

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY - RESOURCES

23 JANUARY 2023

Title:

Petition – Save Crown Court Car Park

Portfolio Holder: Cllr M Merryweather, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Commercial and Assets

Head of Service: Abi Lewis, Executive Head of Reperation and Planning Policy

Key decision: No

Access: Public

1. Purpose and summary

- 1.1 This report informs the Overview & Scrutiny Committee of the receipt of a petition from the Save Crown Court Car Park Action Group. The petition has some 4,000 signatures. The body of the petition was debated at Full Council on 13 December 2022, and in response an amended resolution was passed, as set out in 4.8, below.
- 1.2 Since the petition has already been debated at Full Council, there is no further action for the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to take. The Committee is recommended to note the receipt of the petition and the response from Full Council.

2. Recommendation

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee is recommended to note receipt of the petition from the Save Crown Court Car Park Action Group and the outcome of the Council debate on the matter set out in the body of the petition.

3. Reason for the recommendation

Waverley's Petition Scheme directs a petition with 2,000 – 4,999 signatories to the relevant Overview & Scrutiny Committee for consideration. Whilst in this case the petition has already been debated at Full Council, this report and recommendation ensures that receipt of the petition and the response have been recorded by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

4. Background

- 4.1 At the meeting of Waverley's Full Council on 13 December 2022, the Mayor received a petition presented by the Save Crown Court Action Group.
- 4.2 The petition calls on Waverley Borough Council to:

1. Terminate plans to close or partly close Crown Court Car Park.
2. Stop plans to build houses on Crown Court Car Park.
3. Reject proposals to build a multi-storey car park at the WBC site (or at Crown Court).

4.3 Waverley's Petition Scheme sets out how petitions are dealt with depending on the number of signatures they have. Petitions to Waverley must relate to one of its functions and signatories must either live, work or study in the borough.

4.4 The Save Crown Court Car Park petition has 4,044 signatures. The majority of signatures appear to be from GU7 and GU8 post codes.

4.5 For petitions with 2,000 – 4,999 signatures:

"A relevant senior officer will be called to a meeting of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee to give evidence (if you have requested this in your petition) You must explain, when you submit your petition, what information you want from the officer. If you want to ask the officer questions yourself, you will need to give ten working days' notice to Democratic Services. You will be given a maximum of four minutes to introduce your petition. Only the Joint Chief Executive, Joint Strategic Directors and Heads of Service can be called to account.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will make a recommendation based on the evidence given to Executive, who will then make a decision on your petition."

4.6 Petitions with 5,000 signatures or more will be debated at a meeting of Full Council. The Full Council will make a decision on the petition.

4.7 At the Full Council meeting on 13 December, and subsequent to the presentation of the petition, Members debated the following Motion, which essentially replicated the body of the petition:

"In light of the negative feedback in the Central Godalming Regeneration Project Public Engagement Update as presented by the Finance Portfolio Holder to the Executive on 29th November and taking account of the opposition expressed in a petition being presented to Full Council on 13th December,

This Council resolves to:

- Terminate plans to close or partly close Crown Court Car Park in Godalming
- Stop plans to build houses on Crown Court Car Park
- Reject proposals to build a multi-storey car park at the Waverley Borough Council HQ site"

4.8 During the course of the debate the Motion was amended, and the amended Motion, as set out below, was carried.

Waverley Borough Council resolution, 13 December 2022:

"This Council resolves to:

- Terminate the consideration of any options to relocate some of the spaces in Crown Court Car Park in Godalming

- Stop the consideration of any options to build houses on Crown Court Car Park
- Reject any options to build a decked car park at the Waverley Borough Council HQ site

IF

- Alternative and fiscally equivalent options can be identified and implemented to meet the serious financial constraints impacting Waverley Borough Council within the relevant and appropriate planning and financial frameworks and regulations also keeping in mind the Council objective to maximise the delivery of genuinely affordable and social housing.

