

Report To:	CABINET
Date:	8 APRIL 2024
Heading:	PRINCIPAL SELECT COMMITTEE: PETITION CONSIDERATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Executive Lead Member:	NOT APPLICABLE
Ward/s:	NOT APPLICABLE
Key Decision:	NO
Subject to Call-In:	YES

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to present recommendations to Cabinet from the Principal Select Committee regarding the recent consideration of a submitted petition in accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme and Constitution.

Recommendation(s)

Cabinet is recommended to:

- a) Ensure that an appropriate consultation exercise is undertaken alongside any future repurposing of Council owned community centres within the District.
- b) In conjunction with the above, ensure that all user groups are identified and contacted as a matter of course should any public consultation or engagement exercises be carried out to determine the future use of Council owned community centres.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

The Council received a petition submitted with 866 signatures. In accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme, the submitted petition met the signature threshold for consideration at a meeting of the Principal Select Committee. This consideration was given at a meeting in January 2024. Following consideration, the Principal Select Committee agreed recommendations to be submitted to Cabinet.

Alternative Options Considered

Principal Select Committee Members could have chosen not to submit recommendations to Cabinet following consideration of the submitted petition. However, following discussion, Members agreed to present recommendations to Cabinet.

Detailed Information

In early 2024, the Council received a petition with 866 signatures.

The submitted petition read as follows:

We the undersigned petition the council to We the undersigned object to the bulldozing of our community centres based on one years figures post covid, when there has been no actual Tenant engagement officer to Facilitate joint working between tenants, staff, Elected Members and communities in order to achieve effective community involvement and actions as stated by the tenants charter

The ability to engage with the most vulnerable people face to face at a local level is an integral part of reducing social isolation, helping both mental and physical health. Many people still do not have access to the internet and cannot access any online resources and are overlooked. The social cohesion brought about by the meeting rooms locality and availability is a vital part of building good community relations

PETITION SCHEME

Ashfield District Council has an established Petition Scheme approved by Council. As part of the scheme, the response to a petition is decided by the number of signatures the submitted petition contains.

As per the Petition Scheme:

- If a petition submitted to the Council contains **between 750 and 1499 signatures**, it will be referred to the Principal Select Committee for consideration. Further information on this can be found at section 8 below.

The Petition Scheme continues:

- A petition containing **between 750 and 1,499 signatures** will be considered by the Council's Principal Select Committee.
- The most appropriate Senior Council Officer will be invited to give evidence at a public meeting of the Principal Select Committee relating to the issues set out in a petition.
- The petition organiser will be permitted a total of **15 minutes** to ask up to a maximum of three questions to the Officer(s) in attendance regarding the petition.
- The petition organiser must provide the Assistant Director, Democracy with written notice of these questions at least **10 clear working days** before the Principal Select Committee meeting.

- Questions submitted as part of this process considered by the Chief Executive to be vexatious, discriminatory, abusive, unreasonable, or otherwise inappropriate will not be considered.
- Following the questions asked by the petition organiser, a further **15 minutes** will be allocated to allow discussion between Principal Select Committee Members and the invited Officer(s). During this allocated time, Committee Members may seek further clarification from the petition organiser.
- Following discussion, Members of the Principal Select Committee may decide to approve recommendations to be submitted to a future meeting of the Council's Cabinet.

PRINCIPAL SELECT COMMITTEE – 25 JANUARY 2024

To appropriately respond to the petition, a meeting of the Principal Select Committee was arranged on 25 January 2024.

The petition organiser attended the meeting.

To respond to the questions submitted by the petition organiser and assist Members with discussion, the Assistant Director, Strategic Housing and Strategic Asset Manager were both in attendance.

In accordance with the Petition Scheme, the petition organiser was allocated a total of 15 minutes to ask three questions to the Officers in attendance. Officers then provided responses for each question. Following this, the Committee held a 15 minute discussion, using the time to ask questions of the Officers in attendance.

At the conclusion of the discussion, Members unanimously agreed the following recommendations:

- a) Cabinet be requested to ensure that an appropriate consultation exercise is undertaken alongside any future repurposing of Council owned community centres within the District.

Following discussion, and after hearing the questions asked by the petition organiser and answers provided by Officers in attendance, Members felt it would be appropriate for the Council to undertake appropriate consultation alongside any future repurposing of Council owned Community Centres.

- b) In conjunction with the above, ensure that all user groups are identified and contacted as a matter of course should any public consultation or engagement exercises be carried out to determine the future use of Council owned community centres.

In addition to the above recommendation, Members felt that in the course of any consultation exercise, the Council should strive to identify and consult with any user groups that may be impacted by any proposed repurposing of Council owned Community Centres. Committee Members are of course mindful of Officer time and understand that it can often be difficult to identify specific groups to engage with.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

People Focussed – putting people at the heart of what we do, is one of the core values of the Council as established in the Corporate Plan 2023 – 2027. The Council’s Petition Scheme is established under this value, allowing residents to raise issues and engage with the Council directly.

Legal:

The referral of the petition to the Principal Select Committee is in line with the requirements of the Petition Scheme.

Legal advice will be provided to Cabinet regarding any future consultation process as required.
[RLD 20/03/2024]

Finance: [AVP 19.03.2024]

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	Staffing costs in relation to the consultation process will be funded from current staffing budgets
General Fund – Capital Programme	No financial Implications
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	No financial Implications
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	No financial Implications

Risk:

There are no direct risks associated with the recommendations within this report.

Human Resources:

There are no direct HR implications as a result of the recommendations within this report.

Environmental/Sustainability:

There are no direct environmental/sustainability implications as a result of the recommendations within this report.

Equalities:

There are no direct equalities implications as a result of the recommendations within this report.

Other Implications:

There are no other implications as a result of the recommendations within this report. If, as a result of the petition, the Principal Select Committee make recommendations to Cabinet, any legal implications will be detailed in a further report.

Reason(s) for Urgency

None.

Reason(s) for Exemption

None.

Background Papers

None.

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