

REPORT TO: Petitions Committee

MEETING DATE: 11 September 2014

BY: Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services)

SUBJECT: Petition Presented to the Petitions Committee for Consideration

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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To present the petition, outlined in Appendix 1, to the Petitions Committee for consideration.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Committee considers the petition, as outlined in Appendix 1, and takes action as required:
- (a) PET1405 – Calling on East Lothian Council to Remove Scot's Pine Trees Located in the Children's Play Area at Parsons Pool, Dunbar

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Petitions Committee is asked to note that 1 petition has been received. The petition outlined in Appendix 1 is deemed to be competent, and the Committee is asked to consider and refer the matter to the relevant Cabinet spokesperson/Department Head, where appropriate.
- 3.2 Further details about the location, maintenance and impact of the trees referred to in this petition are provided by Mr Michael Foy, Tree Officer, in a background note at Appendix 2.
- 3.3 Members are advised that they may view the petition by contacting the Clerk to the Petitions Committee.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no immediate policy implications arising from this report. Depending on the action required and agreed by the Committee, there may be policy implications relating to particular issues arising from

competent petitions. These will be subject to a separate report to the relevant committee, as required.

5 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1 This report is not applicable to the well being of equalities groups and an Equalities Impact Assessment is not required.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial – dependent on the action required and agreed by the Committee.

6.2 Personnel – dependent on the action required and agreed by the Committee.

6.3 Other – dependent on the action required and agreed by the Committee.

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 Appendix 1: Summary of petition for consideration

7.2 Appendix 2: Background report by Michael Foy, Tree Officer.

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DATE	04/09/2014

EAST LoTHIAN COUNCIL PETITIONS COMMITTEE
PETITION FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE COMMITTEE AT ITS MEETING OF 11 SEPTEMBER 2014

Petition Ref:	Subject of Petition	Date Received	Principal Petitioner	Number of Signatures
PET1405	<p>Calling on East Lothian Council to Remove Scot's Pine Trees Located in the Children's Play Area at Parsonspool, Dunbar</p> <p>In his covering letter, Mr Higginbottom made the following points:</p> <p>"Our reasons for this request are mainly that the trees are now very old and our concerns are they are becoming unsafe with added all year round problem caused by falling pine needles from the trees. These needles which are very sharp do not decay and do not only block the gutters and drains of the surrounding houses they are a constant source of nuisance in covering all gardens including the children's play park.</p> <p>During wet and windy conditions the needles also cover the public footpath under the trees making the path treacherously slippery and someone has already broken a limb by falling on the path.</p> <p>We must stress that our group is not against trees being in the park far from it we merely ask that consideration is given re the trees that are currently there."</p>	05/06/14	Mr Stuart Higginbottom	48

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide information to the Petitions Committee on East Lothian Council's views on the Pine trees growing in Parsonspool, Dunbar following receipt of a petition requesting that the trees are felled.

2 OPINION

- 2.1 It is the opinion of the report writer that the Pine trees growing in Parsonspool, Dunbar are retained and continue to be managed by East Lothian Council.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The double line of 19 Pine trees (18x *Pinus nigra* + 1x *Pinus sylvestris*) which grow on the west side of Parsonspool open space have been a feature of the area since before the nearby houses were built. The open space they grow within is owned and managed by East Lothian Council.

- 3.2 Best estimates put the majority of the trees at 80+ years old. Originally the line of trees extended from Belhaven Road up to the walls of Lauderdale Park.

- 3.3 The trees grow next to four properties:

- 2 Belhaven Road (private residence)
- 1 Letham Park (private residence)
- 2 Letham Park (private residence)
- 64 Parsonspool (EL council house)

- 3.4 The council's Tree Officer has spoken to all of the householders on a number of occasions over the years and to local elected members who have been approached by the residents.

The two main areas of complaint regarding the trees are:

- Needles & cones falling into gardens, onto roofs & the public footpath that runs between the lines of trees.
- Safety concerns over branches breaking or trees uprooting.

- 3.5 The trees are inspected by East Lothian Councils Tree Officer. At last inspection they were found to be in a healthy condition with no apparent signs of disease, decay or instability.

- 3.6 The public footpath is swept as part of the street sweeping program.

- 3.6 The council have undertaken pruning works on a number of occasions to reduce branches growing into the gardens of the adjacent properties. Three trees at the north end of the avenue were removed in within the last 5 years. Two for safety reasons & one was blown over in high winds.
- 3.7 In June 2014 a petition with 48 signatures on it was sent to Councillor Hampshire requesting that the trees be removed and replaced with 'more urban friendly trees'.

