

REGENERATION, CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

7 DECEMBER 2017

PETITIONS

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

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.

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
Petition to introduce a Controlled Parking Zone in Knight Avenue, Gillingham 91 signatures	As a result of the petition, the expansion of the existing Controlled Zone area in adjacent roads will be programmed for Knights Avenue. The petitioner organiser will be informed when the formal public consultation and Traffic Regulation Order process has been agreed.

4. Petition referred to this Committee

- 4.1 The following petition has been referred to this Committee because the petitioner organiser, Councillor Stamp, has indicated that he is dissatisfied with the response received.

4.2 **Petition calling upon the Council to scrap car parking charges at the Strand, Gillingham.**

- 4.3 This petition, containing 19 signatures, was received by the Council on 24 October 2017. The petition requested the following:

‘Conservative-run Medway Council have introduced £5.20 per day parking charges at the Strand Leisure Park. We the undersigned call upon the Council to scrap car parking charges at the Strand, Gillingham’.

- 4.4 The Director of Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation and Deputy Chief Executive responded to the petitioner organiser on 6 November 2017 as follows:

‘The Strand car park has implemented a pay and display facility to ensure the safe and orderly use of the car park, to prevent the indiscriminate parking of vehicles that could otherwise cause obstruction and to encourage a turn-over of vehicles using the car park which should free up space for other vehicles throughout the day.

Unfortunately this car park has previously been misused by local businesses and students who attend the local university site and also reside within the

local area and have been taking advantage of what was then free parking. This in turn has limited the available parking for Strand users, and at times has prevented them from being able to find a parking space whilst visiting and enjoying the facilities.'

- 4.5 On 15 November 2017, the petitioner organiser requested that the matter be reviewed by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Councillor Stamp's email refers to over 1,500 signatures, which were included in an e-petition he had submitted that did not meet the requirements of the Council's petition scheme. The email states:

'The response provides no tangible justification for the retention of parking charges at the Strand, and exaggerates the extent of the issue with students (and possibly commuters) misusing the car park before the charges were introduced. As such, I would like the petition to be considered by the Regeneration, Culture and Environment O&S Committee.

Over 1,500 residents signed the petition calling for the charges to be scrapped.

Hundreds of residents signing the petition took time to make comments explaining why they felt the charges should be scrapped. These comments were submitted alongside the petition, outlining very strong arguments for scrapping the charges as well as a number of alternative suggestions.

None of the points raised by residents have been addressed in the director's response, and none of the alternative suggestions appear to have been considered. This sends out a message that the views of residents have not been listened to, which is unacceptable.

I would therefore like the opportunity to explain to the committee the impact the charges are having and the reasons why they should be scrapped.'

- 4.6 The Director of Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation and Deputy Chief Executive has further commented that the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer has commissioned a review of The Strand car park. The review will assess and compare the effect, if any, on the footfall at The Strand Leisure facilities since the parking charge was applied. The review period will span from February 2017 to February 2018 to ensure that there is a full year's data used in the assessment. Results will be reported back to this Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March 2018.

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

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Appendices:

None

Background papers:

None