

Committee: Council

Date: 7 February 2018

Subject: Petitions

Lead officer: Paul Evans, Assistant Director, Corporate Governance.

Lead member: Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Alambritis.

Contact officer: Democratic Services, democratic.services@merton.gov.uk

Recommendation:

1. That Council receive petitions (if any) in accordance with Part 4A, paragraph 18.1 of the Council's Constitution.
 2. That Council notes the responses provided to the petitions submitted at the meeting held on 22 November 2017.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report invites Council to receive petitions in accordance with Part 4A, paragraph 18.1 of the Council's Constitution.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. At the meeting held on 22 November 2017, the petition listed below was submitted and the response is set out below. Any petitions received by Council are referred to respective departments with responsible officers asked to advise the presenting member in each case of the way in which the petition is to be progressed.
- 2.2. A petition was submitted by Councillor Brian Lewis-Lavender on car parking arrangements at Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Fields.

Officer Response

- 2.3 It is not the case that the park gates at Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Fields are being opened early in order to encourage commuter parking in the park.

The majority of regular parks users, local residents and, undoubtedly, many of the signatories to the recent petition will be aware that only last summer the Council undertook a local consultation on proposals to introduce pay and display parking to the park. These proposals were specifically designed to discourage the use of the park's car parking facility by commuters.

The parking scheme proposed for this park at that time was not approved by the relevant Cabinet Member, who noted local opposition to the scheme in the form of a previous petition.

With the future of the car parking arrangements recently confirmed in the medium to long term, and a key anti-commuter measure seemingly unpopular locally, the Council felt obliged to revert to the standard park opening hours that applies to all of its parks and to enable all genuine park users to access the park at the standard park opening hours of 8.00am during the midweek period. It should be noted that this opportunity has been temporarily denied them in recent previous years whilst the Council developed and consulted upon its parking options at

this, and other key parks locations, where our principal objectives were to tackle commuter and some other parking abuses.

To clarify, the Council has not insisted that this park be open at 6.15am; its requirement and expectation is simply that the park gates are fully open by the 8.00am standard, advertised and long-established opening time for parks in Merton, without exception. In reality, our parks are opened at different times (but always prior to 8am during the midweek period) due to the mobilisation schedules and deployment patterns of our parks maintenance contractor's grounds personnel - they travel across the borough opening the locked parks as they get to them - and to the local rotas adopted by Friends groups where such groups open parks on a daily basis.

Since this park reverted to pre-8.00am opening during October 2017, the problems of commuter parking have not, so far, returned. However, Council officers will continue to monitor the situation and consider whether revised opening times and further local consultation is appropriate. However, it is unlikely that the Council will be able to support and justify extended periods of later opening at this popular venue, even if it adopts temporary measures to dissuade commuter parking should that problem return to the park.

- 2.4 A petition was submitted by Councillor Abdul Latif on the Virgin Active Gym at Battle Close.

Officer Response

- 2.5 The decision to close this facility was made by Virgin Active not the Council . Virgin Active (the council's tenant) initiated the surrender of their lease which runs until 2033 . Virgin Active offered to dispose of their interest to the Council voluntarily and the terms were agreed by Cabinet and subject to the scrutiny process.

The Council is committed to doing what it can to help people stay fit . Our 3 Council leisure centres help promote healthy active lives and are managed on our behalf by GLL . The nearest one is close by at Latimer Rd, SW19 and GLL will be looking to see how they can offer ex Virgin Active centre users a similar service at this or at our other 2 leisure centres in Morden and Mitcham . Other privately owned health and leisure centres also operate across the borough.

No decision has been made regarding the future of the Battle Close site however we will be looking to consult the public and make a decision in 2018. We will ensure the site does not fall into dereliction and look to agree its future use at the earliest opportunity.

- 2.6 Members are invited to present petitions at this meeting, and a response will be provided to the next ordinary Council meeting in July 2018.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. None for the purposes of this report.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. None for the purpose of this report.

5 TIMETABLE

5.1. None for the purpose of this report.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

6.1. None for the purpose of this report.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

7.1. None for the purpose of this report.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

8.1. None for the purpose of this report.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

9.1. None for the purpose of this report.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

11 APPENDICES

11.1. None

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1. None.

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