

REGENERATION, CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

18 AUGUST 2016

PETITIONS

Report from: Richard Hicks, Director, Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation

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/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.

3 Completed petitions

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

Subject of petition	Response
<p>Petition against anti social behaviour around Derwent Way, Rainham and request to make the Crabtree Close, Oldfield Close and Derwent Way areas a permit parking zone.</p>	<p>The Medway Police Partnership Inspector has tasked one of his Sergeants to meet with the Howard School, so that they can gain a better understanding of the anxieties of local residents and seek to manage these issues. A meeting will also be arranged through the Community Safety Partnership office between the lead petitioner and the relevant Portfolio Holder, Councillor Mackness.</p> <p>Residents can have differing views on requests for parking restrictions, which are primarily installed around major attractors such as railway stations or hospitals. Under this criterion, Derwent Way would not qualify for consideration. Also, such a scheme would not prevent the daily opening and closing traffic situation experienced during term time. Residents parking cannot therefore be recommended as a way forward.</p>
<p>Petition about the pruning of trees growing on the perimeter of Chatham Grammar School, which overhang residential gardens on Rainham Road.</p>	<p>The trees are protected by a Tree Preservation Order in recognition of their high amenity value. TPOs protect trees and woodland that make a significant positive impact on their local environment and their enjoyment by the public. The Council's Senior Tree Officer has met with representatives of the school to discuss the petitioner's concerns and the management of the trees. The school is directly responsible for the upkeep of these trees and has not applied to undertake any works.</p>

4. Petitions not yet concluded

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

Subject of petition	Response
Petition to make the crossing on Rochester Road, Halling, safe	<p>The existing central island near the Elm Haven Marina layby was introduced primarily for traffic management purposes. Similarly, the majority of the islands at Sundridge Hill are traffic islands, providing protection for the numerous right turn lanes and/or deterring overtaking manoeuvres. Although these islands can be used by pedestrians wishing to cross the road, they may not necessarily have been introduced for that purpose. The current island near the Marina is not served by a footway on one side and a formal assessment is needed to consider the physical possibilities of a pedestrian refuge island along with other potential factors, including costs. Further investigations will be made and reported back to the lead petitioner.</p> <p>There are many factors that are taken into account when setting speed limits, including traffic function and composition, location, environmental and local characteristics, traffic speeds, collision history, and national guidance. A Speed Limit Review of the road between the White Hart public house to St Andrews Park will be undertaken during this financial year and the findings will be reported to the lead petitioner. Any recommendations would be subject to funding availability.</p> <p>The Council takes all concerns for road safety seriously and acts to improve safety wherever possible. Road safety improvements must always relate to casualty reduction and the Council has made good long term progress in driving down casualties by targeting the locations with the poorest road safety records first. The safety record of all roads in Medway is continually monitored and improvements are targeted to those locations with a history of road casualties.</p> <p>Road safety investment is actively pursued</p>

Subject of petition	Response
	<p>wherever possible, such as the nearby St Andrews Park development. This has seen the introduction of additional central islands and a proposed lower (40mph) speed limit.</p>
<p>Keep Splashes Leisure Pool open until at least 9.30pm on Sunday evenings.</p>	<p>The opening hours were adjusted in January 2016 to more accurately reflect customer usage. As part of the new opening hours, the adult swimming session at Splashes on Sunday evening was changed from 8pm to 7pm. Since the amended opening hours usage has been monitored and this indicates that in 2015 the 8pm adult swimming session operated on 46 occasions. The average weekly usage was 7.76 people. In 2016 the 7pm adult swimming session operated on 22 occasions between January and June. The average weekly usage was 7.36 people. Given seasonal fluctuations, these figures do not suggest customer demand is not being met by the amended swimming times and while the changes may cause inconvenience to specific customers, there is no evidence of demand to suggest a change in the current opening hours is required.</p>
<p>Objections to the New Pavements of William Street, Rainham.</p>	<p>The Council's Engineers who undertook these schemes considered every user of the pavement, together with those residents that park their vehicles off road and will always endeavour to make improvements within the parameters and constraints of the existing footway.</p> <p>The width of the pavement in William Street is particularly narrow, generally 1.2m along most of its length, and the levels at the back of the pavement and of the road surface are fixed. All of these constraints were taken into account in these works. The engineer looking after the scheme spoke directly to residents and acceded to their requests for alterations where possible.</p> <p>A gradient of at least 2.5% or 1:40, falling towards the road is required to discharge rain water from pavements towards the road. Where there is a requirement to drop the front kerbs for vehicular access, the gradient will generally be increased due to the difference in levels; every effort has been made to keep the gradient as</p>

