

To: Council
Date: 18 July 2022
Report of: Head of Law and Governance
Title of Report: Petition submitted in accordance with Council procedure rules – No to Greyhound Racing in Oxford

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To set before Council a petition meeting the criteria for debate under the Council’s petitions scheme.
Key decision:	No
Cabinet Member with responsibility:	Councillor Chewe Munkonge, Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks
Corporate Priority:	Not applicable
Policy Framework:	Local Plan 2036 Council Strategy 2020-24
Recommendation(s): That Council in accordance with the Council’s petitions scheme:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hears the address by the petition organiser; 2. Debates the proposal contained within the petition and any relevant motions/recommendations submitted by Members by the deadline; and 3. Agrees the action it wishes to take. 	

The petition

1. An ePetition titled ‘No to Greyhound Racing in Oxford’ was submitted in accordance with the Council’s petitions scheme and ran from 18 August 2021 to 31 December 2021.
2. The petition is available to view on the Council’s website [here](#) and states in full:

We the undersigned petition the council to work cross-party and support the development of leisure facilities at Oxford Stadium in line with the Local Plan, but that do not involve greyhound racing or gambling.

Oxford City Council has designated Oxford Stadium for leisure activities in the latest Local Plan. The site is currently owned by a developer, and leased to someone who is planning to reopen the Stadium as a venue for greyhound racing.

Greyhound racing failed at Oxford Stadium in 2008 - there is no widespread support for this activity across the UK or for resuming it in our city; the cruelty involved in breeding and racing greyhounds is well documented, and should no longer be part of a city with Oxford's reputation.

The site can be put to much better use as a leisure facility that is inclusive, providing a range of activities for all ages and disabilities, centred around Oxford's renown as a cycling city through the development of a velodrome. This focus will enable a variety of biking activities as well as the attraction of an elite sport, offering a hub for additional activities including reuse of the existing building.

3. 3,138 people signed the ePetition.
4. The petition organiser submitted an address to the Council meeting on 21 March 2022, but was unable to attend in person. A copy of the wording of the address can be viewed in the briefing note and supplementary papers for that meeting.
5. A written response to the address was provided by the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Tourism:

The Council's involvement at the Oxford Stadium was to ensure the site was protected for community use. We do not own the Stadium or play a role in running it, and there is no decision within the remit of Oxford City Council as to whether or not greyhound racing returns to Oxford Stadium. The licensing of the racing would be by the national body, the National Greyhound Board of Great Britain, not the Council.

The site is allocated in the Local Plan for community and leisure uses with enabling residential development on the car park. Policy SP51 states that in circumstances in which speedway and greyhound racing are not viable, "...residential-led development supported by appropriate uses that will benefit the wider community, for example, complimentary leisure or community uses...will be supported". The City Council will consider any planning application for the site in this context.

6. In accordance with the Council's petitions scheme, any petition presented as part of an address directly to Council and that contains at least 1,500 signatures will not be debated at that meeting but at the next ordinary meeting.

Actions for Council

7. Possible actions available to Council include:
 - a. Noting the petition
 - b. Taking the action the petition requests¹
 - c. Not taking the action the petition requests
 - d. Commissioning a further review
 - e. Where the matter falls to the Cabinet to make the final decision, decide whether to make recommendations to the Cabinet to inform that decision.

¹ Where a petition is about something over which the Council has no direct control, it can only consider making representations on behalf of the community to the relevant body, or where possible it will work with its partners to respond to the petition.

Constitution rules and procedure

8. The Council's petitions scheme outlines the procedure for handling petitions and is set out in the Constitution. The scheme specifies that a petition containing at least 1,500 signatures will be debated at full Council if the petition organiser makes a request for a debate in writing directly to the Head of Law and Governance.
9. The Council procedures are set out in the Constitution. The Council procedures specify that any petition presented as part of an address directly to Council and that contains at least 1,500 signatures will not be debated at that meeting but at the next ordinary meeting.
10. The Constitution states that the petition organiser may address Council upon the petition for up to five minutes before the debate upon the petition at the next ordinary meeting.
11. The motion for debate is set out above in paragraph 2.
12. An alternative substantive motion/recommendation must be proposed if councillors wish to take any action other than adopting the action in the petition, not adopting the action in the petition, or deferring, referring or noting the issues raised by the petition.
13. If a Member wishes to put a substantive motion/recommendation on a petition they must let the Head of Law and Governance have that motion/recommendation by 10am on Friday 15 July 2022 (the working day before the Council meeting). These would then be published in the Council briefing note. Any amendments to these would have to be with Committee and Members' Services by 11am on 18 July 2022 (the day of the meeting).

Financial implications

14. The implications of this report will depend on Council's recommendations, if any, and Council should be mindful of the possible costs in formulating its recommendations.

Legal issues

15. The implications will depend on Council's recommendations, if any. Any recommendations will be considered in detail by the Cabinet, before returning to Council should this be necessary.

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Background Papers: None	

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