

## **REGENERATION, CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**17 JANUARY 2023**

### **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 responses 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/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 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>Response</b>
<p>We the undersigned are concerned by dangerous driving and speeding along Gillingham Road, towards the level crossing, and consider there to be a risk to pedestrians.</p> <p>We call on Medway Council to consider road safety measurers (e.g. 'watch your speed signs, pedestrian crossing) along this section of the road.</p> <p>Paper petition signed by 96 people.</p>	<p>Thank you for your petition, concerning measures to address dangerous driving and speeding on Gillingham Road. We work to promote and improve road safety wherever possible, and we are committed to reducing and preventing casualties on our roads.</p> <p>I would like to assure you that your concerns will be carefully considered by our Road Safety Engineers. We will review the crash history of the area by examining Police reports and carry out observations and a speed survey if necessary. We can then consider suitable options to address any pattern of incidents or common elements that emerge. We envisage this work will be carried out by the end of March next year, and we will be in touch shortly after that.</p> <p>In the meantime, I would recommend that concerns about speeding, red light jumping and other driving offences should also be reported to the Police, as these offences can only be enforced by them. We do have a 'Speed Indicator Device', which we will use at this location for a period of time to remind drivers to check their speed.</p>

#### 4. Petitions Referred to this Committee

4.1 The following petitions have been referred to this Committee because the petition organisers indicated that they were dissatisfied with the response received from the Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive.

#### 4.2 **Prevent speeding vehicles on A2 Watling Street between the Star and Ash Tree pubs**

4.2.1 A paper petition signed by 109 people was presented by Councillor Purdy at Full Council on 10 November 2022. The petition statement was as follows:

“As residents of this area isn't it about time to stop the speeding motorists who ignore the speed limit in this area and the red traffic lights? Especially in the vicinity of the pedestrian crossings before we have a serious accident. Hopefully the local council will take notice and put in calming measures to slow the speeding drivers down.

Update: A serious road traffic accident occurred outside this post office on Saturday afternoon on 17th September 2022.”

4.2.2 On 23 November, the Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive responded as follows:

“Thank you for your petition, which expresses concerns about speeding and red light running at traffic signals on the A2 Watling Street Gillingham.

We do not have enforcement powers against speeding vehicles, and therefore I would recommend that concerns about speeding, red light jumping, and other driving offences are also reported to the Police. We work to promote and improve road safety wherever possible, and we are committed to reducing and preventing casualties on our roads. I would like to assure you that your concerns will be carefully considered by our Road Safety Engineers. We will review the crash history of the area by examining Police reports and carry out observations and a speed survey if necessary. We can then consider suitable options to address any pattern of incidents or common elements that emerge. We envisage this work will be carried out by the end of March next year, and we will be in touch shortly after that. In the meantime, we will deploy our ‘Speed Indicator Device’ at this location for a period of time to remind drivers to check their speed.

I hope this information, and our commitment to investigate your concerns, is helpful.”

4.2.3 On 8 December, the petition organiser, Councillor Purdy, requested that the matter be reviewed by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The reasons for referral are as follows:

“The road has been monitored before and a 30mile speed limit put in place close to the Star pub the sign is often covered by overgrown trees and does little to help.

We do consult with the PCSO.”

- 4.2.4 In response, the Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive has further commented as follows:

“The start point of the 30mph speed limit at this location has been in place for many years. In recent times, road markings have been implemented at this location to make the change in the speed limit even clearer to road users. We will inspect the signs at this location on a regular basis and remove any overgrown foliage to ensure the speed limit remains clearly visible.

I would like to reaffirm our commitment to investigate the issues raised by the petition, in line with our statutory responsibility to investigate collisions on our roads. This work will take place during the current financial year, and we will write to the lead petitioner once it has been completed.”

### **4.3 Parking scheme for residents near the new St John Fisher school on City Way**

- 4.3.1 A paper petition signed by 57 people was presented by Councillor Edwards at Full Council on 10 November 2022. The petition statement was as follows:

“We the undersigned petition Medway Council to develop a parking scheme proposal to mitigate the impact on nearby residents of the opening of the new St John Fisher School on City Way. This should consider introducing a Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ), be drawn up in consultation with residents and local councillors and allow any supported measures to be in place for Spring 2023.”

- 4.3.2 On 23 November, the Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive responded as follows:

“Thank you for submitting the petition signed by residents, requesting a public consultation on a potential residents’ parking scheme in the vicinity of the new St John Fisher School on City Way, and on Howard Avenue in particular.