To this end, the Council further resolves to:

- Appoint a dedicated, **all-party**, Executive Working Group (in accordance with Part 4.4 Annexe 1 of the Waverley Borough Council Constitution) with the following terms of reference, scope, and composition:

a) This Executive Working Group will be chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Assets.

b) The scope of the group will be to find and **further consider** any alternatives to the Godalming Regeneration Project that address the financial objectives of the project and within the relevant and appropriate planning and financial frameworks and regulations.

c) The composition of the group will be 2 Liberal Democrats; 2 Farnham Residents; 2 Conservatives; 1 Green and 1 Labour member.

d) Sessions of this Executive Working Group will not be considered quorate without **at least ONE representative** from each of the legally constituted political groups on the council.

e) The group will meet in January and report by 15th February 2022.

- To write to and engage with Homes England regarding any housing and infrastructure assistance, funding, and guidance that they could offer.
- To release and publish to the WBC website, in the interests of transparency, the Lambert Smith Hampton report (2018) commissioned by the previous administration of WBC.
- To write to the MP for South West Surrey, the Rt Hon. Jeremy Hunt in his capacity as a cabinet minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer of the United Kingdom, to request a plan for sustainable local government funding sufficient to allow this Council to deliver services without the need to consider projects such as the Central Godalming Regeneration Project.”

4.9 Since the Full Council meeting on 13 December, the Democratic Services Manager has been advised by the Leader of the Conservative Group that the Conservative Group will not be appointing any Conservative Group members to the proposed Executive Working Group. The Executive Working Group therefore

will not be established and the Central Godalming Regeneration Project will be progressed via the Property Investment Advisory Board and the Godalming Town Centre Regeneration Project Board.

- 4.10 Since the body of the petition presented by the Save Crown Court Car Park Action Group has already been debated by Full Council there is no further action to be taken with the petition itself. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee is recommended to note its receipt and the outcome of the Council debate.

5. Relationship to the Corporate Strategy and Service Plan

- 5.1 This report ensures that the petition received at the meeting of Full Council is dealt with in accordance with the Waverley Petition Scheme.

6. Implications of decision

6.1 Resource (Finance, procurement, staffing, IT)

Drafted by: Rosie Plaistowe-Melham, Financial services manager

There are no direct financial implications from this report. The decisions regarding the Central Godalming Regeneration Project will have financial implications for the Council but these are addressed in separate reports to members.

6.2 Risk management

N/A

6.3 Legal

Drafted by: Ian Hunt, Interim Deputy Borough Solicitor

There are no direct legal implications from this report. The Council is obliged to have consideration to the petition, although it is not obliged to follow the request. The function of the Overview and Scrutiny committee is to consider and advise the Executive, given that there has been substantive debate on the proposals encapsulated in the petition at Full Council the Committee has the ability to recognise this and make no further recommendation to the Executive, it is however open for the Committee to make recommendations should they consider that this is appropriate. Ultimately the consideration of the substantive issues addressed are for the Executive.

6.4 Equality, diversity and inclusion

There are no direct equality, diversity or inclusion implications in this report. Equality impact assessments are carried out when necessary across the council to ensure service delivery meets the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010.

6.5 Climate emergency declaration

There are no climate emergency implications arising from this report.

7. Consultation and engagement

- 7.1 N/A

8. Other options considered

8.1 N/A

9. Governance journey

9.1 The body of the petition has already been debated at Full Council, on 13 December 2022.

Annexes:

Annexe 1 – Example page of petition, showing the body of petition.

Annexe 2 – Council resolution, 13 December 2022

etc

Background Papers

There are no background papers, as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972).

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Agreed and signed off by:

Legal Services: Ian Hunt, Interim Deputy Borough Solicitor, 12/01/23

Head of Finance: Rosie Plaistowe, Financial Services Manager, 9/01/23

Strategic Director: Name, Post, date

Portfolio Holder: Name, Post, date