

PETITION REQUESTING DEMOLITION OF GARAGES NO'S 1-8 AND 9-12 ST HELEN CLOSE, COWLEY

Cabinet Member	Councillor Jonathan Bianco
Cabinet Portfolio	Finance, Property and Business Services
Officer Contact	Mike Paterson, Residents Services
Papers with report	Site plan

HEADLINE INFORMATION

Purpose of report	To inform the Cabinet Member that a petition was received on 16 December 2015 from Mrs Valerie Harvey. This contained 30 signatures and requested that the Council demolish garages No's 1 - 8 and 9 - 12 St Helen Close, Cowley and replace with much needed additional parking for the residents. This is eligible for consideration at a Petition Hearing with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Business Services.
Contribution to our plans and strategies	Not applicable
Financial Cost	Costs are estimated at £12,000 to demolish garages no 1-8, with additional costs (of approximately £5,000) to refurbish garages 9-12, which the service expects to recover through rental income within 18 months.
Relevant Policy Overview Committee	Corporate Services and Partnerships
Ward(s) affected	Brunel

RECOMMENDATION

That the Cabinet Member:

- 1. Meets the petitioners and considers their request that the Council demolishes garages No's 1 - 8 and 9 - 12 St Helen Close, Cowley and replaces with additional parking for the residents.**
- 2. Decides on the appropriate course of action having met with the petitioners.**

INFORMATION

Reasons for recommendation

To allow the Cabinet Member to meet the petitioners to consider the petition.

Alternative options considered

These can be identified from the discussions with the petitioners.

Comments of Policy Overview Committee(s)

None at this stage.

Supporting Information

1. A petition was received on 16 December 2015 from Ms Valerie Harvey. This contained 30 signatures and requested that the Council demolish garages No's 1 - 8 and 9 - 12 St Helen Close, Cowley and replace with much needed additional parking for the residents. This is eligible for consideration at a Petition Hearing with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Business Services.
2. The residents have signed the following statement :-

"We the residents of St Helen's Close, Cowley petition the Council to demolish Garages No's 1 - 8 and 9 - 12, 2 sites in St Helen's Close, Cowley and replace with much needed additional parking for residents."
3. The justification for the petition states that "The garages in question have been neglected by the Council and the residents consulted agreed that the best way forward would be to have them demolished."

Background

4. The Council is the freehold owner of the two garages sites, shown on the attached plan. Demolition of garages 1-8 received approval in principle from the Council's Strategic Property Governance meeting on 17 December 2015 and a project will shortly be initiated to tender these works and undertake them within the next few months. A scheme for a small residential development will then be drawn up and planning permission sought. Parking would be allowed on a temporary basis on the open space left after the garages have been demolished whilst the planning application is progressed. Residents will have the opportunity to comment on the proposed scheme for a small residential development as part of the planning process.
5. The Council's proposals for the demolition of garages 1-8 partly meets the residents wishes in the short term, however, the parking spaces will only be available on a temporary rather than a permanent basis. In the longer term, the Council's proposed scheme for a small residential development will contribute towards housing need within the Borough, but does not meet the petitioner's request for permanent residents parking.
6. The plan for garages 9-12 is to refurbish and bring them back into use and they would then be available to rent. There is a good level of demand for garages in the area and

when fully let the cost of refurbishment is estimated to be recoverable within 18 months and thereafter the garages would produce a valuable income for the Council. It is intended that this will take place within a similar timescale to the demolition of garages 1-8. This proposal does not meet the petitioner's request for the demolition of the garages for use as residents parking. The petitioner's proposal would not produce an income for the Council.

7. The lead petitioner, Ms Harvey was contacted by email on 15 January 2016 to advise her of the Council's proposals. Whilst Ms Harvey was pleased to hear of the demolition of garages 1-8, she confirmed that the residents of St Helen Close wished to proceed with their petition.

Financial Implications

The demolition costs could be capitalised if the project to build a new residential development is approved, with the relevant permissions in place.

If the residential development is not approved, the estimated £12,000 demolition costs will be charged to the Garages General Fund revenue budget of £150k. Given the lead time to specify the works, tender them and let the contract, it is assumed that the cost will fall within the 2016-17 financial year.

There will be a permanent loss of rental income associated with the 8 garages; however, due to the garages current state of disrepair, this rental income would not have been achievable anyway and the income would have been lost through the cost of voids.

Garages no's 9-12

As noted in the paragraph 6 of this report, the estimated payback of the refurbishment is 18 months. The projection income per annum from the refurbished garages is approximately £3,000 p.a. This would generate a net benefit to general fund budgets after the initial 18 month period mentioned.

EFFECT ON RESIDENTS, SERVICE USERS & COMMUNITIES

What will be the effect of the recommendation?

The recommendation will enable the Cabinet Member to discuss with the petitioners their concerns, and allow him to consider whether or not to agree to their requests.

Consultation Carried Out or Required

This Petition Hearing is part of the Council's consultation and democratic arrangements.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Finance

Corporate Finance has reviewed this report and concurs with the budgetary position outlined above, noting that there would be capacity to fund the proposed works from existing revenue budgets within Residents Services.

Legal

Cabinet Member Report - Petition Hearing 24 February 2016

The Borough Solicitor confirms that there are no specific legal implications arising from this report this stage.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Petition.