We understand why residents may be concerned that the new school will generate parking problems in nearby streets. We have therefore confirmed that parking provision within the new school site will comprise 69 parking bays for staff, 40 parking bays for drop-off/pick up, 8 parking bays for visitors, 6 disabled parking bays and 4 parking bays for minibuses. A further 40 spaces can be made available for drop off and collection, if required. The Council’s Planning Committee, when it approved the planning application for the school, ensured that the on-site parking provision was secured by planning condition. With this in place the Committee was satisfied that the

parking impact on surrounding streets would be low, and no mitigation measures were required.

With on-site parking for up to 167 vehicles, we cannot assume at this stage that the new school, once operational, will have an impact on parking in adjacent roads. Whilst there are several options for restricting non-residential parking on the public highway, these are most effectively developed in response to issues experienced rather than trying to predict what will happen. We are also mindful that the process for implementing parking restrictions requires considerable resource, and we should not commit to this without clear evidence of a significant problem that, in terms of scale and impact, requires us to consider an intervention.

For these reasons, our approach will be to carefully monitor the impact of the school once it opens and continue to liaise with residents, and Ward Councillors, over this issue.”

4.3.3 On 8 December, the petition organiser, Councillor Edwards, requested that the matter be reviewed by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The reasons for referral are as follows:

- “The portfolio holder Cllr Filmer previously provided Cllr Murray with an assurance that a parking scheme consultation for the area in question would be included in the 2022/23 programme;
- In the summer, we had a site visit with parking officers (Richard Cornell & Nikki Musson) to specifically discuss options for a parking scheme on City way;
- Despite chasing many times throughout the year, I believe we have heard nothing from parking officers since the attached email from Michael Edwards that we would be given a clear way forward once internal discussions had concluded and in light of Cllr Filmer’s commitment (Appendix A);
- We also want to look at parking issues in the area in a holistic way, and it is for this reason that a consultation on a proposed parking bay for allotment holders at the site next to the new school was suspended at our request earlier in the year. Our discussions with parking officers were clear that the parking scheme consultation should consider the needs of both nearby residents (i.e. consideration of a CPZ) and allotment holders who wish to have a dedicated time-limited space to load and un-load cars. The Director of Place’s decision not to conduct a parking scheme consultation therefore puts the allotment parking space issue in limbo for many more months too.
- Residents are concerned about the impact of the new school opening, but they are also experiencing parking difficulties now. I have attached a document with comments we collected from residents at a public meeting in late October and via email (Appendix B). Although the lack of spaces due to construction workers’ cars will soon fall away, I am confident in saying there was a consensus amongst the meeting attendees (30+) that weekday commuters who

did not want to pay for parking were also a significant problem for residents now.

Perhaps the petition itself was too narrowly focused on the school opening, but there are wider long-standing parking issues in this area that parking officers have been involved in and it is disappointing that this doesn't appear to have been considered. It is also disappointing that commitments from the portfolio holder have not been honoured and communication with us from officers has been, in my view, poor.

I should also let you know that we have recently been told that the school will be opening earlier than planned, in late January. So despite engaging with the council early, we have now missed the opportunity to consult residents before the school opened. I appreciate Richard Hick's commitment to monitor the impact of the school opening and to liaise with residents and us as local Cllrs, but I would still like to see the portfolio holder's commitments honoured and a consultation on a parking scheme held this financial year."

4.3.4 In response, the Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive has further commented as follows:

"It remains our intention to survey residents of City Way, Howard Avenue, Onslow Road, Arthur Road and Amherst Road during the current financial year. The timing of our engagement with residents is key to ensuring that we obtain accurate, up-to-date information upon which to base any proposals, and will help us to establish which type of restriction would be most suitable for the areas concerned.

A meeting between officers and Ward Members has been arranged. This will enable us to review the work that has been undertaken so far and consider residential parking alongside verge parking issues and parking for allotment holders. We would also like to discuss with Members the details of our forthcoming engagement with residents, and the information to be provided. We would like to understand, for example, the level of car ownership in the area, which would enable officers to estimate the extent of non-residential parking currently taking place. A residents' parking scheme/Controlled Parking Zone would have a significant impact on residents and their visitors – greater than the impact on non-residents - and therefore our engagement should highlight some of the key issues for consideration. These include the physical extent of any residents' parking scheme, the impact that a scheme could have on parking capacity, the cost of permits, and any alternatives to permit parking that may be available, such as single yellow line restrictions.

Officers look forward to meeting with the Ward Members shortly and progressing our engagement with local residents over the coming months."

## 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 which are not within existing budgets, and 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 response and appropriate officer action in paragraph 3 of the report.
- 7.2 The Committee is requested to consider the petition referral requests in paragraph 4 and the Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive's responses.

## Lead Officer Contact

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## Appendices

Appendix A – Officer email regarding the petition at paragraph 4.3.  
Appendix B – Residents' comments regarding the petition at paragraph 4.3.

## Background Papers

None