

CONGLETON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Prosperity Scrutiny Committee
Held on Wednesday, 11th April, 2007
at Conference Room, Congleton Town Hall, High Street, Congleton

PRESENT

Councillor J Brown (Chairman)

Borough Councillors

Councillors A Barratt, Mrs J Burgess, W Goodall, R Grayson, P Kolker and B Moran

Also Present

S Jones – Head of Safer Communities
P Lowe – RTA Associates

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor A Large

2 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting held on the 15th January 2007 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported

4 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No questions had been received from members of the public

5 MANAGEMENT OF CAR PARKS

Statement by Chairman of the Committee

The Chairman stated that any future decision to introduce any regime of car parking charges in the Borough would be a major policy decision that would need to be taken by Full Council. It would not be a decision that could be made by either the Prosperity Scrutiny Committee or Executive.

(Note

In accordance with Rule No.31 and with the prior permission of the Chairman, Councillors C V Burgess and D I Hough addressed the Committee on this matter).

Car Park Management Interim Report

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Safer Communities regarding car park management.

Executive had commissioned an in-depth study focusing primarily on the use and management of designated shopping car parks within the Borough. The study was commissioned to be delivered in 3 phases.

- Phase 1 focused on the current situation i.e. condition of car parks, current management practice and current car park usage levels.
- Phase 2 focused on future options for change which would include management options, costs and the views of stakeholders.

1. Councillor Brown asked who had decided which car parks should be designated as shopping car parks.

In reply the Head of Safer Communities stated that car parks had been designated following an internal assessment. Car parks that had not been initially designated as shoppers car parks could be included in future car park management schemes.

Phase 3 of the study would be the preparation of a business case. However, before this could be undertaken a consultation with the following key stakeholders would be undertaken; Borough Council Members, Chambers of Commerce, Market Town Initiatives, Cheshire County Council Highways Department, Town/Parish Councils in Alsager, Middlewich, Sandbach, Congleton and Holmes Chapel, and the Police.

2. Councillor Goodall asked how much the study had cost and requested clarification regarding the financial information relating to each of the 4 options included in the report.

In reply, the Head of Safer Communities stated that the study had cost £23,000 which had been allocated from the 2006/2007 budget. The Head of Safer Communities outlined financial information for each of the options and stated that the information had been reviewed by the Council's Finance Manager.

3. Councillor Grayson asked whether there were any statutory guidelines regarding the proposed consultation process.

The Head of Safer Communities stated that in accordance with the Compact there would be a minimum 12 week consultation period, however there were no statutory guidelines.

4. Councillor Grayson asked if an information pack for key stakeholders was being produced.

In response, the Head of Safer Communities stated that an information pack would be put together, however, the methodology for the consultation had not been finalised.

5. Councillor Moran asked whether the timescales for implementation of car park management schemes were realistic.

In reply, Peter Lowe stated that the timescales identified in the report were realistic however any timescales would be dependent on a desire to implement a car park management scheme.

6. *Councillor Kolker suggested that private car park owners such as local supermarkets should be identified as a key stakeholder and be consulted accordingly.*

Councillor Kolker also suggested that it would be useful to investigate the knock-on effect of introducing car parking charges and suggested that Vale Royal Borough Council and Knutsford Town Council be asked about their experiences regarding car park management.

7. *Councillor Grayson asked whether a review of other similar sized local authorities who had recently introduced car park charges had been conducted.*

In reply, the Head of Safer Communities stated that the study had not investigated the effects on economic prosperity, however this issue would be included in a further report.

Off Street Car Parking Charging Study and Parking Compliance Survey

The Committee received information from Mr P Lowe of RTA Associates Limited, on the off-street car parking charging study and parking compliance survey. Based upon the findings from the car park usage survey RTA Associates had concluded that there was a need for improved usage control and availability for car parking for shopping purposes.

The report contained a number of recommendations which included a recommendation to introduce charging on 14 of the Borough's car parks.

