

MEETING TITLE AND DATE:

Council- 26 February
2020

REPORT OF:

Director of Law &
Governance

Agenda – Part: 1	Item: 6
Subject: Petitions – Whitewebbs Park	
Ward: Chase	
Members consulted: N/A	

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report details the petition received with a request for the Council to:

- avoid any measures or developments that will in any way restrict the citizens of Enfield from freely enjoying full access to the woodlands, amenities, current physical activities, golf and the open spaces of Whitewebbs Park.
- ask that the Council restrict developments and landholding in the park to those that will maintain full use of the park by ordinary citizens and to those that will not damage or radically change the atmosphere, usage and environment of the park.
- ask that no development will be permitted that will have an adverse effect on the climate and air quality of Enfield through construction work and traffic generation.
- Ask that nothing be done that will adversely affect the ancient woodland and biodiversity of the whole park.
- ask that there be full public consultation with all interested park users before any proposals are agreed and implemented.

1.2 Under the Council's Petition scheme if more than 3,124 valid signatures are received it will be debated at Full Council. This petition has 3,569 verified signatures.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Council is asked to receive the petition from the Lead Petitioner, and in accordance with the Councils Petition scheme, allow consideration of the views expressed in the petition.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Council's Petition Scheme details that compliant petitions submitted to the Council must include:

- Contain the name, a valid address with postcode, and the signature of any person supporting the petition. A valid address is within the Borough of Enfield and can be a home, work or study address and includes Enfield-owned out-borough estates or temporary accommodation provided by the borough.
- Include a clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition. It should state what action the petitioners wish the council to take
- have the petition organisers contact address This is the person we will contact to explain how we will respond to the petition. The contact details of the petition organiser will not be placed on the website.
- relate to a matter for which the authority has responsibility, and which affects the authority or its area

3.2 The Council's Petition Scheme enables Petitions with 3,124 signatures (1% of the assessed population from the 2011 census as published by the Office of National Statistics) to be debated at Full Council.

4. PETITION

4.1 A petition from lead petitioner requesting that the Council to:

1. Avoid any measures or developments that will in any way restrict the citizens of Enfield from freely enjoying full access to the woodlands, amenities, current physical activities, golf and the open spaces of Whitewebbs Park.
2. Ask that the Council restrict developments and landholding in the park to those that will maintain full use of the park by ordinary citizens and to those that will not damage or radically change the atmosphere, usage and environment of the park.
3. Ask that no development will be permitted that will have an adverse effect on the climate and air quality of Enfield through construction work and traffic generation.
4. Ask that nothing be done that will adversely affect the ancient woodland and biodiversity of the whole park.
5. Ask that there be full public consultation with all interested park users before any proposals are agreed and implemented.

4.2 An E-petition and a paper petition has been submitted with 4,212 signatures. These signatures have been checked for duplicates, valid address and postcode and incomplete information and there are sufficient numbers to trigger a full Council debate. This petition has 3,569 verified signatures.

5. COMMENTS FROM OTHER DEPARTMENTS

5.1 Financial Implications

In this report the Council is asked to receive the petition from the Lead Petitioner, and in accordance with the Council's Petition scheme, allow consideration of the views expressed in the petition.

This report in itself has no direct financial implications, all the relevant financial implications have already been considered in the previous reports.

5.2 Legal Implications

Section 9P of the Local Government Act 2000 (inserted by the Localism Act 2011) requires a local authority to maintain a constitution. Paragraph 1.7 of the Council's Constitution states that citizens have the right to (inter alia) submit deputations and petitions to the Cabinet or Council departments.

The Council has a Petitions Scheme, approved by Council on 22 November 2017, which sets out the procedure for a petition to be considered by full council.

The matters set out in this report complies with the above legislation and the Council's procedures.

5.3 Property Implications

Whitewebbs Park Golf Course is currently being marketed by Enfield Council. The aim of the council isn't to sell the park but award a 25-year lease. The lease might include some surrounding land including woodland, depending on the suitability of any proposals.

On 19 December 2019, the council began the second stage of the marketing of Whitewebbs. This means we have gone back to all who expressed interest with enhanced criteria.

Bidders must make their final submissions by 2 March 2020. All submissions that meet the council's requirements will be assessed and scored, based on a published scoring matrix. All bidders must obtain pre-planning application advice from the council's Planning Team, for their proposed future use of the park. Without this advice, bids will not be considered.

