

## **ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**

Monday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2010 at 6.00pm

### **Panel Members Present**

Councillor L. Beeley (Chair)  
Councillor K. Westley (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor D. Anson  
Councillor C. Bott  
Councillor R. Carpenter  
Councillor J. Cook  
Councillor M. Munir  
Councillor M. Yasin

### **Officers Present**

Keith Stone	-	Assistant Director, Neighbourhood Services
Steve Pretty	-	Head of Engineering & Transportation
Mark Rickard	-	Group Leader – Transportation & Forward Planning
Paul Leighton	-	Group Leader - Traffic Management, UTC/Parking Services/Major Projects/Minor Improvements
Steph Simcox	-	Service Accounting & Financial Training Manager
Matt Underhill	-	Scrutiny Officer
Neil Picken	-	Senior Constitutional Services Officer

### **Portfolio Holder present**

Councillor T. Ansell

### **14/10 Apologies**

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Twedde.

### **15/10 Substitutions**

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

The Chairman took the opportunity to welcome Councillor Westley who had replaced Councillor Chambers and Councillor Munir who had replaced Councillor Griffiths on the Panel.

### **16/10 Declarations of Interest and Party Whip**

Councillor Westley declared a prejudicial interest in item 5 – provision of residents only parking zones as he was a parking enforcement officer.

## 17/10 Minutes

### RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2010, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

## 18/10 Provision of Residents Only Parking Zones

***Councillor Westley, having declared a prejudicial interest in this item, left the meeting during its deliberation, did not take part or vote.***

Further to Minute Number 11/10, the panel received a report (annexed) detailing further developments to the revised policy for the provision of residents only parking zones.

Mr Paul Leighton, Group Leader - Traffic Management, UTC/Parking Services/Major Projects & Minor Improvements presented the report and focussed on four key areas which had been part of previous discussions by the Panel at its meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2010. These included:-

- The general cost of permits;
- Linking the permit costs to the vehicle emissions;
- Provision for health care workers and carers;
- Variable permit allocations subject to road space availability.

With regard to the general cost of permit it was explained that, at the current cost of £20 per year, resident only parking zones were heavily subsidised by general council revenue funding. To quantify, it was stated that there were five permit schemes within the borough which cost the Council £70,000 a year to enforce.

Following a benchmarking exercise, it had been established that whilst some Authorities did not charge for permits, the majority applied a charge with costs varying from £20 and approximately £100 per year.

In light of the information gathered, Mr Leighton reported that the proposed policy recommended that the cost of a residents permit be increased to £60.00 per year with the cost of any additional permits rising to £70.00. Officers considered this to be reasonable given the substantial benefit for residents in parking zone areas.

Mr Leighton continued to outline a number of discounts which would be linked to vehicle emissions. This included band 'A' vehicles such as Smart Cars which would be exempt from a charge. This would support the Council's climate change agenda. Other discounts included 50% for sole carers whom had to park in a controlled zone when visiting to care for a person, subject to restrictions.

For healthcare professionals, a borough wide policy was under development which was separate to the policy brought before the Panel. The proposed policy did recognise the need for a carers permit and made provision for a 50% discount to be

applied for applications made by sole carers. This was subject to the carer not living with the person for whom they cared for, and that they did not live in the area controlled by the residents only parking zone.

With regard to permit allocations, Mr Leighton explained that the proposed policy allowed for a differing number of permits to be issued within different residents only parking zones. Each household would be permitted to buy a minimum of two permits. Further applications for permits then be considered, on a case by case basis, should additional road space allow.

In response to the comments made, Members raised a number of issues relating to:-

- the level of the proposed increase in permit charges;
- the percentage of properties within an area required to request a parking zone and the provision of further parking zones;
- the number of parking wardens;
- the consultation process for the revised policy.

In response, it was reported that parking zones were heavily subsidised and currently cost the Council £70,000.00 per annum. The proposed increase of permit charges sought to redress the balance.

Further parking zones could be provided subject to 80% of properties in the area supporting their implementation. Mr Pretty explained that whilst further parking zones could be implemented, due to limited funding it was not possible for a comprehensive parking zone scheme to be introduced across the borough.

The number of parking wardens had increased to reflect the additional powers which had been transferred to the Council. This included (amongst others) enforcing council car parks, double yellow lines and resident parking zones. Mr Pretty advised Members that the cost of providing wardens formed part of the civil parking annual report, due to be considered by Cabinet on the 13<sup>th</sup> October, 2010.

With regard to the final point regarding consultation it was stated that the policy would be considered at Cabinet. Subject to approval, a formal consultation process would then be undertaken.

Arising from further discussion Councillor Anson **moved** and it was duly **seconded** by Councillor Bott:-

- i) That the cost of permits be increased by 50% resulting in a revised cost of £30.00.
- ii) That no discounts be offered to carers nor any discounts linked to emissions.

The motion, having been put the vote was declared **lost**, with two members voting in favour and none against.

Further deliberation took place, Councillor Beeley **moved** and it was duly **seconded** by Councillor Cook:-

- i) That the cost of permits be increased to £40.00 for the first permit and £45 for the second.
- ii) That no discounts be offered to carers nor any discounts linked to emissions.