1. *Councillor Goodall asked why only two potential options were listed in the study and enquired why an option to maintain car parks without charging had not been included as a third option.*

In reply, the Head of Safer Communities stated that the consultants had been commissioned to look at options other than maintaining car parks. He stated that the budget allocation for maintaining car parks was not sufficient to maintain all car parks in the Borough to the desired standard.

Councillor Goodall requested further information on all the options that were available.

2. *Councillor Moran requested information on the rationale for the recommended parking controls for each specific car park.*

3. *Councillor Goodall requested clarification regarding the time limits for short and long stay car parks.*

In reply Mr Lowe stated that the time limits were comparable to the time restrictions for single yellow lines. Mr Lowe also stated the maximum stay of 10 hours was actually the maximum amount of time that car park use could be charged.

4. *Councillor Grayson asked for further clarification on alternative methods of controlled parking which included disc parking.*

5. *Councillor Moran asked whether Town Councils would be consulted on the designation of car parks.*

In reply, the Head of Safer Communities stated that Town Councils would be offered an overview presentation to include specific issues relating to their particular town.

(NOTE: The meeting adjourned at 7.45 p.m. and re-convened at 7.50 p.m.)

Car Park Management- Interim Report

The Committee received further information from the Head of Safer Communities on the car park management interim report. It had been found that there was justification to redistribute parking in Congleton and Sandbach and there were issues regarding the car parking for rail users in Holmes Chapel. It was also found that there was spare capacity in car parks in Alsager and Middlewich, consideration would need to be given as to whether the Council was achieving best use of these amenities.

In order to deliver effective car park management both on and off-street, the Council would need to pursue the introduction of on-street parking decriminalised parking enforcement through the powers available under 1991 Road Traffic Act. Options were being explored for car parking enforcement which included the use of in-house resources or external agencies. It was also found that a pay and display enforcement method would be the most appropriate in the Borough.

1. Councillor Moran enquired whether residents parking schemes had been investigated.

In reply, the Head of Safer Communities stated that the County Council, as the Highway Authority, had to approve any residents parking schemes however such schemes would be appropriate in some areas of the Borough.

2. Councillor Kolker asked what were the objectives of the Council in respect of its car parks

It was pointed out that this matter should be referred to Executive.

(NOTE

In accordance with Rule 31 and with prior permission of the Chairman, Councillors Hough and Baxendale addressed the Committee on the above matter).

RESOLVED –

1. That the Head of Safer Communities be requested to provide the committee with the following information at the earliest opportunity: -

- a. The cost per Council taxpayer of the current cost of maintaining car parks.
- b. Detailed information on all options relating to car park management schemes.
- c. An explanation of the rationale towards the conclusions reached in relation to the recommended parking controls for each specific car park.
- d. Further information regarding the advantages and disadvantages of disc parking schemes.

2. That Executive be recommended to review the timescales for the implementation of car parking charges to incorporate contingencies.
3. That Executive be requested to contact Vale Royal Borough Council and Knutsford Town Council to obtain information regarding their experiences of car park management schemes.
4. That Executive be recommended to amend the term “maximum stay 10 hours” to “maximum chargeable duration under 10 hours”.
5. That Executive be requested to undertake a quality of life survey amongst residents prior to the consultation with key stakeholders
6. That Executive be recommended to include in the report a Statement of Intent regarding the designation of car parks and that key stakeholders be consulted on their intended designation.
7. That Executive be recommended to include private car park owners in the list of key stakeholders to be consulted
8. That the Head of Safer Communities be requested to visit Town/Parish Councils to give a presentation on car park management schemes and issues relating to their specific town as part of the consultation process.
9. That if Executive approve the consultation exercise with key stakeholders, the cost of the consultation exercise and the documentation that will be forwarded to key stakeholders be submitted to the Prosperity Scrutiny Committee prior to the consultation being undertaken.
10. That the Head of Safer Communities circulate all appendices which had been produced by RTA Associates to Prosperity Scrutiny Committee Members.
11. That Executive be requested to clarify what the objectives of the Council are in respect its car parks.

The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and concluded at 8.20 pm

JOHN BROWN
CHAIRMAN