

29 January 2020		ITEM: 15
Council		
Purfleet: Changing name to Purfleet-on-Thames		
Wards and communities affected: West Thurrock and South Stifford, and Aveley and Uplands	Key Decision: Yes	
Report of: Councillor Rob Gledhill, Leader of Thurrock Council		
Accountable Director: Karen Wheeler, Director of Strategy, Communications and Customer Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

On 30 January 2019 a petition from 611 residents of Purfleet was presented to Council requesting that the current name of the town of Purfleet be changed to Purfleet-on-Thames.

Group Leaders agreed to a public consultation which ran for 12 weeks from Monday 22 July to Sunday 13 October, offering everyone an opportunity to give their views about the proposed name change to Purfleet-on-Thames.

84% of respondents thought that the name should be changed to Purfleet-on-Thames. 185 responses were received.

It is a function of Council to alter or change the name of an area and Full Council are therefore asked to agree to the name change following the outcome of the public consultation exercise.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That Council agree to change the name of the town of Purfleet to Purfleet-on-Thames.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The proposed name change originated from a residents' petition submitted to Full Council on 30 January 2019. There is no legal status in a town name and unless Her Majesty the Queen grants a charter for any town then the name of a town is derived from custom and practice. It therefore follows that if there is no legal status in a town name, then there is no formal legal process which dictates how it may change and changes are subject to custom and practice. The Council itself can, after due consultation, propose to make such a

decision on behalf of the community and seek to persuade other stakeholders to do likewise. The Council is entitled to do this because the Local Government Act 2000 allows the Council to do anything which they consider likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic well-being of their area. This is augmented by powers under the Authority's General Power of Competence.

- 2.2 In this report, Full Council is now being asked to progress a name change from Purfleet to Purfleet-on-Thames following public consultation.
- 2.3 Group Leaders agreed to a public consultation which ran for 12 weeks from Monday 22 July to Sunday 13 October, offering everyone an opportunity to give their views about the proposed name change to Purfleet-on-Thames.
- 2.4 Businesses, community groups and residents were all engaged throughout the process, and posters promoting the consultation were displayed in the Purfleet Community Hub, local bus stops and by local organisations as well as publicised in press releases and on social media with a link to the online survey. Hard copies of the survey were also made available.
- 2.5 84% of respondents thought that the name should be changed to Purfleet-on-Thames.
- 2.6 185 responses were received including 126 from residents, 4 from businesses and 14 on behalf of a community group or organisation.
- 2.7 The majority of the respondents were positive about changing the name to celebrate the history of the area, formally recognise the link with the river Thames, help promote the planned regeneration activity, reflect the new aspirations of the people and place, and to support raising the profile of Purfleet.
- 2.8 Respondents who did not support the change were mostly concerned about the cost and that it was unlikely to make a material difference to the area.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The Council is entitled to make this decision because the Local Government Act 2000 allows the Council to do anything which they consider likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic well-being of their area. This as indicated is augmented by powers under the Authority's General Power of Competence. However it is necessary in order to properly inform such a decision that appropriate consultation be undertaken with residents and relevant stakeholders.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 **Accountability** – as a community leader the Council needs to be responsive to requests from its different communities but ensure that it responds in an open and accountable manner by giving all a fair chance to comment.

- 4.2 **Self-reliance** - the objective of the petition appears to be around raising and / or improving the profile of Purfleet by emphasizing its proximity to the Thames and to return to an earlier description of the town as Purfleet-on-Thames during the Victorian era.
- 4.3 **Community** – the Council as a community leader needs to recognise and be responsive to the various communities which exist within the borough or impact upon it. With respect to the sought for name change for the town, there may be a number of local communities which are likely to be particularly interested in the proposals and change e.g. the Purfleet Community Forum, other Purfleet specific groups and schools.
- 4.4 **Tradition** – the proposal at its core appears to be seeking to embrace the traditional relationship between Purfleet and the River Thames.
- 4.5 Reflecting on the above it is believed that progressing the name change to Purfleet-on-Thames following an appropriate consultation is supportive of the Council's vision and its community leadership position.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 As set out in the report.
- 5.2 Highways England responded to the consultation and stated that they did not have any issue in principle to changing the name of Purfleet to Purfleet-on-Thames. However, this may have implications for signage in the area and asked to be notified of the outcome as soon as possible.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 As set out above, this is in line with the Council's community leadership role.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by **Jo Freeman**
Finance Manager

There is no direct cost to change the name to Purfleet-on-Thames, however, there would be some cost to the council to change things like signage. Exact costs to replace signage have not yet been calculated and would require a survey of the current signage across the borough if the decision is made to change the name. Entry signs to the town will be replaced at the earliest opportunity but other signage will be changed as the redevelopment of Purfleet progresses.

The cost of communication activity to promote the consultation was estimated at £500 and is from existing budgets.

7.2 **Legal**

Implications verified by **Courage Emovon**
Ag Strategic Lead / Deputy Head of Legal Services / Deputy Monitoring Officer

The legal implications are set out in the body of the report and Legal Services is on hand to advise on any legal implications arising as and when required.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by **Rebecca Lee**
Strategic Lead – Community Development

The consultation was open to all residents, businesses and other stakeholders with provision made for those who were unable to access this online. This allowed all interested parties to have a say including those outside of Purfleet itself.

The name change to Purfleet-on-Thames is likely to have a positive impact on the local community and reflects the desired outcome from the petition and consultation response.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

None.

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Relevant local government legislation
- Purfleet on Thames petition

9. **Appendices to the report**

None

Report Author:

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