

Report to Cabinet Petitions Committee

1 September 2021

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Subject: | Petitions Progress Report |
| Contact Officer: | Trisha Newton Trsha_newton@sandwell.gov.uk |







1 Recommendations

That the Cabinet Petitions Committee approve the action taken or proposed as details in the third column below.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

To receive petitions and approve action taken/proposed in response.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

| | | |
|---|---|---|
|  |  | Petitions are one of the many ways in which people who live and work in the Borough can influence the decision-making process. Many of the issues typically raised by petitions underpin the Council's Vision. Petitions alert members and officers to current local issues and ensure that services are being targeted appropriately in delivering the Council's priorities. |
|  |  | |
|  |  | |



4 Context and Key Issues

Section 46 of the Localism Act 2011 removes the requirements for principal local authorities in England and Wales to make, publish and comply with a scheme for the handling of petitions made to the authority, with effect from 1 April 2012. At its meeting on 22 May 2012, the Council decided to retain a petitions scheme, although there was no longer a statutory requirement to have such a scheme.

5 Background Details

5.1 Petitions received since last reporting period

| Signatories | Subject | Action Taken/Proposed |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|
| 5.1.1 151 – residents of Steven Drive, Bilston (Princes End) | Request for traffic calming measures | This matter is being investigated by officers and an update will be submitted to a future meeting. (Received 16/8/2021) |

5.2 Progress on outstanding petitions

| Signatories | Subject | Action Taken/Proposed |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| 5.2.1 128 – Residents of Lightwoods Hill, Smethwick (Abbey) | Request for traffic calming measures | Following representations from the head petitioner at the previous meeting, the Committee requested that Highways undertake a traffic survey. Officers have confirmed that a traffic calming scheme will be proposed for Lightwoods Hill and a consultation will be carried out with the residents during September 2021. An update will be provided to a future meeting of the Cabinet Petitions Committee. (Received 19/07/2021) |



5.2.2 24 – Residents of Essex Avenue, Wednesbury (Friar Park)

Concerns regarding insufficient parking and request for removal/maintenance of trees

Following representations from the head petitioner and local ward member, the Committee requested Highways investigate the feasibility and potential cost of implementing parking bays, a permit scheme or other measures to mitigate the issues experienced by the residents and consider whether funding was available to support the work required. Officers had undertaken an investigation into the removal or maintenance of the trees and grass. There are parking bays in place adjacent to the highway along Essex Avenue and these bays accommodate approximately 12 vehicles. To increase the number of parking bays, the layout would need to be changed so that parking runs perpendicular to the highway. To achieve this, part of the grass verge would need to be removed (approximately 2metres), along with 4 mature trees. If it is agreed the trees can be removed, these would need to be replaced with 8 trees in the local vicinity in accordance with Council policy. The new layout could create a further 12 parking spaces which would give a total of 24 spaces. The possible presence of utility mains and cables is currently being investigated.



As soon as the cost of any required diversion work has been established, the total scheme costs will be reported back to housing services for them to confirm that a budget is available. An update will be provided to a future meeting of the Cabinet Petitions Committee.

(Received 29/06/2021)

5.2.3 63 – Residents of West Park Road (St Paul's)

Concerns regarding the new entrance and exit for West Smethwick Park

Officers confirmed that a significant consultation had been undertaken prior to the project commencing. Furthermore, while officers from Highways were consulted and no concerns were raised, discussions are now in place to address the concerns highlighted by the residents. Officers continue to work alongside partners in the local community to address the issues raised. The issues highlighted were addressed as part of the local town forum in order to identify what measures can be adopted to mitigate any concerns. All existing entrances into the Park would be improved as part of the restoration project, with an exception of the existing car park entrance which was proposed to be relocated. Properties on West Park Road received letters notifying residents of the Planning Application on the 10th April 2017. New litter bins would be installed as part of the



restoration project and Officers continue to deal with any flytipping and littering as it arises. Officers intend to commence work on the new entrance way with immediate effect. Assessments on impact of traffic calming from other roads will be undertaken as soon as the work has been completed. An update will be provided to a future meeting of the Cabinet Petitions Committee. (Received 29/04/2021)

5.2.4 413 – various road users/ residents (Wednesbury North)

Request for traffic light system at the junction of Park Lane/Manor House Road and Hobs Road/ Hawthorn Road, Wednesbury

The funding for road safety schemes such as traffic signals is prioritised where injury accidents are occurring. A five-year injury accident analysis shows there have been 3 recorded injury accidents during this period. This is low when compared to other locations that are being considered for major traffic calming schemes. Although this junction does not meet the criteria for the installation of traffic signals a road safety scheme to implement additional carriageway markings and vehicle activated speed signs either side of the junction will be undertaken. This will help to warn drivers and reduce vehicle speeds on the approach to the junction. The Committee requested the junction be monitored to ensure that the traffic calming measures made a difference. Arrangements have been made for a further



traffic survey to be undertaken along Park Lane. The data will then be compared to the traffic survey which was undertaken prior to the installation of the vehicle activated speed sign. The traffic surveys had to be rearranged due to the pandemic which resulted in reduced traffic levels. The traffic survey had been conducted and officers were awaiting the results. An update will be provided to a future meeting of the Cabinet Petitions Committee.

