

**Manchester City Council  
Report for Information**

**Report to:** Council – 13 July 2016

**Subject:** Petition: MEN Piccadilly Gardens

**Report of:** The Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit

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**Purpose of the report:**

This report advises the Council of the procedure for dealing with petitions under the Council's petitions scheme.

**Recommendation:**

That the Council debate the petition requesting the Council take action on Piccadilly Gardens and decide how it will respond.

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**Wards Affected:**

City Centre

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**Contact Officers:**

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**Background Documents:**

None

## Background

1. The Council's Petitions Scheme requires petitions to be debated at a meeting of full Council if the number of valid signatures exceeds 4000. The Council has a petition about Piccadilly Gardens with 20365 signatures. The arrangements for a Council debate of a petition are described in the petition scheme and the Council's procedural rules in the constitution. The petitions scheme is published on the Council's website.  
[http://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/10095/petitions/4759/manchester\\_city\\_councils\\_petitions\\_scheme](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/10095/petitions/4759/manchester_city_councils_petitions_scheme).

## Piccadilly Gardens Petition

2. Following a campaign in the Manchester Evening News, the Council has received an e-petition containing 20,365 signatures. The petition statement is as follows:

*We, the undersigned, petition the Council to restore our pride in Piccadilly Gardens - a Manchester Evening News petition:*

*"The Manchester Evening News calls on the council to make good its previous promises - and finally make the city proud of Piccadilly Gardens.*

*For years Mancunians have despaired of the petty crime, bleak concrete and patchy grass that dominate Manchester's main public square.*

*Thousands of people pass through this space every day, from Manchester and beyond, but it has become an embarrassment to people living, working and spending their free time in the city centre.*

*In 2014 the council promised to heed our last call for a major facelift. Yet in many ways it has only deteriorated further.*

*We now call on the town hall to work up a real, visible plan in conjunction with property owners Legal and General, a plan that can be put out to public consultation so that we all have a say in the space's future.*

*That includes either demolishing or transforming its unloved concrete wall, once and for all.*

*Manchester deserves to be proud of Piccadilly Gardens."*

3. The petition organiser has been invited, and will be attending the meeting to make a statement to Council about the petition. More detail on the procedure that is to be followed is provided in the next section of the report.
4. In March 2016, the Council considered a motion in response to the campaign from the Manchester Evening News. Since then, the Council has planned repairs to the fountain and the restoration of the jet display configuration as originally designed to take place in the autumn. The statue of Queen Victoria

has also been fully cleaned and restored, and the spring planting for the gardens and reurfing of the worn grassed areas has been completed. The Council is in discussions with Legal and General to develop ideas for carrying out improvements to Piccadilly Gardens. These discussions on both the commercial and design aspects are still at an early stage. If any proposals are agreed, a report will be brought to the Executive and the public will be consulted before any action is taken.

### **The Council's Petition Scheme**

5. If a petition contains 4000 valid entries from people who live work or study in the city, it will trigger the right to be debated at full Council. At the meeting, the petition organiser, or their representative is allowed five minutes to present their petition to the Council. Councillors can then discuss the petition for a maximum of 25 minutes before deciding how to responds to the petition.
6. The procedure to be followed during the petition debate is set out in the Council's Procedure Rules at Part 4 Section A of the Council's Constitution. Council procedure rule 13.A provides:

#### **13A.1 Presentation of Petition Requiring Debate**

Where a Petition Requiring Debate has been properly submitted in accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme and is included on the agenda for an ordinary or extraordinary Council meeting, the main petition contact (as defined in the Council's Petition Scheme) or a person nominated by the main petition contact to act on their behalf, will be allowed to speak for a maximum of 5 minutes in order to present their petition to Council.

#### **13A.2 Petition Debate**

A Petition Requiring Debate under the Council's Petition Scheme will be debated by Council Members. Any Council Member who speaks in a Petition Debate may speak only once and for a maximum of 5 minutes on the issue raised by the Petition Requiring Debate. When chairing a Petition Debate the Lord Mayor will normally seek to ensure that the Petition Debate lasts for a maximum of 25 minutes, although the Lord Mayor has discretion to extend the time for a Petition Debate where he/she considers this to be appropriate.

#### **13A.3 Council Response to Petitions following a Petition Debate**

At the end of the Petition Debate, the Lord Mayor will ask for motions on how the Council wishes to respond to the Petition Requiring Debate which may include:

- a) Taking the action requested in the Petition, with or without modifications;
- b) Noting the Petition, but not taking the action requested in the Petition;
- c) Commissioning further investigation into the matter;

- d) Deciding whether to make recommendations to the Executive where the matter falls to the Executive to make the final decision.

Members will vote on such motion(s) by voice or by show of hands, or by ballot, at the discretion of the Lord Mayor.

#### 13A.4 Notification of the Council's Response following a Petition Debate

The main petition contact will receive written confirmation from the Council of the decision taken by the Council following a Petition Debate and this will be published on the Council's Petition Website (unless under all the circumstances the Council believes that this would be inappropriate)."

### **Recommendations**

7. The Council is invited to take account of the level of support that the petition received, and the action that the Council has taken to date to respond to the requests in the petition, and to decide how to respond. Based on the procedure set out in the constitution, the Council has the following options:
  - a. Taking the action requested in the petition, with or without modifications;
  - b. Noting the petition, but not taking the action requested in the petition;
  - c. Asking officers to further investigate the matter
  - d. Make recommendations to the Executive