The petition has asked several questions which are responded to as follows:-

- a. **Avoid any measures or developments that will in any way restrict the citizens of Enfield from freely enjoying full access to the woodlands, amenities, current physical activities, golf and the open spaces of Whitewebbs Park.**

The council wants to select a partner who will offer a wider and more inclusive benefit to the local community, in line with planning policies.

It is intended that local people will see an improvement in facilities including café and welfare facilities and no loss of activities such as walking or rambling, running, dog walking, cycling, and horse riding. In fact, the intention is to increase use of the park by more of the community after the investment.

Bidders are required to show a wide and inclusive benefit to the local community, in line with planning policies and that met with the council's criteria, which are:

- enhancement of public access
- enhancement and maintenance of woodland and open areas
- a more inclusive range of activities
- better provision of refreshments and welfare facilities

Since 2014/15 the council has worked to greatly increase revenue and reduce expenditure at Whitewebbs Park, including the golf course. This has included improving the online profile and accessibility for the course, as well as running more marketing campaigns.

Despite this the golf course has operated at a loss for several years and in the last few years, the number of rounds played has dropped significantly in line with national trends. Enfield and the surrounding area is well served by golf courses, so as well as inviting proposals from experienced golf course operators it is appropriate to also consider other leisure uses.

- b. **Ask that the Council restrict developments and landholding in the park to those that will maintain full use of the park by ordinary citizens and to those that will not damage or radically change the atmosphere, usage and environment of the park.**

As stated above bidders are required to show a wide and inclusive benefit to the local community, in line with planning policies and that meet with the council's criteria, which are:

- enhancement of public access
- enhancement and maintenance of woodland and open areas
- a more inclusive range of (outdoor leisure) activities
- better provision of refreshments and welfare facilities

- c. Ask that no development will be permitted that will have an adverse effect on the climate and air quality of Enfield through construction work and traffic generation.**

As stated above the council's criteria require bidders to demonstrate enhancement and maintenance of woodland and open areas. The Council is also seeking proposals that enhance biodiversity.

As also stated above all bidders must obtain pre-planning application advice from the council's Planning Team, for their proposed future use of the park. Without this advice, bids will not be considered.

Any bid that is unlikely to secure planning consent is unlikely to be selected as a preferred bid.

Detailed bids have yet to be received but some construction work is likely to be required such as the replacement of club house and development of a permanent café facility. It is possible that bids might include the remodelling of the golf course involving some import of soil.

The planning process will give proper consideration to any impact on environmental sustainability, air quality and traffic generation.

- d. Ask that nothing be done that will adversely affect the ancient woodland and biodiversity of the whole park.**

As stated above the council's criteria require bidders to demonstrate enhancement and maintenance of woodland and open areas. The Council is also seeking proposals that enhance biodiversity.

- e. Ask that there be full public consultation with all interested park users before any proposals are agreed and implemented.**

The council has committed to engage with a range of stakeholder groups prior to selecting a preferred bidder and once a preferred bidder has been chosen, the council will arrange for a public engagement event to take place. At this event, the preferred bidder will be available to share their proposals and answer questions about them.

As part of any planning process, there will be the usual statutory consultation period where the local community will have the opportunity to comment.

The Council will not enter into a lease until planning consent has been granted.

6. KEY RISKS

Members of the Council note that the council petition scheme allows a debate at Full Council following the requisite number of signatures.

7. IMPACT ON COUNCIL PRIORITIES - CREATING A LIFETIME OF OPPORTUNITIES IN ENFIELD

**Good Homes in Well-Connected Neighbourhoods
Sustain Strong and Healthy Communities
Build our Local Economy to Create a Thriving Place**

The Council's Petitions Scheme ensures that the public are able to register their opinions on issues of importance to them.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

Local authorities have a responsibility to meet the Public Sector Duty of the Equality Act 2010. The Act gives people the right not to be treated less favourably because of any of the protected characteristics. We need to consider the needs of these diverse groups when designing and changing services or budgets So that our decisions it do not unduly or disproportionately affect access by some groups more than others.

Corporate advice has been sought in regard to equalities and an agreement has been reached that an equalities impact assessment is neither relevant nor proportionate for the approval of this report

9. PERFORMANCE & DATA IMPLICATIONS

There are no performance & data implications from debating a petition.

10. PUBLIC HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct public health implications from debating a petition.