(Received 17/4/2019)

5.2.5 33 – residents of View Point, Tividale (Tividale)

Request for installation of night and day gates in the gulley located at View Point.

Greenbelt Group wish to assist in reducing anti-social behaviour and would not oppose the installation of gates in principle, if this represented the wishes of the 299 households which are currently billed in respect of the areas. However, Greenbelt Group have specified that the Council would need to be responsible for the maintenance thereafter, agree to indemnify Greenbelt Group in respect of the gates (e.g. to cover any injury) and agree to fund the removal of the gates, if and when required. The head petitioner has advised that residents are not prepared to contribute. As the land is not in Council ownership the Council cannot take on the liability or maintenance of the gates. No further action is proposed by the Council.



Following representations, further investigation would be taken and a further report would be submitted to the Cabinet Petitions Committee at a future date.

(Received 5/3/2019)

5.2.6 79 – residents of Queens Road, Smethwick (Smethwick)

Concern regarding speeding and traffic accidents on Queens Road, Smethwick.

A seven-day traffic survey has been undertaken for Queens Road between Basons Lane and the traffic island at the junction with Warley Road. It shows that 85% of vehicles are travelling at 32.8mph or less (includes both directions). A three-year injury collision analysis has also been undertaken and it shows there has been 1 recorded injury collision. When Queens Road is compared to other roads in Sandwell it has a very low number of injury collisions and does not therefore meet the criteria for the implementation of a traffic calming scheme. Although the vehicle speeds are slightly higher than the 30mph speed limit, this is still within the parameters of 35mph set by the Police for enforcement purposes. However, a carriageway lining scheme was implemented in October last year in response to enquiries received from residents at Queens Road. Following representations submitted to the Committee, a further traffic survey will be undertaken in spring/summer and compared to the survey results from the



winter. The traffic survey had been conducted and officers were awaiting the results. An update would be provided to a future meeting of the Cabinet Petitions Committee.
(Received 24/8/2019)

5.3 Petitions requiring final approval

| Signatories | Subject | Action Taken/Proposed |
|---|--|---|
| 5.3.1 26 - Residents of Church Road (Soho and Victoria) | Request for permit holder parking on Church Road | Following representation from the head petitioner at the previous meeting, the Committee requested that Highways investigate the feasibility and cost of utilising the grass verges to provide additional parking spaces. Officers have confirmed that the grass verge along Church Road is Council owned and maintained by housing management. The grass verge opposite property numbers 51-63 accommodates three utility boxes and also has apparatus present underneath the verge. It would not therefore be possible to construct parking bays along this section in its current state. The utility boxes and apparatus would have to be moved by the utility company which would incur substantial costs to the Council. In addition, alternative locations suitable to accommodate the utility boxes would need to be identified. |



There are also level differences between the grass verge and the footpath that would need to be addressed before parking bays could be constructed. This would require retaining walls to support the land which would incur further substantial costs. The grass verge opposite property numbers 1-49 also accommodates a utility box that would need to be removed and relocated. This section is also lined with mature trees, 6 of which would need to be removed before parking bays could be constructed. The removal of trees and green spaces is usually met with objection, although if this was agreed, they would need to be replaced with 12 new trees in the local vicinity in accordance with Council policy. Approximately 40 additional parking spaces could be achieved at this location, although the costs to undertake the work will be substantial as outlined above. It is estimated the work will be in excess of £230,000 for which housing would need to identify a budget. (Received 10/06/21)



5.3.2 11 - Residents of Smethwick (Smethwick)

Concern regarding removal of trees on Smethwick High Street

An update has been provided on the proposed pedestrian and cycleway scheme along Tollhouse Way and Smethwick High Street, being delivered as part of Sandwell's successful Accelerated Towns Fund programme funding bid. The Tollhouse Way scheme detailed design has been assessed and is currently continuing to be monitored by the Urban Forestry Manager. With regards to the concerns around the impact on trees, for every tree felled as part of this scheme, two new semi-mature trees will be planted. The trees to be felled are along a short section of the overall Tollhouse Way scheme and the new total tree planting scheme will consist of 46 new trees, doubling what was there previously. Works are in progress to determine suitable locations within the High Street area for the new trees which will be implemented during Autumn 2021. Where possible, replanting will take place as close as possible to where the current trees are to be felled. Doubling the number of trees at this location will assist in absorbing more CO2 whilst providing an alternative means of travel to vehicle journeys will reduce vehicle emissions and improve Air Quality. Having considered representations made by the head petitioner at the previous



meeting, the Committee requested that further details be provided on the consultation process undertaken by officers be submitted to the Committee. Details of the consultation are attached at Appendix A. (Received 17/02/2021)

