



Petition: Wilding Worthing

Report by the Solicitor to the Council and the Director for Communities

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1. A Petition was received on 21st June 2020 from Ms Emma Cameron containing 1029 signatures. The petition was received by the Proper Officer.
- 1.2. The Petition is in regards to proposals to designate a number of green areas around Worthing for rewilding.
- 1.3. Any action to be taken in response to the Petition, is to be determined, following debate, at the Worthing Borough Council Meeting.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1. Worthing Borough Council is recommended to debate the Petition and determine what action, if any, it shall take in response to the Petition.

3.0 Background

- 3.1. The Worthing Borough Council adopted Petition Scheme is available on the Council's website:

<https://www.adur-worthing.gov.uk/media/media.129314.en.pdf>

- 3.2. The details of the petition state:

Following the declaration by Worthing Borough Council of a climate emergency some areas on edges of parks are being left alone to grow naturally, which is a very welcome move.

<https://www.adur-worthing.gov.uk/news/archive/pr19-106.html>. We are now calling on Worthing Borough Council to designate a number of green areas around Worthing for rewilding. To mark 'No Mow May' we are asking that these areas are left unmown, allowing the wildflowers to grow and that the use of herbicides and pesticides is eliminated.

Why is this important?

In the last 25 years the UK has lost 75% of flying insects and the vast majority of wildflower meadows. Rewilding areas provide habitat and food for insects, pollinators and local wildlife, and offers areas for families and children to learn more about wildflowers and wildlife. Just 8 Dandelion flowers provide enough nectar for 15,000 bee visits a day. <https://www.plantlife.org.uk/uk/about-us/news/no-mow-may-how-to-get-ten-times-more-bees-on-your-lockdown-lawn>. Even small wild areas support declining insect populations. Rewilding also contributes to reaching our zero carbon goals, by taking harmful carbon dioxide from the air and storing it underground. This is a financially prudent environmental move as well, as rewilding saves money on expensive council-funded maintenance costs.

Campaign backed by Worthing Climate Action Network and Extinction Rebellion Worthing.

There is now an update and good news on the area known as Robert's Marine: 'Plan for this space is to let areas of the grass grow long and create a grass maze within it. Have the patch of wild flowers and then some areas of cut grass still because we get quite a few people exercising on that space, dogs running around on it and people

picnicking as well. We felt the mix enables all of that to still happen whilst adding a little more wild spaces for nature.

- 3.3. Qualifying petitions are defined in the Petition Scheme as those petitions containing more than 1,000 signatures and including a minimum of 50 names, addresses and signatures of people who live, work or study in the Borough of Worthing. The petition contains 1,029 signatures, exceeding the 50 person minimum and meets the relevant criteria to be considered as a qualifying petition.
- 3.4 Under the Worthing Borough Council Petition Scheme the Petition Organiser, Ms Emma Cameron, is to be provided with the opportunity of five minutes to address Council on the petition. The Leader then has five minutes to address Council with their right of reply to the petition.
- 3.4. It is a requirement of the Scheme that where a qualifying petition is received, and where time permits, the petition is to be debated by the Council to determine how to respond to it.

Members of the Council are recommended to consider and determine the Petition and any Member of the Council may move a specific motion as a proposal for the appropriate disposal of this matter. Such a proposal will need to be seconded, debated and voted upon in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules. A range of suggested responses and ways of disposal are available and set out within the Scheme, and include, but are not limited to:

- taking the action requested;
- holding an enquiry or undertaking research into the matters arising;
- referring the petition for consideration to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee; or
- taking no further action.

- 3.5. The Petition Organiser was notified on 24 June that the petition amounted to a qualifying petition.

4.0 Proposals

- 4.1. The person submitting the petition has five minutes to address the Council to support their petition.

- 4.2. The Leader has five minutes to address Council as the Council's right of reply to the petitioner.
- 4.3. Council will then debate the petition and determine what action to take in response to the petition.

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1. There are no financial implications in considering a petition at the Council Meeting.
- 5.2. However, if the decision taken at the Council Meeting, in response to the petition, is likely to have significant financial implications for the Council and requires action by the Executive, then the action to be taken and financial implications should be considered by the Executive at a meeting of the Joint Strategic Committee.

6.0 Legal Implications

- 6.1. Full details of the Borough Council's adopted Petition Scheme can be found in Part 5 of the Council's Constitution.
- 6.2. The usual rules of debate set out at paragraph 16 of the Council Procedure Rules in Part 4 of the Constitution, apply to the Council debate upon the petition.
- 6.3. The requirement to have a Petition Scheme was contained in the Local Democracy, Economic Construction and Development Act 2009 (as amended).

Background Papers

Worthing Borough Council Constitution containing the Petition Scheme.

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Sustainability & Risk Assessment

1. Economic

Matter considered and no issues identified.

2. Social

2.1 Social Value

Matter considered and no issues identified.

2.2 Equality Issues

Matter considered and no issues identified.

2.3 Community Safety Issues (Section 17)

Matter considered and no issues identified.

2.4 Human Rights Issues

Matter considered and no issues identified.

3. Environmental

There are environmental implications for the management, custodianship and protection of our natural resources arising from the proposals within the petition, but not from the proposal to debate the petition at Full Council.

4. Governance

The Council has a Petition Scheme in compliance with legislation, which has been adopted formally as part of the Council's Constitution. All petitions submitted to the Council should be determined in accordance with the published Scheme.