

## **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**4 MARCH 2021**

### **PETITION**

Report from: Ian Sutherland, Director of People – Children and Adult Services

Author: Stephen Platt, Democratic Services Officer

#### Summary

This report advises the Committee of a petition received by the Council which falls within the remit of this Committee including the response sent to the petition organiser by the Director of People – Children and Adult Services.

#### 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 Petition

- 3.1 The response to a petition relevant to this Committee that has been accepted by the petition organiser is set out below.

<b>Subject of petition</b>	<b>Director's response</b>
<p>Extend Free School Meals for Medway's Children until April 2021 at the least to cover the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>(E-petition, 3 signatures)</p>	<p>Since your petition, the Holiday Activities and Food Programme has been announced by the Department for Education. This states:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Holiday Activities and Food programme will expand in 2021 so that children on free school meals in England will be offered free healthy meals and enriching activities over the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays.</li> <li>• The Government's investment of up to £220 million will be delivered through grants to all local authorities.</li> <li>• They greatly value the important role that community and voluntary organisations have played in this programme over the last three years, and they encourage all local authorities to work with a wide range of partners in the delivery of this programme.</li> </ul> <p>This grant will be in place from April 1st and in Medway the Public Health team are currently engaged in conversations with DfE and our peers organise an programme to ensure successful delivery using learning from the previous holiday food and activity programmes before beginning a consultation with schools, parents and partners. Medway children eligible for free school meals have continued to receive support whilst learning from home. Approximately 6,000 children in Medway currently access free meals during the school term. Schools and academies can choose to provide those eligible with a</p>

Subject of petition	Director's response
	<p>voucher, lunch parcel or food items through a caterer.</p> <p>We've also been working with schools to help ensure support continues to be provided throughout the school holidays.</p> <p>Citizens Advice Medway provided a helping hand over the October and December breaks to ensure children received meals. The February half term scheme will be funded via the winter grant, with preparations happening now, following a rapid evaluation feedback process about the Christmas hamper scheme.</p>

#### 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 petition will be taken into account as part of the review of this matter.
- 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 note the petition response and appropriate officer action in paragraph 3 of the report.

#### Lead Officer Contact

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

#### Appendices

None

## Background Papers

None