

REGENERATION, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

28 JANUARY 2016

PETITIONS

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

Author: Steve Platt, Democratic Services Officer

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.
- 2.3 For petitions where the petitioner organiser is not satisfied with the response provided by the Director there is provision for the petition organiser to request that the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee review the steps the Council has taken, or is proposing to take, in response to the petition.

3 Completed petitions

- 3.1 A summary of the response to a petition relevant to this Committee that has been accepted by the petition organiser is set out below.

Subject of petition	Response
Objection to the Council's proposal to change Gundulph Road, Chatham, into a one-way traffic flow.	The statutory consultation period on this proposed traffic management scheme had now ended and the results, including the petition, would be analysed. The Portfolio Holder and Director would consider an Objection Report before making a decision on the proposal.

4. Petitions referred to this Committee

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

- 4.2 At its meeting on 10 December 2015, the Committee deferred consideration of this petition on the basis that the lead petitioner was not in attendance at the meeting. The petition organiser was subsequently invited to this meeting of the Committee and has confirmed that he will be attending the meeting.

- 4.3 The 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.”

- 4.4 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.”

- 4.5 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”.

- 4.6 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.”

- 4.7 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.

Lead officer contact

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Appendices: None

Background papers: None