

**BUSINESS SUPPORT**  
**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**12 APRIL 2018**

**PETITION - ADDITIONAL PARKING BAYS -  
FORGE LANE, GILLINGHAM**

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

Author: Steve Platt, Democratic Services Officer

**Summary**

The Committee is requested to consider the petition referral request which falls within the remit of this Committee.

**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 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 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. Petition referred to this Committee**

- 3.1 The following petition has been referred to this Committee because the petitioner organisers have indicated that they are dissatisfied with the response received from the Director.

#### **3.2 Petition for additional parking bays on Forge Lane, Gillingham**

- 3.3 This petition, containing 18 signatures states:

'We the undersigned call on Medway Council's Housing Department to provide additional parking capacity by creating parking bays on the north side of the 'green triangle' on Forge Lane, Gillingham.'

- 3.4 The Director of Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation, and Deputy Chief Executive responded to the petitioner organiser on 17 January 2018 as follows:

"Thank you for taking the time to send us your petition.

I am sorry to hear about the parking difficulties where you live; we recognise that parking is an increasing problem for residents across Medway. I have considered your request for the provision of additional parking bays on Forge Lane in Gillingham, as the land is owned and managed by the Housing Management service, for which I am the Director.

The Housing Management Service has a planned, major works programme, which focuses on improving the condition of our housing stock and the communal areas and land around it. Resources are limited, so careful choices have to be made about how the available funds are spent. The situation at Forge Lane is complicated by the fact that it is not just Medway Council tenants who park in the area, but private residents and non-residents too, so it is more than just a Housing Management issue.

There are currently no plans for the Housing Management Service to provide additional parking bays in Forge Lane or in the immediate area. The programme of works for the next financial year (2018/19) is currently being finalised and unfortunately there is no capacity within it to undertake such a scheme of works. However, your request will be noted and added to a list for future consideration.

I can confirm that the Council's Highways Department will shortly be making some changes to the area and double yellow lines on the corners of the green and school entrance/exit points are due to be implemented in the very near future. The consultation process for this ended on 20 December 2017, with no objections being received. There will be no reduction in available parking on

Forge Lane as vehicles should not be parking on the corners of the green or across the entrance/exits of the school in any case, so this should not have a negative impact on the available parking provisions.

We have also contacted Rivermead School and asked them to ensure that staff or visitors parking in the immediate area is kept to a minimum.

I am sorry we cannot meet your request at this time, but I hope you are satisfied that your petition has been taken seriously and your request has been fully considered.”

- 3.5 On 28 January 2018, the petitioner organisers requested that the matter be reviewed by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Their e-mail requesting the referral states:

“Thank you for your letter dated 17th January. After considering your response and liaising with my neighbours and local Labour Councillor Andy Stamp, we would like to have the matter reviewed by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Whilst we do understand the limited funds in place to provide works, this issue is a matter of safety, as well as the condition of our green space at the centre of the road. The addition of yellow lines will make a difference to longer term parking, but we are concerned it will make no difference to people parking there for a short time e.g. school collection/drop off. Sadly with the lack of parking spaces, as well as the general fact most homes own 2 cars, the refusal to install proper parking bays will force further residents and visitors to park on the grass area - whether permitted to or not. Where most areas do not have the space to accommodate additional parking, we are fortunate to have space to create potentially 11 further spaces whilst still keeping the green land as specified by the Highways Agency.

We thank you for contacting Rivermead School, but we do believe the school are already doing everything in their power to ensure parents and visitors to their school respect the residents and the road restrictions. They are fully aware and affected by the parking situation and the safety concerns it raises as sadly one of their teachers was knocked down quite severely by a car at the front of the school towards the end of 2016.

It would be with great appreciation to us all if you could please look again to see if there is any way in which our request could be accommodated. As parents of two young boys it would be great to allow them to enjoy the green space opposite our home instead of slowly watch it turn into a muddy car park. Also to allow them to step outside without fear they will be hit by a car because other cars have parked in a way that obstructs the view of the road. We appeal to you as a young family in the road but also on behalf of neighbours in their older years and some in poor health or with disabilities.”

- 3.6 In response, the Director has further commented that the Council recognises that the provision of adequate parking on estates is a concern for residents. The provision of parking bays in Forge Lane would be funded from the Council’s Housing Revenue Account, which is a ring fenced account for the provision of services and works in relation to the Council’s own Housing stock and assets. Members approved the capital maintenance works budget of

£4.660 million at Full Council on 22 February 2018, which included within it a budget of £75,000 for environmental works across all the Council's housing estates. The priority of the Council is to ensure that its housing stock is maintained in accordance with legislation and is safe for residents. The Environmental improvement budget is currently already committed for 2018/19 for a range of works.

The request from residents is however noted for parking bays and will be considered along with other resident suggestions when future environmental works programmes are considered.

Officers will continue to explore if the provision of preventative parking bollards could be installed at the edge of the grassed areas to address the concerns of residents of illegal parking on the grassed verge. This would ensure the grassed areas remain in a good condition and are not damaged by vehicles, and the safety of children and residents is enhanced.

Additionally, and in the meantime, officers are currently working with the Front Line Services team to pilot a parking enforcement strategy in another area of Medway where the Council has housing stock. This pilot is being closely monitored and, if successful in preventing illegal parking on grassed areas, may be rolled out further across the Council's Housing Estates. Officers will consider Forge Lane as a next priority area for this enforcement strategy to be applied if successful.

#### **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 consider the petition referral request and the Director's comments at paragraph 3 of the report.

#### **Lead officer contact**

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#### **Appendices**

None

#### **Background papers:**

None