The motion, having been put the vote was declared **carried**, with five members voting in favour and two against.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- i) That the cost of permits be increased to £40.00 for the first permit and £45 for the second;
- ii) That no discounts be offered to carers nor any discounts linked to emissions.

#### **19/10 Domestic Vehicular Crossings**

The panel received a report (annexed) detailing the process relating to the application, cost and construction of domestic vehicle crossings.

Steve Pretty, Head of Engineering & Transportation, presented the report and drew Members attention to pertinent points contained therein. In particular Mr Pretty advised members that each application to the Council was considered individually and priced accordingly dependant on the location and complexity of work. He reported that the majority of works (78 out of 81 from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2010 to the date of the meeting) were undertaken by the Council although other, suitably qualified contractors, could also carry out the construction. Those deciding to take the latter option would be charged an additional £250 to inspect the contractors documentation and for an inspector to visit the site after completion.

Members were informed that the average cost of installing a domestic vehicle crossing in Walsall was £896.00. Discounts were offered to customers whilst the Authority is carrying out new carriageway schemes or as part of the maintenance programme for reconstructing the highway.

There then followed a discussion by Members in relation to the use of contractors to undertake the work. Members suggested that an approved list of contractors should be produced and that customers are advised accordingly when they approach the Council for works to be undertaken.

Following a discussion relating to the cost of carrying out such work, Members suggested that a payment scheme could be introduced. In response, officers reported that a scheme had been in place previously however it became difficult to retrieve the balance from some customers. This led to a revised system whereby a quotation, once approved is valid for 6 months which affords people the opportunity to save. Members suggested that an instalment plan could be offered prior to works being carried out. Residents could apply and if approved enter into an agreement to pay

instalments over 6 months. Upon completion, works would be undertaken.

Officers advised that this would be an option but stated that an administration fee be applied if the client cancelled prior to completion of payment. In response, it was suggested that a 5% increase be applied to customers wishing to take the instalment option.

Arising from discussion it was **moved** by Councillor Beeley and **seconded** by Councillor Anson:-

- i) That all works undertaken be carried out by Council approved contractors and that customers are advised accordingly when they approach the Council for works to be undertaken.
- ii) That an instalment plan, whereby customers are afforded the opportunity to pay in instalments prior to the work being undertaken, be established to include:-
  - A cancellation fee being applied should the applicant withdraw once an agreement has begun;
  - A 5% increase in the cost of works to be undertaken for those wishing to take advantage of the instalment scheme.

The motion, having been put the vote was declared **carried**, with members voting unanimously in favour and none against.

**RESOLVED:**

- i) That all works undertaken be carried out by Council approved contractors and that customers are advised accordingly when they approach the Council for works to be undertaken.
- ii) That an instalment plan, whereby customers are afforded the opportunity to pay in instalments prior to the work being undertaken, be established to include:-
  - A cancellation fee being applied should the applicant withdraw once an agreement has begun;
  - A 5% increase in the cost of works to be undertaken for those wishing to take advantage of the instalment scheme.

## **20/10 Speed Limit Review on A & B Roads in Walsall**

The Panel received a report (annexed) setting out the Council's approach to reviewing Walsall's existing speed limits and seeking the Panel's views.

Mark Rickard, Group Leader, Transportation & Forward Planning presented the report and provided a presentation to the panel including worked examples of the speed limit

review system. An A3 colour version of the appended table to the report was circulated and the Panel were informed that the document was being amended and so was subject to change. The Panel were further advised of an amendment to paragraph 4.7 of the report as submitted. Bullet point 1 of paragraph 4.7 should have read:-

- A34 Birmingham Road (Bell Road to Borough Boundary)

### **Resolved**

That the report be noted.

## **21/10 Financial Monitoring**

The panel received a report (annexed) summarising the predicted revenue and capital position for 2010/11, based on the performance for quarter 1 (1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2010), for services within the remit of the Environment Scrutiny & Performance Panel.

Steph Simcox, Service Accounting & Financial Training presented the report and advised the Panel that significant work had been undertaken to address the £174k deficit. It was anticipated that the Quarter 2 financial report would show a significant improvement.

### **Resolved**

- i) That the 2010/11 forecasted year end financial position for services under the remit of the Environmental Scrutiny & Performance Panel net revenue overspend of £174k, after the use of approved reserves and carry forwards and action planning, be noted;
- ii) That the capital forecast for a break even position be noted.

## **22/10 Budget Setting Framework & Timetable 2010/11 – 2014/15**

The panel received a report (annexed) setting out the framework for setting the budget for 2011/12 to 2014/15 and the associated timetable for budget activity.

Steph Simcox, Service Accounting & Financial Training Manager presented the report and drew members attention to the fact that the budget process would be delivered as part of the resource allocation project stream of the council's working smarter programme.

### **Resolved**

That the budget framework and timetable for 2011/12 to 2014/15, including key reporting dates as referred to in appendix 1 of the Cabinet report appended to the report as submitted, be noted..

### **23/10 Work programme 2010/11 and Forward Plan**

The work programme 2010/11 and forward plan were considered (annexed).

#### **Resolved**

That the work programme 2010/11 and forward plan be noted.

### **24/10 Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the date of the next meeting was 16 November 2010.

*The meeting terminated at 7.45 p.m.*

Signed:

Date: