

REGENERATION, CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17 AUGUST 2017

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 petition organisers by officers.

The Committee is requested to consider the petition referral request.

1. Budget and policy framework

- 1.1 In summary, the Council's Petition Scheme requires the relevant Director to respond to the petition organiser, 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 or policy 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 petition 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
<p>E- petition for Veterans to be added to the Medway Passport to Leisure scheme</p> <p>13 signatures</p>	<p>The Medway Passport to Leisure is a discount card that makes sport and leisure more accessible to a wider group of people who live in Medway. It gives them and their dependants reduced prices or free access to some facilities in Medway at certain times. To qualify, you must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered unemployed • Registered disabled and social services recipient • A senior citizen, 60+ years old • On social security and income support • An asylum seeker • On incapacity benefit • 16+ Youth Service Team <p>Over 60s living in Medway are also entitled to free swimming when they hold our Medway City Card.</p> <p>In addition, serving members of the Armed Forces are entitled to join our Corporate Premier Membership which includes the use of all Medway's Echoes gyms as well as use of our running track, aerobics classes, rackets sports and swimming pool. The cost of this membership is £26 per month, which is £15 per month cheaper than our normal premier membership.</p> <p>Following your request, we will look at the discounts that other Local Authorities in Kent offer. Our leisure facilities, along with many other services the Council provide, are facing financial pressures due to reductions in Government funding, so we are unable to make any promises at this time.</p>

4. Petition referred to this Committee

4.1 The following petition has been referred to this Committee because the petitioner organiser has indicated that they are dissatisfied with the response received.

4.2 **Petition concerning road safety at Rectory Grange, Canon Close and Rochester Maidstone Road**

4.3 This petition, containing 36 signatures, was received by the Council on 5 July 2017. The petition requested the following:

‘Provide additional resources for Parking Enforcement to provide a concentrated blitz on illegal parking on double yellow lines between 3 and 3.30pm.

Extend double yellow lines on one side on Canon Close between Rochester Maidstone Road and Rectory Grange.

Increase the level of signage where there are double yellow lines.

It is impossible to access Rochester Maidstone Road due to impaired vision which is caused by illegally parked vehicles.’

4.4 The Assistant Director Front Line Services responded to the lead petitioner on 18 July 2017 as follows:

‘I refer to your letter and attached petition requesting double yellow lines due to parked vehicles causing road safety issues.

The Council receives many hundreds of such enquiries. When an enquiry involves a request for further parking restrictions, this can cause many differing views to be expressed. Proposals for changes involve a lengthy legal process and public consultation. What one person may consider the solution or even a group of individuals it may not be the solution agreed by the majority of residents.

With regard your comment on the school to promote walking bus, Medway Council's Safer Journeys Team work in partnership with the KM Charity Team and schools across Medway try to develop Walking Buses as a means of encouraging active travel and a reduction in the number of car journeys associated with the school journey.

The Council continues to work with St William of Perth RC Primary to deliver road safety education and have previously risk assessed Walking Bus routes on behalf of the school. Unfortunately the initiative for various reasons did not progress previously. As a result of your petition this is something that the Safer Journeys Team are happy to revisit with the school in the new academic year.

Having considered your parking restriction request and taking into account limited resources available we must inform that on this occasion we are unable to progress your request for parking restrictions but will contact the

school in the next academic year to re-discuss taking forward the walking bus initiative.'

- 4.5 On 23 July 2017, the lead petitioner requested that the matter be reviewed by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The letter stated:

'I write to request this petition is reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Your response to the petition almost invites such an action and is indicative of someone who wishes to move this on for someone else to address.

You completely ignored the issue of additional resources for Parking Enforcement to address illegal parking/waiting.

You completely ignore the request to increase signage.

The request for extending double yellow lines by some twenty metres has not been considered on an individual basis but in general terms. This request was unanimously supported by the petitioners. How can you maintain "it may not be the solution agreed by the majority"?

You need to be aware that we are actively working with the school governors of St William of Perth School. We also have a meeting scheduled with Councillor Stuart Trantor.'

- 4.6 The Assistant Director Front Line Services has further commented as follows:

'Parking Services will increase enforcement activity around the school concerned during the afternoon peak times, between 3pm and 3.30pm. There will be further enforcement, as requested, when schools reopen in September and enforcement officers will continue to patrol this area in the weeks that follow. Vehicles seen to be parked in contravention of the restrictions will be issued with a penalty charge notice.

Double yellow line road markings no longer require associated upright signage to enable them to be enforced. The Council has a commitment to reduce unnecessary sign clutter and, therefore, no further upright signage is proposed.

A parking engineer and the Acting Head of Integrated Transport will review the existing parking conditions on Canon Close, and a site visit will be arranged in conjunction with the Ward Councillor. Should it be agreed that an extension of the existing waiting restrictions is appropriate in order to preserve conditions of road safety; this will be progressed within the current 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 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.

7. Recommendation

- 7.1 The Committee is requested to note the petition response and appropriate officer action in paragraph 3 of the report.
- 7.2 The Committee is requested to consider the petition referral request and the Director's comments at paragraph 4 of the report.

Lead officer contact

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

Appendices:

None

Background papers:

None