residents Parking Permit Scheme.</p>	<p>The Council carried out an extensive public consultation in Knight Avenue and the surrounding roads during the summer of 2011, informing residents of the proposals for Residents Parking. There was concern that with the new development of Gillingham Liberty Quays, adjacent residential roads may experience additional vehicles due to student parking. At the time, opposition was received from residents in Knight Avenue and, therefore, the scheme was not installed. Due to limited financial and staffing resources, it is not possible at present to carry out a further parking review of the area.</p>

4. Petitions referred to this Committee

4.1 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.

4.2 A petition for a 20mph speed limit in the Darland area of Watling Ward

4.3 This petition was presented by Councillor Purdy at the meeting of Council on 15 October 2015. The petition states:

“I live on the Darland/Watling Ward and strongly feel that we need much safer driving conditions here. This petition is to request a 20 mph speed limit within the Darland/Watling Ward. Speeding cars, crowded parking, and poor visibility of pavements and junctions often make walking, cycling and driving dangerous.”

A covering letter to residents stated:

“Darland/Watling has suffered two main traffic problems for years:

- 1) Speeding
- 2) Restricted views of the pavement and road ahead because of the number of parked cars.
 - 1) Speeding is common. Some drivers put people’s lives at risk. 30 mph is too fast for several roads in Darland. Beechwood Avenue, Darland Avenue and Kingsway carry most traffic and most of the problems, but other roads often suffer speeding vehicles.
 - 2) Nose-to-tail parking and tall vehicles make it hard for drivers to see what’s on the pavements, round a bend, or coming out of a junction. In closely-parked roads such as Montrose and Beechwood, drivers have a tarmac tunnel ahead, and little view of what’s around it.

A reckless driver caused a high-speed accident in Beechwood Avenue on 5 September. He drove too fast up the road and hit a car that was inching out of an access alley. Fortunately, no-one was hurt. The speeding car took over 100 feet to stop after the impact, which was hard enough to trigger its airbags.

Speeding and a limited view of what’s ahead on the pavement are a recipe for disaster. People with reduced mobility, children and pets are especially vulnerable.

Please sign the 20’s plenty petition.”

4.4 The Director of Regeneration, Community and Culture responded to the lead petitioner on 29 October 2015 as follows:

“Your petition requested a 20mph speed limit in the Darland area. I understand your concerns relate generally to driving speeds, high volumes of

on-street parking and, specifically, driving speeds on Beechwood Avenue, Darland Avenue and Kingsway.

It is difficult to understand the attitude of road users that put themselves and others at risk by driving dangerously, or in excess of the speed limit. I understand the request for a 20mph limit within these areas to reduce user speeds, particularly following the incident you mentioned in your petition.

Whilst speeding, inconsiderate, and dangerous drivers are a matter of serious concern, the basis upon which Medway Council introduces road safety improvements is casualty reduction. This means locations with an ongoing poor road casualty history are tackled first, to help prevent further casualties on our roads.

An area-wide 20mph speed limit would likely be suitable for a number of the smaller roads within the Darland area, where traffic speeds are likely to be relatively low. On the larger, busier roads it is likely that additional features would be required in order to make the speed limit self-enforcing. This would require notable changes to the highway environment, such as traffic calming measures. Whilst I realise that this may indeed be desirable, the Council must ultimately balance the cost of such alterations with the wider benefits. As I mention above, in order to determine where the most efficient use of public resources and investment in road safety can be made, locations with the poorest safety records are tackled first.

On investigating the injury collision history for all roads within the Darland area, there have been three slight injury collisions recorded during the last three years of available Police records. The three collisions in question occurred at separate locations on different roads throughout the area.

Unfortunately, at the current time there are other locations within Medway with poorer safety records, which are a higher priority for safety engineering measures. After careful consideration, it is not possible for physical speed restriction measures to be introduced at this time. The collision record will, of course, continue to be monitored.”

4.5 On 3 November 2015, the lead petitioner requested that the matter be reviewed by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

4.6 The Director has further commented as follows:

Medway Council introduces road safety improvements, such as speed reduction measures, on a priority basis. Locations with poor safety records are tackled first, to help prevent further casualties on Medway's roads. At the current time there are many other locations within Medway recording poorer safety records than the area of Darland identified. As above, our approach is to tackle poorly performing locations first.

4.7 A petition for the provision of parking facilities after 6pm at Church Street, Chatham

4.8 This petition was presented by Councillor Khan at the meeting of Council on 15 October 2015. The petition states:

“This is a formal petition to Medway Council Parking Services from the business owners, concerning the parking issues at Church Street, Chatham, Kent.

We, the business owners who signed this petition do officially request from Medway Council to resolve our parking issue that we are having at Church Street, Chatham, Kent. Our customers and we as the business owners do suffer from the lack of parking facility at the Church Street area after 18:00.

We hereby do formally ask Medway Council to provide parking facility after 18:00 at the Church Street otherwise our business suffering financially. We as business ratepayers do request Medway Council to resolve the parking issues as soon as possible.”

4.9 The Director of Regeneration, Community and Culture responded to the lead petitioner on 29 October 2015 as follows:

“Your petition requested parking facilities in Church Street, Chatham after 6pm. Medway Council receives many hundreds of similar requests. It is always the aim of officers to visit the locations of the requests to gain a better understanding of what can be achieved. The Council’s approach to considering new parking restrictions in a particular road is to carry out a parking review to look at the entire area, not just individual roads. This ensures a more holistic approach to parking enforcement, so that parking problems are not just ‘moved on’ to neighbouring roads.

Due to limited resources, it is not possible to carry out a parking review of the area at this moment and, unfortunately, this is the case with many other requests for parking reviews.

At this time, I regret that we are unable to carry out your request to amend the current parking restrictions in Church Street.”

4.10 On 8 November 2015, the lead petitioner requested that the matter be reviewed by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The reasons for the request are as follows:

“Medway Council refuses to deal with our petition due to limited resources. Medway Council states “...it is not possible to carry out a parking review of the area at this moment...”

I believe this is not a fair reason from the Local Authority to not deal with our petition.

Local Authority should deal with the residents’ request and cannot simply refuse to deal with the request “due to limited resources”.”

- 4.11 Further comments subsequently received from the lead petitioner are as follows:

“I understand that at this stage the council cannot call for a review of the particular restrictions but I am wondering if they can be considered as part of the wider consultation surrounding Chatham High Street, which I understand Medway Council is conducting.

The changes to parking conditions, allowing customers to park there after 7pm, could make a significant difference to my business and other restaurants in the area ensuring that we remain in Chatham High Street.”

- 4.12 The Director has further commented as follows:

There has been a recent temporary reorganisation of the Integrated Transport Service so that parking enquiries and requests can be progressed. A date for the review of Church Street cannot be given at this time but parking engineers will aim to undertake site visits and make recommendations by the end of the financial year.

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

- 6.1 Any financial implications arising from the issues raised by the petitions are set out in the comments on the petitions.
- 6.2 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.

7. Recommendation

- 7.1 The Committee is requested to note the petition responses and appropriate officer actions in paragraph 3 of the report.
- 7.2 The Committee is requested to consider the petition referral requests and the Director’s comments at paragraph 4 of the report

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Appendices: None

Background papers: None