5.3.3 168 - Residents of Old Warley (Old Warley) Request for pedestrian crossing system at Bleakhouse Road/Castle Road West Junction.

The current Sandwell Strategic Road Safety Plan 2017 / 2022 investigates road casualty statistics over a period of time and helps identify the most vulnerable groups to target with interventions. This is done proactively every year using a risk-based approach, by undertaking in depth road casualty analysis across the borough. This helps identify sites where road casualties are happening year on year, on a regular basis, and will likely to continue happening unless safety improvements are put in place. Historic casualty data is investigated to help steer our safety programmes. Officers focus on those sites that are the most dangerous or where the greatest improvements can be achieved, identified from recorded evidence of regular casualties. Considering the Junction of Bleakhouse Road and Perry Hill Road, this has been investigated previously to understand if a solution can be found to both answer resident's concerns whilst meeting current council policies and available budgets. Based on the current



police reports, that there have been no reported injury accidents or road casualties in and around this junction in the past 5 years. Unfortunately, the only viable improvement would involve moving buried utility apparatus and such a scheme would cost around £200,000 in total. There is no budget available for work at a location that has a historically good road casualty record with no recorded injuries in the previous 5 years. Having considered the representation made at the previous meeting, the Committee requested that a full report considering potential mitigation measures to address the issues experienced by residents be submitted to the Committee. An update is provided at Appendix B. (Received 11/01/2021)

6 Source Documents

Copies of petitions from various groups of residents (exempt information).



Consultation – Tollhouse Way/Smethwick High Street Scheme

With regards to specific local consultation on this scheme, in addition to the scheme being discussed at various Local Towns Fund Boards and Local Members Board meetings, there was a press release from Sandwell MBC on the general Accelerated Towns Fund scheme on the 15th January 2021. In addition, a scheme specific press release was published on the 8th January 2021. Prior to this, a press release in November 2020 around the removal of the temporary pop-up cycle lane along Tollhouse Way, introduced as part of the Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF), stated that it would be replaced by a permanent off-road cycle lane in the grassed area off the main highway. In addition to this there were various engagement surveys undertaken as part of the Towns Fund project where further information was available. This can be accessed on the Town Deal website. Letters were also distributed in January to some households and businesses where the cycle route would pass nearby to ensure they were made aware of proposals. However, as the scheme is not directly affecting any residential or business frontages, wider targeted consultation for wider residents/businesses in the area wasn't considered a statutory requirement over and above what has already taken place. As the local highway authority, Sandwell can undertake infrastructure improvements on their network within their statutory duty without the need for a planning application or planning approval. At this point, it may be prudent to add that whilst there is usually scope to undertake extensive consultation for highway and transport schemes generally, Government funding recently which has tended to have the words 'Emergency' (as with the EATF) and 'Accelerated' as with this source of funding, has meant the authority has been given tight deadlines to complete on site works, with consequences of funding being reclaimed if not completed on time. This would result in potential significant costs to the authority and the possibility of missing out of the ability to install these infrastructure improvements. Therefore, whilst we always endeavour to undertake as an extensive amount of consultation as we can, the length and period of consultation for schemes such as this, has had to reflect the specific circumstances.



Report on the Bleakhouse Road Petition

Each Local Highway Authority has a Statutory Duty under the Road Traffic Act 1988 to investigate road injury accidents (those recorded on Police reports) and put in place programmes of work and projects to target those casualties. Highway Services produce a Strategic Road Safety Plan to help the Council discharge this duty and to prioritise the limited budgets available for use in the most effective way.

The current Sandwell Strategic Road Safety Plan 2017 / 2022 was approved by cabinet approval as Sandwell's key road safety policy document, establishing the rules for road safety investment decisions. The plan requires the investigation of road casualty statistics to identify the most vulnerable groups to target with interventions. Targets at both a local and regional level have a consistent objective to reduce the number of killed and seriously injured (KSI) on the highway network, particularly those involving children, pedestrians and cyclists.

