

# ***Action Taken on Petitions***



## **ACTION TAKEN ON PETITIONS**

Council Members are asked to note the action taken in relation to the under-mentioned petitions which were presented to Council: -

### **1. Petition – Request that the Developer of the Chestergate Housing Scheme use an alternative access for construction traffic rather than Pickering Road**

A petition signed by nine residents, was presented to Council on 22 March 2023 by former Councillor Pam Mann and referred to the Executive Director of City Development.

The residents claim to have suffered from noise, mud and dust whilst the development has been ongoing. The petition requested that the Council intervene with the developers and instruct them to use an alternative entrance.

Following receipt of the petition, the issues were investigated by officers and with respect to the mud and dust concerns raised in the petition, the developer states that a road sweeper was in operation when earth moving operations were ongoing. Furthermore, the road sweeper visits once a week and will also be requested when site activities and the weather deem it necessary. Repairs to the carriageway were completed during February 2023 and at a follow up highway inspection in May 2023 Council officers considered the road to be safe and serviceable. The amount of noise generated by construction traffic should have greatly reduced now that the carriageway has been repaired and the number/type of construction vehicles has reduced.

The Council have no legal powers to insist that Gentoo change the current route of construction traffic but it will request that Gentoo submit a request to alter the planning conditions and Construction Management Plan now that the access road is complete. The Council will also consider making an alternative access route a planning condition for any future phases of development.

### **2. Petition to Reduce or Remove Charges for Memorial Benches in Sunderland**

A petition signed by 267 residents was presented to Council on 13 September 2023 by Councillor Sam Johnston requesting that charges for memorial benches be reduced or removed.

Council officers have considered the petition and advised as follows.

The Council understands that these benches hold significant sentimental value for many and have carefully considered the quality of the product offered to ensure a consistently high quality for the lifetime of the sponsorship term. The goal is to ensure the long-term sustainability of the memorial bench programme, allowing the

Council to continue to provide a meaningful and lasting tribute to loved ones. Purchase costs of the premium bench, installation costs and maintenance expenses have contributed to the overall cost of each bench as the aims are to ensure the continued delivery of quality memorialisation products and improvement of public areas.

Taking into account all the associated costs in the purchase, installation and maintenance of these benches, any overage is minimal and can contribute to the administration of the scheme.

Therefore, any reduction to these charges could result in the Council subsidising the provision of this service. To remove the charges altogether would mean that this would become a fully subsidised service and would inevitably create an unprecedented demand that the Council may not be able to accommodate in terms of cost, locations, time to install and maintain in a safe usable state.

It should be noted that these benches are not benches that the Council would provide anyway, in these locations, as part of normal highway assets.

The Council understands that bench fees may be challenging to some, and is actively exploring ways to mitigate the impact of such by introducing a range of alternative memorial options to enable bereaved families to memorialise loved ones in a range of products and prices.

The Council is committed to finding solutions to residents' concerns in providing the best service at the best costs that cater for every budget.

Councillor Johnston has been advised of the response.