

Corporate Policy Committee

Date of Meeting:	6 October 2022
Report Title:	Petition: Fight for Middlewich
Report of:	David Brown, Director of Governance and Compliance
Report Reference No:	CP/50/22-23
Ward(s) Affected:	Middlewich

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1** To receive a petition and determine what course of action is appropriate in respect of each element of the petition.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1.** In accordance with the Council's Constitution, petitions signed by over 5000 petitioners may be submitted to Full Council or a Committee for consideration.
- 2.2.** The Fight for Middlewich Petition was presented to Full Council at its meeting held on 20 July 2022 and has been referred to the Corporate Policy Committee because various elements of the petition cross-over the responsibilities of the other service committees.
- 2.3.** The responses to the petition are now appended to the report for consideration.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1** That the petition be received.
- 3.2** To note the responses to those matters within the Council's control (items 1- 12 of Appendix 2).
- 3.3** To note that items 13 – 17 of Appendix 2 will be referred to the relevant bodies identified within the Appendix.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1.** In accordance with paragraph 4.29 to 4.32 of chapter 3 of the Constitution (as at June 2021 paragraph 5.2 refers), petitions signed by over 5000 petitioners may be accepted at the start of a meeting of a committee.
- 4.2.** This report has been made to the Corporate Policy Committee because the various elements of the petition cross-over the responsibilities of the other service committees. The Corporate Policy Committee has “cross-cutting” powers to deal with such matters and it is empowered to deal with the petition in its entirety, if the Committee feels it is appropriate to do so.

5. Options Available

- 5.1.** In responding to a petition, the committee may choose to:
- note the petition;
 - write to the petition organiser outlining the Council’s views;
 - request that an officer report be submitted to the committee at a later date; or
 - Take no further action
- 5.2** If the Committee decides the petition is of significant importance to the whole Borough, the Committee may decide the petition should be debated at Full Council.

6. Background

- 6.1.** A petition entitled ‘Fight for Middlewich’ was received by Cheshire East Council, which has been signed by at least 5000 petitioners.
- 6.2.** The petition was launched in October 2021 and was submitted to Democratic Services in May 2022. As the Council’s Petitions Scheme changed during this period, the Monitoring Officer has determined that the procedure set out in paragraph 4.29 to 4.32 of Chapter 3 of the Constitution as at June 2021 (Appendix 1) will apply.
- 6.3.** The petition contains a statement as follows ‘Middlewich residents have been ignored for years! Because of this, the town is severely suffering and rapidly deteriorating we want equality, to be treated to fairly against other CEC towns and have all our issues resolved ASAP’. The petition mainly comprises a list of requests or demands for services etc, which are set out in Appendix 2. These demands/requests have been extracted (in most cases) verbatim from the paper petition and/or the electronic petition which ran on Change.org. Any variation in the wording is due to the amalgamation of the two statements.

- 6.4.** By way of context, there has been significant correspondence and dialogue with the petitioner addressing the issues raised.
- 6.5.** One of the strengths of Cheshire East is the diversity between the towns. But that positive diversity can have a downside. Individual towns often comment that other towns get funding while theirs gets left behind. More work than ever before is now being undertaken to identify potential projects in a wider range of town centres, and Cheshire East councillors are working with town councillors and town councils to develop bespoke town centre vitality plans for Alsager, Congleton, Handforth, Knutsford, Nantwich, Poynton, Sandbach, Wilmslow and Middlewich, the subject of this petition.
- 6.6.** Appendix 2 sets out the officer response includes examples of some of the positive work and services provided in Middlewich:
- For Middlewich wards, the Council is currently holding a total value of s106 contributions of £874,444 which will be invested in ecology, highways and green spaces
 - One of the most significant infrastructure projects within the borough is the Middlewich Eastern Bypass. The scheme is important for the delivery of local jobs on Mid-Point 18 development site and will help relieve congestion in the town centre.
 - The Council's Youth Support Service, in conjunction with local young people, the council's Communities Team, Middlewich Town Council, Cheshire East Social Action Partnership, Youth Fed, and local volunteers, have set up a new youth group for young people in Middlewich.
 - There are a range of public facilities available within Middlewich provided by Cheshire East Council and Middlewich Town Council:
 1. Middlewich library
 2. Middlewich leisure centre
 3. Salinae Day Centre for adults
 4. Fountain Fields Park and Play Area
 5. Victoria Hall
 6. Public toilets
- 6.7.** The petition organiser will be permitted to speak at the Committee meeting, for 3 minutes to outline the background to the petition.
- 6.8.** The Committee may then choose to:
- note the petition (this may be an appropriate option if the committee considers that it is content with the officer response provided in respect of each element of the petition [Appendix 2] or the Council has no power or standing to involve itself in the matters in question).

- write to the petition organiser outlining the Council's views.
- request that an officer report on the matter be submitted to the committee at a later date (if the committee considers that there is an element or elements of the petition which would call for a bespoke report or reports, to be brought back to a future meeting of the committee).
- take no further action (if the committee considers that the matters raised in the petition have been responded to fully, or the Council has no power or standing to involve itself in the matters in question).
- Decide that the petition is of significant importance to the whole borough and that it should be debated at full Council.

6.9. The petition must be considered at Full Council if the Committee recommends any action which may amend the budgetary or policy framework of the Council's Constitution Chapter 2, part 3, paragraph 1.7.

7. Consultation and Engagement

7.1 Not applicable

8. Implications

8.1 Legal

8.1.1. There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report. Any decision of the committee which gives rise to the need for a further report may have legal implications, which will be assessed at that time.

8.2 Finance

8.2.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report. Any decision of the committee which gives rise to the need for a further report may have financial implications, which will be assessed at that time.

8.3 Policy

8.3.1 There are no direct policy implications, however there may be such implications as a consequence of any further action taken.

8.4 Equality

8.4.1 There are no direct equality implications, however there may be such implications as a consequence of any further action taken.

8.5 Human Resources

8.5.1 There are no direct human resource implications, however there may be as a consequence of any further action taken.

8.6 Risk Management

8.6.1 There are no direct risk management implications, however there may be as a consequence of any further action taken.

8.7 Rural Communities

8.7.1 There are no direct implications on rural communities, however there may be as a consequence of any further action taken.

8.8 Children and Young People/Cared for Children

8.8.1 There are no direct implications, however there may be as a consequence of any further action taken.

8.9 Public Health

8.9.1 There are no direct public health implications, however there may be as a consequence of any further action taken.

8.10 Climate Change

8.10.1 There are no direct climate change implications, however there may be as a consequence of any further action taken.

Access to Information	
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Appendices:	Appendix 1: Petitions Procedure June 2021 Appendix 2: Officers response to Middlewich Petition
Background Papers:	Petition: Fight for Middlewich