

<b>CABINET</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM No. 13</b>
<b>20 JUNE 2022</b>	<b>PUBLIC REPORT</b>

Report of:	Fiona McMillan, Director of Law and Governance	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor Coles, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Governance	
Contact Officer(s):	Pippa Turvey, Democratic and Constitutional Services Manager	Tel. 452460

## OUTCOME OF PETITIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS	
<b>FROM:</b> <i>Directors</i>	<b>Deadline date:</b> <i>N/A</i>
It is recommended that Cabinet notes the actions taken in respect of petitions.	

### 1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report is submitted following the submission of E-Petitions, the presentation of petitions to Council officers, and the presentation of petitions at Council meetings.

### 2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet on the progress being made in response to petitions submitted to the Council.
- 2.2 This report is for Cabinet to consider under its Terms of Reference No. 3.2.7, '*To take a leading role in promoting the economic, environmental and social well-being of the area*'.

### 3. TIMESCALES

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	<b>NO</b>	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	<b>N/A</b>
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### 4. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

#### **Petitions Received by the Council**

##### Gates on Itter Park, Fulbridge Road Entrances

The petition was submitted by Mrs E Dawson on 5 November 2021. The petition contained 119 valid signatures and called for the Council to 'install gates on all the entrances to Itter Park on Fulbridge Road'.

The Head of Environmental Partnerships responded:

"Thank you for your petition and I am very sorry to hear this sad new.

litter Park is currently fenced around the perimeter and also around an area within the park with both natural and hard landscaping, and there are currently gates at both main entrances; however, one gate is left open and on litter Crescent there are two open access areas to make the park accessible for all. These access points allow easy access for prams and mobility scooters / wheelchairs, and we do not currently fully gate off any of our parks, so they are open to all to access.

The park is not currently promoted as an off lead dog walking area, and whilst I fully sympathise with the tragic circumstances that led to your petition, given the current financial pressures on the council and the need to ensure the parks remains accessible for all we would not be looking to install gates at this time.

In relation to your request for traffic calming measures on Fulbridge Road. I can confirm that Peterborough City Council works to the cluster site list as a means of prioritising safety measures. This stretch of Fulbridge Road does not feature and therefore would not currently be identified for measures such as traffic calming. We will however keep this under review. I will send on your concerns in relation to speeding on this road to the Police for enforcement purposes.

In relation to your concerns around the safety of people using this park and the footpaths around the area. I can confirm we work closely with the local schools to highlight key messages in relation to pedestrian and cycle safety to students. This is offered to reception aged children and their parents as well as older students including those in secondary schools. Key messages are highlighted to all age groups. If you are aware of any community groups that would benefit from some Road Safety advice and information then please do contact my colleague Jenny Wright, [jenny.wright@peterborough.gov.uk](mailto:jenny.wright@peterborough.gov.uk).”

### Keep the Key Theatre Open

The petition was submitted by Mr Ashley-Cooper on 16 December 2021. The petition contained 2943 valid signatures and called for the Council to ‘Keep the Key Theatre open as a place of important arts and culture in the City and to engage with those who use the building before making the disastrous decision to close it’.

The Executive Director for Place and Economy responded:

“Thank you once again for organising the petition relating to the future of the Key Theatre.

We're so very grateful for the amount of support for the Key that has been demonstrated through your petition.

You will by now be aware of the negotiations that we have had with Selladoor, the operators of the Peterborough New Theatre. Subject to confirmation of an emergency funding grant from Arts Council England, Selladoor have agreed to take over the management of the Key Theatre as a going concern.

Selladoor have extensive experience of managing theatres, as well as production management, expansive commercial expertise, and an impressive list of industry-leading national and international contacts.

Their management of the Key will help to build a strong performance culture across both of their Peterborough sites, with the New Theatre and the Key offering a very different set of productions and having multiple uses, as well as building a complementary rather than competitive programme. They are also keen to work closely with the Cresset as the city's third main performance space.

As part of our negotiations, we have also secured the future of the Key Youth Theatre which has its home at the Key.

As I say, the final deal with Selladoor is subject to confirmation of ACE funding, and we will know the outcome of that in the next three or four weeks. Selladoor have a very positive track record

of securing and managing grant funding, and so we and they are optimistic their bid will be successful, but of course that decision is out of our hands. Meanwhile, we have asked the current operator, City Culture Peterborough Ltd, to continue to manage the Key until the transfer can take place.

I very much hope you are as encouraged by the progress we've made as we have been by the volume of support expressed through your petition."

### Keep Werrington Sports Centre Open to the Public

The petition was submitted by Mr Beard on 19 December 2021. The petition contained 655 valid signatures and called for the Council to 'reverse the decision to close Werrington sports centre to the public from Jan 2022'.

The Service Director for Communities and Partnerships responded:

"Thank you very much for organising and submitting the petition to keep Werrington Sports Centre open.

The decision to temporarily close the Centre was not one we have taken lightly. You may be aware that the Centre is operated on behalf of the Council by Peterborough Ltd, trading as Vivacity. Peterborough Ltd are a Local Authority Trading Company, and they notified us of severe qualified staff shortages late last calendar year. This, they confirmed, is seriously hindering their ability to sustain a regular, reliable and safe leisure service offer across the full range of sports centres and other venues they operate for the city. The staffing shortage is particularly prevalent in relation to qualified duty managers and lifeguards.

The impact on services as a result of staff shortages is likely to manifest itself in the form of emergency closures, unreliable opening hours, reduced classes, and ultimately increased risk right across the leisure estate. An unreliable service is likely to lead to memberships being cancelled making the whole leisure service vulnerable.

