

Brighton & Hove City Council

Council

Agenda Item 60

Subject: Petition for Debate - Neglect of Public Facilities at Wish Park is Impacting the Community's Health

Date of meeting: 14 December 2023

Report of: Executive Director for Governance, People & Resources

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Ward(s) affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 Under the Council's Petition Scheme if a petition contains more than 1,250 signatures and is not petition requesting officer evidence, it will be debated by the Full Council.
- 1.2 The e-petition has resulted in triggering a debate at the council meeting, having exceeded the threshold with a total of 1765 signatures confirmed at the time of printing the report.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the petition is noted and referred to the City Environment, South Downs & The Sea Committee for consideration.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION / CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

3.1 The Petition:

Wish Park is one of the few areas in the city where residents can enjoy recreational activities in the heart of their community.

The park offers:

- Football for girls, boys and adult teams– Two large local clubs use it as their base and there are multiple holiday clubs.
- Cricket used for weekend and midweek games over the summer
- Friends group that organises the upkeep of the park and recreational activities

- Local schools and nurseries use the space and playground
- Vibrant social networks have developed around the Café supporting groups of all ages and interests
- Exercise classes run by independent providers for many resident types
- Informal gatherings and family events for many multi-cultural groups

Sadly, there has been a deterioration of the park which has now come to a head with recent events that we believe were predictable and could have been avoided, examples:

- Outside gym removed – promised to be replaced but never was
- Dangerous football pitches now closed due to lack of maintenance/repair; children have suffered serious injury and council advises not expected to be repaired this season.
- Cricket Square disappearing as no longer maintained and fenced off, the public unaware and have started cycling and playing football on the square
- Planted areas becoming overgrown and dangerous - Gardening group suspended as residents have become disengaged

Many local groups and residents have tried to contact the council parks department to address these issues but no progress is being made and no plans to change the direction of neglect.

The impacts are appearing very fast:

- Children and adults missing out on exercise – physical and mental health is being affected with some children feeling isolated through lack of social contact
- At a time of cost-of-living crisis access to affordable facilities for exercise is being withdrawn, impacting the most vulnerable members of our community – this is counter to the council’s own [health and wellbeing strategy](#)
- Without the active groups in the area the park will become less welcoming and safe, likely to become a target for antisocial behaviour

4. PROCEDURE:

- 4.1 The petition will be debated at the Council meeting in accordance with the agreed protocol:
- (i) The Lead petitioner will be invited by the Mayor to present the petition and will have up to 3 minutes in which to outline the petition and confirm the number of signatures;
 - (ii) The Mayor will then open the matter up for debate by councillors for period of 15 minutes and will first call on the relevant Committee Chair to respond to the petition and move a proposed response. The Mayor will then call on those councillors who have indicated a desire to speak in the matter, before calling on the relevant Committee Chair to respond to the debate;
 - (iii) An amendment to the recommendation in paragraph 2.1 of the report or to add additional recommendations should be submitted by 10.00am on the day before the meeting; otherwise it will be subject to the Mayor's discretion as to being appropriate. Any such amendment will need to be formally moved and seconded at the meeting;
 - (iv) After the 15 minutes set aside for the debate, the Mayor will then formally put:
 - (a) Any amendments in the order in which they are moved, and
 - (b) The substantive recommendation(s) as amended (if amended).

