



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE PETITIONS COMMITTEE**

**THURSDAY 11 SEPTEMBER 2014
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, TOWNHOUSE, HADDINGTON**

Committee Members Present:

Provost L Broun-Lindsay
Councillor W Innes
Councillor S Currie

Council Officials Present:

Mr R Montgomery, Head of Infrastructure
Mr M Foy, Tree Officer
Ms C Molloy, Senior Solicitor

Petitioner(s) Present:

Mr G Robertson (on behalf of the petitioner)

Clerk:

Ms F Currie, Committees Assistant

Apologies:

Councillor M Veitch

Declarations of Interest:

None

1. PETITION PRESENTED TO THE PETITIONS COMMITTEE FOR CONSIDERATION

PET 1405: CALLING ON EAST LoTHIAN COUNCIL TO REMOVE SCOTS PINE TREES LOCATED IN THE CHILDREN’S PLAY AREA AT PARSONSPOOL, DUNBAR

Ms Catherine Molloy, Senior Solicitor, provided a brief summary of the Committee’s remit and indicated that Members were being asked to consider a petition calling on the Council to remove Scots Pine trees located in the children’s play area in Parsonspool, Dunbar.

The Convenor noted that the Principal Petitioner, Mr Stuart Higginbottom, could not attend the meeting but Mr George Robertson, a local resident, was present to answer questions if required. He also welcomed Mr Michael Foy, East Lothian Council’s Tree Officer, and thanked him for his helpful report to the Committee. The Convenor then asked Members to confirm they were content to proceed with consideration of the petition, which they did.

In response to questions from Members, Mr Foy explained that the Council did not wish to replace the Scots Pine trees at present but would continue to monitor them and consider replacement as and when necessary, for example, should they become diseased or unsafe. He confirmed that his preference would be to replace the trees gradually with other species which were similar in size and spread. In the meantime, he assured Members that regular monitoring of the trees would continue and any issues, such as removal of dead or unsafe branches, would be addressed as required.

Councillor Innes proposed a compromise of felling only one line of trees but was reminded that the Committee’s remit did not allow for consideration of such a proposal.

Mr Robertson stated that while he had no wish to advocate felling healthy trees, some of those nearest his property had become problematical. He supported removal of the trees to the west side of the path to protect his and neighbouring properties from potential damage. He also pointed out that the trees were growing in sandy soil and this may also make them unsafe. Mr Foy indicated that he would not be in favour of removing one line of trees and advised that the trees were capable of standing safely in the soil.

Councillor Currie noted that the trees were subject to regular monitoring and management and he was satisfied that any concerns could be addressed within this process. He did not consider the petition to be well founded and was minded to dismiss it. Councillor Innes said that, in his opinion, the trees contributed significantly to the amenity of the local area and should not be felled. However, he would have a further discussion with Mr Foy over the long-term management plan. The Convenor concurred with the views of his colleagues. He also encouraged Mr Robertson and his neighbours to continue to raise any concerns they may have with Mr Foy.

Decision

The Committee agreed unanimously that the petition did not have merit was therefore dismissed.

Signed

Provost Ludovic Broun-Lindsay
Convener of the Petitions Committee