The operator therefore asked us to consider, with them, ways in which these risks could be mitigated, and we jointly determined that ensuring the best performing centres were properly staffed and therefore reliably open would be the most appropriate way forward.

Regrettably, analysis does show that Werrington Sports Centre currently operates at a greater financial loss than the other centres within the portfolio. Much of this is of course due to the impacts of the pandemic, but is the sole reason Werrington was selected as the site to temporarily close.

This has enabled the operator to redeploy qualified staff from Werrington to the other centres they operate, resolving the issues and risks I've described above.

We are extremely sorry that this decision will so clearly impact the residents to the north of Peterborough. With that in mind, and with the support of Ken Stimpson school, the local ward councillors, and representatives from the local community, we have been able to put in place some bespoke arrangements with a number of groups that regularly use the centre for their activities, enabling them to continue that usage during this temporary closed period. Those groups have been incredibly flexible and have agreed in some cases to change the times they use the centre so as to share the increased costs this arrangement has incurred. We are very grateful to them and to the school, and as a result hundreds of people who access these groups will continue to be able to do so. It is worth noting that the local Werrington Councillors -John Fox, Judy Fox and Steve Lane -were unaware of the proposal to temporarily close the centre prior to the decision being taken.

I appreciate though that community use for the wider population remains unavailable, which we do regret. I understand that Peterborough Ltd are offering a complementary upgrade to

Werrington Centre users to their Gold Membership Package, which will allow them to use the Regional Fitness and Swimming Centre and the Hampton Leisure Centre for the duration of the closure. This upgrade has been automatically applied. Alternatively, they are offering the option for memberships to be frozen until the Centre reopens. These are clearly not a replacement for having access to a local facility, but hopefully may go some way for some users to mitigating the inconvenience caused.

Finally, Peterborough Ltd are working hard to recruit new staff that can be trained up to take on the roles where there are significant shortages. I would also like to reiterate that the closure is a temporary one, and we will continue to work hard with the operator to reopen the Centre as quickly as we possibly can.

I hope this response is helpful, and I would like to sincerely thank you once again for organising the petition.

My colleague, Paulina Ford, will be able to advise you on your options regarding the petition as referred to in her letter to you dated 7 January.”

### Save New Ark City Farm Eco Centre

The petition was submitted by Mr Scotten on 5 April 2022. The petition contained 681 valid signatures and called for the Council to ‘Reverse its decision to withdraw vital funding enabling New Ark to keep offering support and vital services for children and families within Peterborough, continuing its 40-year legacy for future generations’.

The Commissioning Manager responded:

“Thank you for making us aware of the petition relating to New Ark Adventure Play Centre and City Farm. We appreciate the services that are provided by this facility for the community.

The Local Authority has supported the New Ark Play Association Charity for a number of years. An agreement for New Ark Adventure Playground and City Farm was in place and due to expire on 31 August 2018. This funding was to support the services delivered by the New Ark Play Association and was separate from the funding that was provided by the Local Authority for the preschool. At this time the Local Authority acknowledged that it could not continue to contribute to these services indefinitely. They are not part of a statutory responsibility of the Local Authority. Nevertheless, the Local Authority agreed a grant fund over a 36-month period, reducing each 12-month period by £11,000, ending August 2021, in order to provide a period for New Ark Play Association to develop a more sustainable service and end the reliance on the Local Authority funding. Over this period the Authority has continued to support the charity through:

- Regular meetings to provide opportunity to review services and discuss funding challenges
- Support to advertise the charity and events through the Families Information Service
- Information on potential funding opportunities available to charitable organisations

COVID brought about several challenges. However, New Ark Play Association has been able to access continued financial support through the Local Authority:

- The Local Authority Grant continued to be paid during the COVID period
- The Local Authority continued to pay the Nursery Education Grant, based on the previous year’s attendance figures, despite the temporary closure of the service, and reduced numbers attending when opened. The preschool continues as a viable part of New Ark services.
- COVID Grants were accessed totaling £13,506.80, since the initial lockdown

The media announcement of the risk of closure to the centre was unexpected. There had been no mention of closure during meetings leading up to the end of the grant period, nor immediately

afterwards. Annual reports for 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21 reported small profits for the charity, despite COVID and the reducing grant funding. The meetings held reported the recovery of the centre, increased numbers attending the centre, and the reinstatement of fund-raising events. Alternative opportunities to increase income were available prior to the end of the grant period. The Holiday and Food Activities Programme (HAF), provided funding to deliver services for targeted children in the local area. Unfortunately, New Ark Play Association chose not to take up this opportunity.

There have been further funding opportunities that have been discounted by the organisation such as through the opportunity to develop the provision for 2-year-olds, a very popular model with many pre-schools in the city.

The grant funding that was allocated to New Ark Play Association in August 2018 is no longer available. However, funds continue to be available through the delivery of the Holiday and Food Activities Programme. This government funding has been confirmed over the next three years, and subject to you successfully delivering the programme, could enable you to apply for funding and run the holiday activity to our most vulnerable children during this time. This could financially support those areas of your offer that are currently not sustainable, whilst providing an essential service for children in the community. We would encourage you to consider this opportunity.

In the meantime, should further funding opportunities arise either through the Local Authority or via our research on funding opportunities, we will of course let you know and encourage you to take up these when they become available.”

## **5. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION**

- 5.1 As the petitions presented in this report have been dealt with by Cabinet Members or officers, it is appropriate that the action taken is reported to Cabinet.

## **6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 6.1 There have been no alternative options considered.

## **7. IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no legal, financial, or equalities implications arising from the issues considered.

## **8. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- 8.1 Petitions presented to the Council and responses from officers.

## **9. APPENDICES**

- 9.1 None.

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