4 DISCUSSION

- 4.1 The trees are an important feature in a town in which there are relatively few large mature trees in public ownership. They grow on an area of high ground and are tall enough that they can be seen above the surrounding houses.
- 4.2 They soften the built environment and along with the nearby broadleaf trees frame this main entrance into the centre of Dunbar & the Conservation Area.
- 4.3 The Pine trees that grew on private land to the North of the existing trees but were part of the same line of trees were made the subject of a Tree Preservation Order (TPO NO75) in 1989. This means that the council had determined that the trees were of significant enough amenity value to the town that they should be protected from unauthorised removal.
- 4.4 The trees drop needle & cones into the adjacent gardens which result in the residents having to clear gardens, paths, decking & guttering. The council has & will continue to undertaken work to the trees to try and minimise this problem should the trees be retained. The councils Tree Officer does not believe that the needles & cones that fall into the gardens & roofs of the properties warrant their removal, given their significance in the landscape.
- 4.5 Complaints regarding the trees have been ongoing for a number of years. The council has always rejected calls to remove the trees based on their significance in the landscape. The petition asks that the trees are removed and replaced with more 'urban friendly trees'.

5 OPTIONS

- 5.1 That the trees are retained as they are and the Council continue to manage them. Pruning works continue to be undertaken as and when required and if trees are removed when they die or develop problems replacement trees are planted.
- 5.2 All 19 trees are removed and new young trees are planted. The petition asks for 'urban friendly trees'. The councils tree officer would like to see broadleaf trees planted that will one day grow to the same size/scale/amenity that the existing trees provide.

5.3 That the 19 trees are removed in a phased program over a set number of years and replacement trees are planted. It has to be recognised however that it will take at least 40+ years for the visual amenity to be restored.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial – To fell 19 the trees, grind stumps - £6000
To plant replacement trees & maintain for 5yrs - £4000

6.2 Personnel - n/a

6.3 Other - n/a

7 ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 Location plan and photographs of trees.

AUTHOR'S NAME	Michael Foy
DESIGNATION	Tree Officer
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DATE	27/08/2014

**PINE TREES - PARSONS POOL, DUNBAR
PHOTOGRAPHS**



Parsonspool looking west towards trees.



Belhaven Road looking west towards trees.

**PINE TREES - PARSONS POOL, DUNBAR
PHOTOGRAPHS**



Parsonspool looking west at 2 Belhaven Road



Parsonspool looking west at 2 Letham Park

**PINE TREES - PARSONS POOL, DUNBAR
PHOTOGRAPHS**



Parsonspool looking at 64 Parsonspool

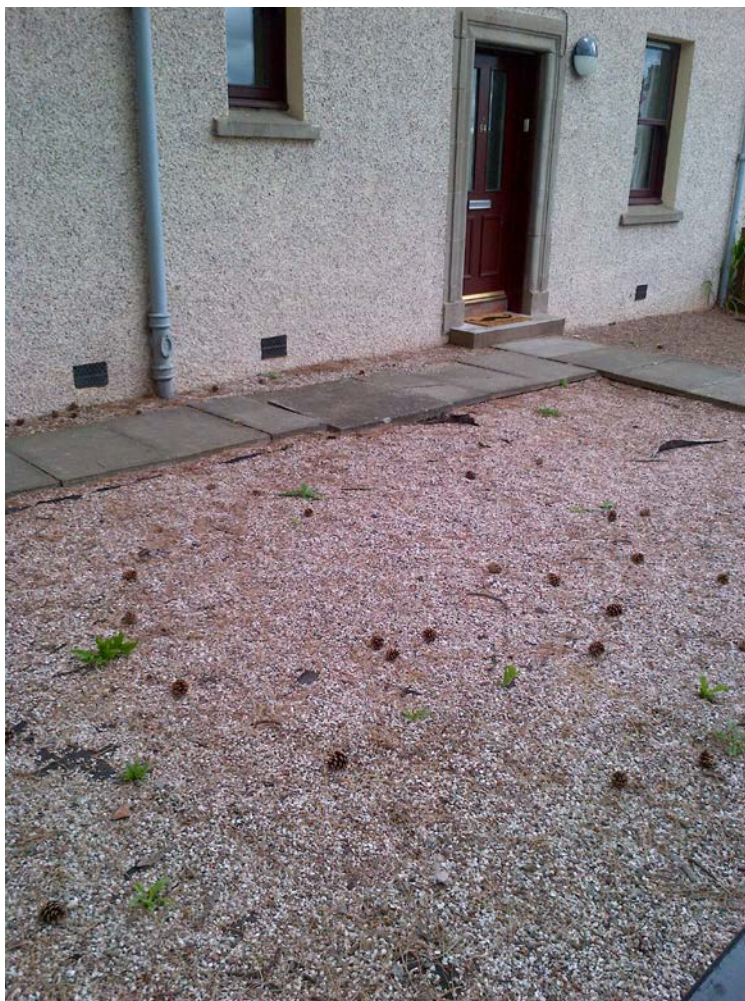


2 Letham Park garage roof

**PINE TREES - PARSONS POOL, DUNBAR
PHOTOGRAPHS**



2 Letham Park roof



64 Parsonspool garden

**PINE TREES - PARSONS POOL, DUNBAR
PHOTOGRAPHS**



Trees viewed from 2 Letham Park



Footpath between trees