

## **BUSINESS SUPPORT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**7 JULY 2016**

### **PETITIONS**

Report from: Perry Holmes , Chief Legal Officer

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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/pdf/4.01%20-Council%20rules.pdf>

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. No petitions have been referred to this Committee at this time.

### 3 Completed petitions

- 3.1 A summary of the responses to petitions relevant to this Committee that have been accepted by the petition organisers is set out below.

Subject of petition	Response
Petition to address housing complaints by residents of Plewis House, St Albans Close, Gillingham	Emptying of the rubbish bin and the use of larger bags has been raised with Norse, who is responsible for delivering the Council's estate service. A sign will be put up to remind residents of their responsibilities when using the washing machine/dryers, including not overloading the machines and keeping the area clean and tidy. The laundry room has recently been deep cleaned. Issues with the machines are passed to the Council's contractor, Appliance Services. A repair to the dryer door was carried out in February 2016 and a further inspection would be undertaken. The missing magnets on the door on level 3 had been replaced. Future repairs can be reported to the Council's contractor, Mears.
Petition to improve disabled toilet facilities for young people in Medway	<p>The Council currently has four fully accessible toilet facilities in the Borough which include changing benches and hoists suitable for both adults and younger people. These are located at:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Medway Park, Gillingham</li> <li>2. Rochester Adult Education Centre, Eastgate, Rochester</li> <li>3. Splashes Leisure Centre, Cozenton Park, Rainham</li> <li>4. Strood Leisure Centre, Strood</li> </ol> <p>The first two of these facilities are identified locations on the "Changing Places" website (<a href="http://www.changing-places.org/">http://www.changing-places.org/</a>) and we will add the latter two as quickly as possible.</p>

<b>Subject of petition</b>	<b>Response</b>
	<p>The Council would also like to assist in developing additional facilities in the Borough – the highest priority being a facility in Chatham town centre. Discussions have already taken place with the owners of the Pentagon Shopping Centre with the view to including a facility within any re-modelling proposals that are developed for the Centre.</p> <p>The Council’s facilities management partner, Medway Norse, is also being approached to see if improvements can be made to any of the existing public conveniences, including those at both Riverside and Capstone Country Parks.</p> <p>In the meantime the Council will ensure this issue is included within the development of local planning policies in order to seek improved facilities in future development proposals as appropriate.</p> <p>It is hoped that in time these measures will lead to an improvement in the current provision.</p>

#### **4. Risk Management**

- 4.1 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.

#### **5. Financial and Legal Implications**

- 5.1 Any financial implications arising from the issues raised by the petitions are set out in the comments on the petitions.
- 5.2 Overview and Scrutiny Rule 21.1 (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.

#### **6. Recommendation**

- 6.1 The Committee is requested to note the petition responses and appropriate officer actions in paragraph 3 of the report.

**Lead officer contact**

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**Appendices:**

None

**Background papers:**

None