The road safety plan is reviewed every year using a risk-based approach, starting with a detailed casualty analysis across the borough. This helps to identify sites where road casualties are happening on a regular basis and are likely to continue happening unless safety improvements are put in place. The priorities are those locations with higher numbers of KSI casualties or child casualties linked to causation factors that can be mitigated by modifying or improving highway infrastructure. This approach has been very successful in reducing road casualties, down from 1639 injuries in 2000 to 773 last year. Highway Services manage more than 550 miles of road network for the Council as Local Highway Authority and Local Traffic Authority in accordance with statutory requirements and Council Policy. There is a potential for accidents to happen anywhere on our network and the Council receives hundreds of requests each year based on public perceptions of risk not supported by evidence. The limited funding available must be prioritised for investment at the highest risk locations based on the evidence. In areas where there have been no recorded casualties in 5 years, the likelihood is there won't be one the following year. It doesn't mean of course that there won't be a casualty, but the likelihood of it occurring is low. Conversely, if there is a site which has had a few casualties each year for the past 5 years, the likelihood is high that there will be a few more casualties the following year, unless something is done. Council Policy requires that the limited road safety funding must be used to help reduce the injury accidents that are most likely to happen



again next year at the most dangerous locations where the greatest improvements can be achieved.

The Junction of Bleakhouse Road and Perry Hill Road has been investigated previously to understand if a solution can be found to resident's concerns whilst meeting statutory requirements and council policies within available budgets.

It has been confirmed, based on police reports, that there have been no reported injury accidents or road casualties in and around this junction in the past 5 years. In common with many locations across the borough there is a local perception that this is a dangerous area but thankfully this has not proven to be the case based on the evidence.

Highway Services have previously investigated if any low cost options are available to improve the junction if other sources of funding can be found. As part of that study a number of constraints were identified that needed to be considered in any re-design:

- There are a number of bus routes that pass through the junction.
- The Number 49 runs up Castle road West and carries straight on into Brennad Road (and vice versa)
- The Numbers 13A, 20, 54 and 54A Run along Perryhill Road in both directions
- There is a private parking area in front of the shops, but many vehicles choose to park on the link to Castle Road West for convenience.
- On the central island there is a Telephone Box and a number of utility access boxes.
- There are a number of residential properties and shops on or near the junction with drop kerbs.

Unfortunately the only viable improvement would involve moving buried utility apparatus and such a scheme would cost around £200,000 in total. There is no budget currently available as this location that has a historically good road casualty record. This scale of investment can only be justified at higher priority locations where casualties are already occurring on a regular basis.

Councillors have provided ideas about how changes could be made to the junction to potentially answer resident's concerns. The proposals have been carefully considered and found not be viable as a solution for the following reasons;



- The bus route 49 runs up Castle Road West and straight across the junction in Brennand Road (and vice versa). The plan submitted requires the closure of the small link road next to the central triangular island to increase parking capacity. This is the route the bus currently takes.
- To reroute the bus along the other arm of the triangle would require the bus to undertake a right turn onto Perryhill Road and left into Brennand Road. In the opposite direction the left turn from Perryhill Road into the link back to Castle Road West would require alteration to the central island to provide a suitable left turn radius for buses to make the manoeuvre. This would mean making footway into carriageway and would result in the same issues with excessive utility company costs to pay, to protect or divert their services.
- This work would also be required for delivery vehicles and refuse collection vehicles.
- The current car park identified on the plan is the privately owned area in front of the shops. Removing the Castle Road West road link would increase the car parking provision in a way that would be difficult to manage and operate. Using the footway (that currently separates the road link and the private car park) to extend the car park would create a similar requirement to divert or protect utility apparatus.
- The provision of a pedestrian crossing by the public house, would be at a location away from the main junction and hence away from the pedestrian desire lines. Consequently, pedestrians would still choose to cross at or near the junction. Experience shows that pedestrians will be unlikely to divert away from the desire line to the new crossing and walk back again.

Other locations have been considered for a crossing further away from the junction to reduce cost as suggested at Petitions Committee. Sufficient space would be needed for a crossing at a location that avoids footpath crossing accesses on both sides of the road. The nearest location would be significantly away from pedestrian desire lines requiring a detour to make use of the crossing, so is unlikely to be well used. Policy and funding constraints would not justify using the road safety budget to fund a crossing at a location with a good safety record, that is unlikely to be well used.



Consideration has been given to other budgets that might be available for walking and cycling initiatives. Planning and Transportation officers advise that there may be a potential to submit future bids, as and when the opportunity arises, for grant funding (i.e. Better Streets funding, or additional cycling and walking grants). The junction is on an existing cycle route, so the upgrade might be justified once capital funding becomes available. Funding of this type is provided by the Department for Transport to the West Midlands Combined Authority who then allocate the grants to constituent Local Authorities.

