

AT A MEETING
of the
CAR PARKS WORKING GROUP
held at The Council House, Walsall on
Wednesday 28 November 2005 at 6.00pm.

PRESENT

Councillor Rob Robinson
Councillor D Anson
Councillor I Shires
Councillor Rose
Councillor Yasin

APOLOGIES

Apologies for non attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillor Aslam, Councillor Andrews, Councillor Longhi.

RECEIPT OF DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest and members confirmed there was no party whip.

QUESTIONNAIRES FEEDBACK

Staff Questionnaire

Members were advised that the staff survey had not yet been circulated. In response to questions members were advised that the draft questionnaire had been circulated for comment as previously requested and the delay in the process had been partly due to the requirement to run the questionnaire past the Employee Relations forum and partly due to suggested improvements to the question and additional questions being added. Paul Leighton advised that the questionnaire is now with ISS to finalise the database and that it is proposed to circulate it this week.

In response to further question members were advised that the process is internal and the information can completed on line and collated onto a database.

It was agreed that a further work group be arranged to consider the findings of the staff car park survey.

Other Authorities questionnaire

Members considered the findings that had been circulated previously. Glynnis Jeavons explained that she had circulated the questionnaire to other authorities who are also members of the regional car parks group. She said that the response to the questionnaire had been disappointing, but from the responses received it could be

interpreted that there should be a clear distinction between casual and essential users, for example Solihull provides free parking for those that need it. In summary officers found that the feedback didn't provide any surprises or information that was not already known and many of the Councils have Town Halls or Civic Centre outside the centre.

DUDLEY MBC STAFF PARKING SURVEY 2003

Due to the poor response by neighbouring authorities to our questionnaire officer agreed to circulate additional information to members in the form of a summary chart of the responses of a similar exercise carried out by Dudley MBC in 2003.

Members noted that the position that many authorities were in was very similar to that of Walsall MBC and that many of them did not charge for staff parking.

Members considered the information before them the following issues were discussed:-

- In response to a question relating to taxation and free parking Glynnis Jeavons advised that everyone who pays for parking permits gets a tax reduction at the end of year. Members requested that this be checked out with finance to see if offering car parking free of charge is a 'benefit in kind' and a taxation issue.
- Reviewing essential and casual status and linking into the number of business journeys, measuring up miles against claims. Members felt that the frequency of journeys was more measurable and where people are going to and from would show better who was in need of an essential pass
- Members discussed encouraging the movement of staff out of the centre to district centres wherever possible because technology had advanced to enable staff to work in the districts or from at home, any centre visits could be to a 'hot desk' in the centre. Members recognised this would be a massive task but felt strongly that this was an issue that should be highlighted in the findings of this scrutiny work group.

IDENTIFYING THE ISSUES TO BE INCLUDED IN THE REPORT TO PANEL

Members gave consideration to the information received to date and listed a number of issues to be included when pulling together the draft report to panel:-

1. Designated area on car parks for permit users during working week and pay and display on Weekends
2. Encourage movement of staff to district centres, evolving district centres
3. Technology has got better if staff don't have to come in why do they. Encourage more home working and the use of hot desks in the districts / centre.
4. Walsall TIF – details of Walsall councils part in the first tranche of congestion charging. This incentive scheme to encourage councils to tackle congestion will involve parking, road congestion, road space re-allocation, bus lanes and more ways of making Walsall more accessible. It will be necessary to do a study on what is viable and to further pursue early decisions on major Transport schemes that can help to get funding.

TIF is an option to use funding to improve roads but need to investigate viability of demand management and need to define what schemes could be underway. Parking is one of the issues that can be improved with TIF money others include:-

- Converting long stay car parks to short stay
- Car sharing
- Demand management
- Park and Ride – could use TIF money to fund a post to identify park and ride sites

Members discussed the bigger issues that are linked into TIF such as:-

- Tackling congestion and pollution
- Bus passes
- Traffic is a major link to the Environment
- Identifying hot spots

Members recognised the Importance of TIF and of how the car park strategy should link in with other strategies to link to TIF

5. Information boards are needed showing where car parks are and illuminated signs showing where the spaces are.(Parking guidance systems)
6. Regeneration issues – developers providing parking with-in their sites
7. Pay and display on streets
8. Make better use of rail station car parks
9. During seasonal rushes make provision for casual / additional car parking
10. Make our car parks safe, additional funding through LAA's and LNP's

Members continued to discuss the issues that should be addressed in the parking strategy such as encouraging use of public transport and better enforcement.

Officers advised that many of the comments would be taken on board during the consultants work and that the remit of this panel is to focus on staff parking provision to feed into the strategy at the consultation event.

It was suggested that the focus from this group should be the casual / essential user split, who is 'closest the door' when parking near central office., promotion of car sharing and more flexible working to take advantage of technology.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 7.40 p.m.