

REGENERATION, CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14 OCTOBER 2021

PETITIONS

Report from: Richard Hicks, Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive
Author: Stephen Platt, Democratic Services Officer

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

Subject of petition	Summary of response
<p>Install speed cameras at the top of Four Elms Hill, Chattenden, by the crossings/petrol garages.</p> <p>89 signatures (e-petition)</p>	<p>The Council takes all concerns for road safety matters seriously and promotes road safety wherever possible.</p> <p>I am mindful that this location was sadly the scene of a tragic loss of life in the recent past. Such incidents are deeply saddening and the wider impact upon families and loved ones is always in mind.</p> <p>Whilst I am further mindful that the Police's investigations regarding this incident will be ongoing (and it is clearly important for that work to be completed), I can update you on steps the Council has been taking to promote safe road use in this area.</p> <p>The Council has been working with local road safety partners and has recently introduced mobile speed camera operation at the top of Four Elms Hill. This includes regular speed camera signing to advise road users that speed cameras are in use. Speed enforcement via speed cameras is therefore now in operation. This is in addition to any police led speed enforcement activity.</p> <p>Hopefully regular speed enforcement via cameras, along with the permanent threat of speed enforcement will be a positive safety enhancement for all road users.</p> <p>I should add that further future alterations in the interest of safety are not ruled out.</p>

Subject of petition	Summary of response
<p>Continue with the very successful 'No Mow May', but with alterations to ensure certain areas are cut for safety reasons. We also would like a better communication campaign that informs residents about the campaign and its importance.</p> <p>187 names (e-petition)</p>	<p>As you may be aware, we agreed to adopt a Climate Change Action Plan in June this year with the aim of reducing CO2 and increasing biodiversity in our green environment. We ran a No Mow May promotion primarily for residents to encourage leaving grass to grow in gardens, and we also adopted this approach across our wider grounds maintenance estate. This year proved very challenging in ensuring that approach took into consideration road safety, but we have learned from this and revised our plans for 2022 to ensure road safety is taken into account.</p> <p>This year we followed the national scheme, however, for 2022 we will be widening our communications and publication of any initiatives, as well as promoting our measures on our widely-used social media platforms.</p> <p>We will continue to adopt an ecological approach, as this is part of our Climate Change Strategy, combined with ensuring road safety on all highway grass areas. Whilst we may maintain some roads to a higher frequency, we also expect to increase meadow areas in our parks in the coming years to offset this.</p>

4. Petition not yet concluded

- 4.1 A response has been sent to the petitioner organiser for the following petition. If a request to refer this petition to this Committee is received, it will be referred to a future meeting.

Subject of petition	Summary of response
<p>Take action in implementing effective traffic calming measures along the entirety of Marlborough Road where they are not already in existence.</p> <p>92 names (paper petition)</p>	<p>Thank you for your recent petition requesting the introduction of traffic calming measures on Marlborough Road, Gillingham, suggesting a number of changes to the management and operation of the access to Medway Maritime Hospital.</p>

We recognise the effects that traffic volumes, speed and noise have on residents, along with the fear of serious injury. Sadly, this affects residents on many roads and we frequently receive similar requests.

As you set out, we have communicated with you previously in relation to Marlborough Road, and I am afraid our priorities for safety improvements must still be focused on those locations with the poorest road safety records first. This is in the interests of reducing casualties on our roads.

I do of course accept that some years have passed since your previous request, and we will therefore undertake a further assessment of road user speeds, along with the updated history of crashes on Marlborough Road. Consideration can then be given to any road safety issues. If appropriate, suitable options to reduce the problem will be examined, based upon the observations and associated investigations.

Please allow us a little time to carry out these investigations. My Transport and Parking team will write to you to update you on the outcome of these investigations in due course. I anticipate this will take place over the remainder of the current financial year.

I hope you find that way forward acceptable.

Unfortunately, we are not able to control or influence the management of the Hospital nor dictate where and how it should access its premises. We are therefore unable to address your suggestions to divert their ambulances and/or route their service traffic and deliveries to alternative residential streets, nor can we comment on your suggestion to close or install gates on their Marlborough Road access. You may wish to write to the Hospital and possibly to the South East Coast Ambulance Service direct in relation to these issues.

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. Actions referred to in the officer responses are within existing budgets, however any further activity would require Cabinet and Council approval for budgetary additions if funding was available.
- 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 of the report.

Lead Officer Contact

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

Appendices

None

Background Papers

None