

REGENERATION, CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

5 DECEMBER 2019

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:

<https://www.medway.gov.uk/downloads/file/2657/401 - council rules>

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 petitions relevant to this Committee that have been accepted by the petition organisers are set out below.

Subject of petition	Summary of response
<p>Petition the Council to announce a moratorium on volume house building on the Hoo Peninsula with immediate effect, pending further investigation.</p> <p>399 signatures (e-petition) and 125 signatures (paper petition)</p>	<p>A moratorium cannot be instigated because Planning legislation requires that applications be considered on their merits and in relation to National and Local Planning Policies and all other material considerations. Local Planning Authorities cannot be seen to pre-determine any application, but must carefully consider all planning issues. Anyone is fully entitled to comment on a planning application and comments will be taken into account in the determination of the applications.</p>
<p>Petition the Council to implement speed restrictors and install speed cameras to reduce the number of vehicles driving in excess of 30mph when travelling along the Walderslade Village Bypass and Robin Hood Lane and the section from the roundabout connecting the bypass and Princes Avenue up Robin Hood as far as the junction with Tunbury Avenue.</p> <p>297 signatures (paper petition) of which 52 were discounted due to missing information.</p>	<p>The Council is responsible for investigating road safety problems and works to reduce road casualties. Those locations with the poorest road casualty records are tackled first, in the interests of reducing casualties on Medway's roads.</p> <p>Following requests from Walderslade Ward members, the Council is exploring speed reducing possibilities and will investigate the detailed road casualty history. This will inform the prospect of alterations at this location. On CCTV, the focus is on reducing and preventing road casualties rather than issuing fines. In line with national and local guidelines, speed cameras are not warranted at this location at this time. Speed enforcement is a Police issue and the Council will advise them of the petition.</p>

4. Petitions Referred to this Committee

4.1 Two petitions were referred to this Committee because the petition organisers indicated that they were dissatisfied with the response received from the Director, Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation and Deputy Chief Executive.

4.2 At the agenda planning meeting held on 5 November 2019, Members agreed that, to ensure the effective management of the Committee's workload, these referrals would be considered at the meeting scheduled for 21 January 2020. The subject of the petitions are:

- Traffic flow in Central Strood; and
- A Safer Crossing for Hempstead Infants/Junior School.

The petition organiser has since indicated that she no longer wishes for this petition to be considered at the meeting scheduled for 21 January 2020. The initial response to the petition was that consideration was being given to the appointment of a new School Crossing Patrol Officer to serve Hempstead Road. However, since the referral request there has been further correspondence between the petition organiser and officers and a Ward Member on the possibility of a permanent crossing at this location.

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 will be taken into account as part of the review of these matters.

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. Recommendations

7.1 The Committee is requested to note the petition responses and appropriate officer action in paragraphs 3 and 4.2 of the report.

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Appendices:

None

Background papers:

None