Subject of petition	Response
	<p>shallow as possible. The style of vehicular crossing installed is the standard type, has a natural continuous flow with the footway and eliminates the use of short steep ramps with excessive gradient hazards for users of the pavement. The pavement and vehicle crossings have been constructed in the same manner and with a similar specification as Taswell Road where the increased width of pavement enables the gradient to be shallower and less obvious. Station Road, in the vicinity of William Street, is mainly terraced housing and has only one vehicular crossing which provides access into the public house. All other parking is “on road”, hence the continuous level surface.</p> <p>Given the limited width of the footway in William Street, it is difficult for two pedestrians to pass each other at any given point; to construct a continuous level surface throughout would create unacceptable gradients at each vehicle crossing point that may restrict pedestrian movement and prove hazardous to others.</p>
<p>Petition to keep the Strand Lido Gillingham open for all.</p>	<p>The Council has publically stated that it has no intention of closing the facility and over the past two years, has spent tens of thousands of pounds on refurbishing the changing rooms, toilets and entrance. As with all Council facilities, The Strand is required to operate within its budget and the programme is developed to reflect customer usage and maximise the budget to greatest effect.</p> <p>Analysis has shown that there were significant discrepancies in customer attendance at the pool in spite of attempts to generate additional activity through longer daily opening hours and extensive marketing over the previous two years. Usage was heavily weather dependant with large numbers of customers attracted by hot and sunny weather whilst cooler temperatures and/or inclement weather resulted in very low pool usage. Given the size of the pool and the consequential lifeguard requirements, allied to low customer usage on a number of days, it was therefore appropriate to review opening times. The pool is open daily throughout the summer holidays and has been open over weekends</p>

Subject of petition	Response
	<p>since the end of May. It has also opened during recent hot, sunny weather. Where opening days have been adjusted is weekdays in June and July when children are still at school and the ambient temperature is still relatively low.</p> <p>For comparison purposes this equated to 26 days in 2015, of which 20 had an average usage of below 2.5 customers per hour and four others had an average usage of below 3.5 customers per hour. This shows that considerable budget was being spent on providing a service very few customers attended, which was an unsustainable position. The Council are happy to work with the Friends of Strand Group to trial sessions outside core opening hours to see if there is a regular latent demand which is currently not being met.</p> <p>Considerable publicity and promotion has been undertaken in the past couple of years, including a promotional film, posters, leaflets, e-mail newsletters, media coverage and social media, alongside improved signage. The vast number of people who visit the Strand park and the swathes of bathers in the swimming pool on hot, sunny days suggest there is extensive knowledge of the facility.</p>

5. Petition referred to this Committee

- 5.1 A petition for a speed camera for Walderslade Road between the Poachers Pocket Public House and Weeds Woods Road has been referred to this Committee because the lead petitioner has indicated that they were dissatisfied with the response received from the directorate. However, at the lead petitioner's request and with the agreement of the Chairman of the committee, consideration of the matter has been deferred to the next meeting of the committee on 25 October 2016.

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 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.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1 The Committee is requested to note the petition responses and appropriate officer actions in paragraphs 3 and 4 of the report.

Lead officer contact

Steve Platt, Democratic Services Officer, (01634) 332011
stephen.platt@medway.gov.uk

Appendices:

None

Background papers:

None