

REGENERATION, CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

10 JUNE 2021

PETITIONS

Report from: Richard Hicks, Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive

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Summary

This report advises the Committee of petitions received by the Council which fall within the remit of this Committee including a summary of the response sent to the petition organiser 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/5702/401 - 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 responses to petitions relevant to this Committee that have been accepted by the petition organisers is set out below.

Subject of petition	Summary of response
<p>End of use of herbicides in parks and greenspaces. (E-petition containing 19 names)</p>	<p>The quantity of chemical applied in greenspaces was not a significant quantity to make key changes to the biodiversity (fence lines and around assets), however the Council agreed to review each year and to support other actions on climate change:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Reduce grass cutting on some high speed and rural roads, and this increases the area of over 400 thousand square metres for new biodiverse areas. b. Increase the mini meadows in parks. c. Plant additional 1million bulbs in Medway urban parks and highway verges to enhance to biodiversity within these areas. d. Not use chemicals in play areas. <p>The current view of the UK Government body and HSE remains that the use of glyphosate, when used as instructed, is safe. Medway has a duty to prevent spread of certain harmful weeds as per the Weeds Act 1995 and to stop invasive non-native plants spreading as per DEFRA Guidance. Medway Norse stopped using any glyphosate products in play areas in spring 2020. Fence line spraying was replaced by manual strimming or leaving grass longer where suitable. Where there were groupings of trees, we increased larger swathes of grass areas, incorporated some sites such as Kings Frith with bulb planting, and this had positive feedback.</p>

Subject of petition	Summary of response
	<p>The new methods proved successful in 2020, in that long grass verge / asset programme has reduced glyphosate usage and resulted in no complaints about the change and has led to the programme being an adopted approach for assets on all open green space sites. Medway Norse will continue to research and test new products for effectiveness on weed growth and is working towards a year-on-year reduction of glyphosate. In 2020 Medway Norse used 60% less glyphosate-based products than in 2019, with a 100% reduction in play areas.</p>
<p>Install suicide barriers on the M2 motorway footpath. (E-petition containing 149 names)</p>	<p>All motorways within England are the responsibility of Highways England, which is a Government company that operates, maintains and improves England's motorways. They are contactable on 0300 123 5000 or via their website at www.highwaysengland.co.uk. As a local authority, we have no remit for motorways.</p>
<p>We the undersigned petition the council to Stop the junction and flyover at Higham Road and Islingham Farm Road HIF Phase 1 and 2. (E-petition containing 710 names)</p>	<p>Our HIF proposals comprise road, rail and environmental infrastructure investments which will enable us to meet our legal requirements to provide for housing, linked to the Government's challenging housing targets for Medway.</p> <p>The road proposals are being designed to take account of several factors including traffic benefits, environmental interests, safety, cost and deliverability, and the relationship with housing proposals being brought forward on the Peninsula. As part of the planning process the road proposals will be subject to a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) from which an Environmental Statement (ES) will be produced. The EIA will form a key component of the final HIF road planning application and will set out the likely environmental impacts of the scheme and, importantly, the measures that will be taken to avoid, prevent or reduce any significant adverse effects. Surveys on noise, visual impact, lighting and air quality will be undertaken in 2021.</p>

Subject of petition	Summary of response
	<p>The current road proposals do support a change in traffic speed along Islingham Farm Road from 20 to 30 mph, but this would be on a road with lanes in each direction, rather than the current single lane with passing places. The proposed road will also benefit from a new walkway and cycleway between the road and the residential properties along Islingham Farm Road providing safer access for those wishing to walk or cycle. These new paths continue up along Woodfield Way towards Chattenden.</p> <p>We are fully committed to ongoing engagement and consultation on our HIF proposals and as they develop there will be further opportunities for public and stakeholder participation. During the January to April 2021 HIF consultation, local residents have sent us a number of alternative proposals for phases 1 and 2. We are currently reviewing each of these proposals and will be reporting back later in this year once the review is complete.</p>
<p>We the undersigned petition the council to urgently re-instate the CCTV within Rainham Recreation Ground which will assist in the detection of anti-social behaviour, crime and/or the identification, apprehension or prosecution of offenders.</p> <p>(E-petition containing 416 names)</p>	<p>Medway's CCTV cameras are monitored 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and are focused on maintaining the safety of our town centres, transport hubs and areas of high night-time economy. This has proven to be an effective strategy as it maximises the time each camera is actively watched by the operative and therefore the chance they can intervene in cases of serious crime or risk to the safety of residents. The number of cameras on the system is strictly limited to those which are effective in meeting these goals.</p> <p>The Community Safety Team is in constant consultation with Police colleagues over the types of anti-social behaviour in different areas, and the best way to combat them. It has been agreed that CCTV would offer little real value to addressing the needs of the area, and that a more effective use of resource is a physical presence. Since the end of February, Kent Police has granted 5 Anti-Social Behaviour dispersal authorities in the area of</p>

Subject of petition	Summary of response
	<p>Rainham Recreation Ground, resulting in numerous people being required to leave the area. This has been supplemented by an enhanced patrol regime of the local PCSO team, as well as on several occasions the redeployment to the area of the Community Policing Team and the Town Centre Team. Unfortunately, the deployment of CCTV to the park could be considered an unacceptable diversion of resources from our town centres and therefore we would not be advocating this at the present time. However, the situation will continue to be monitored, and if Rainham Recreation Ground presents an increase in the relevant activity, disproportionate to the surrounding area, this decision will of course be reconsidered.</p>

4. Petition Referred to this Committee

- 4.1 A petition to reject plans to build a relief road on Deangate Ridge Golf and Sports Complex has been referred to this Committee because the petition organiser indicated that he was dissatisfied with the response received from the Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive.
- 4.2 At the request of the petition organiser, consideration of this petition has been deferred to the next meeting of the Committee on 12 August 2021.

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. Recommendation

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

Lead Officer Contact

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Appendices

None

Background Papers

None