

BUSINESS SUPPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1 JULY 2021

PETITION

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

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 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 Petition

- 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	Summary of response
<p data-bbox="300 808 715 913">Plant more trees to reduce Medway’s Carbon Footprint - Stop Killing Our Planet</p> <p data-bbox="300 949 783 1608">We the undersigned petition the council to plant more trees within Medway to reduce our collective carbon footprint. For us to neutralise our entire carbon footprint each person of Medway's near 300,000 population would need 1,025 trees per year. Collectively this would need 307,500,000 trees in Medway alone per year. This petition is to plead with Medway council to plant at least 2% of this per year for the next 50years. For us to do our part in saving our planet. For us to reduce our carbon footprint to stop extinction of life on earth.</p> <p data-bbox="300 1644 767 1682">(E-petition containing 31 names)</p>	<p data-bbox="809 808 1390 1798">We are very supportive of the need to work collectively to reduce carbon emissions in Medway. In January 2021, we adopted the Kent and Medway Energy Low Emissions Strategy (KMELES) which sets an agreed Kent and Medway target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050. We realise that significant action is required in the next ten years to achieve this target. A Climate Change Action Plan is currently being developed which includes a priority around green infrastructure. In terms of progress to date, we were successfully awarded funding from the Urban Tree Challenge Fund via the Forestry Commission at the end of 2020 which enabled over 10, 500 trees to be planted across ten sites in Medway during February and March 2021. We will continue to respond to future funding opportunities which will allow us to extend the tree canopy coverage within Medway. We are also currently developing a Tree Strategy to set clear targets and actions in support of this expansion.</p> <p data-bbox="809 1836 1385 1975">While we recognise the clear benefits of increased tree canopy across Medway, such as improved biodiversity and physical and mental health, trees are</p>

Subject of petition	Summary of response
	<p>just one of the natural solutions to climate change and resilience.</p> <p>The Climate Change Action Plan highlights the role of other green infrastructure assets, such as grassland and saltmarshes in storing carbon, and therefore includes actions to protect these assets so as to further contribute to a reduction in emissions in Medway. The plan also supports a range of approaches to achieving net zero carbon through reducing energy usage and eliminating carbon through the introduction of renewable sources. As Medway Council accounts for just 1.4% of Medway's carbon footprint, we have included actions in the plan to support others in reducing and eliminating their carbon emissions. The Climate Change Action Plan is due to be presented to Cabinet in June.</p> <p>Note: The Action Plan was considered and agreed by the Cabinet on 8 June 2021 (decision no. 66/2021 refers)</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 petitions will be taken into account as part of the review of these matters.
- 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

Appendices

None

Background Papers

None