

AT A MEETING  
of the  
**CAR PARKS WORKING GROUP**  
held at The Council House, Walsall on  
**Friday 30 September 2005** at 6.00pm.

**PRESENT**

Councillor Rob Robinson  
Councillor D Anson  
Councillor I Shires  
Councillor Yasin

Councillor A Andrews  
Councillor M Longhi

**APOLOGIES**

Apologies for non attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillor Carol Rose.  
Councillor Longhi sent apologies that he would be late to the meeting.

**RECEIPT OF DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

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

**NOTES OF MEETING 22 AUGUST 2005**

**AGREED**

That the notes of the meeting previously circulated be received as a correct record.

**COMMENTS OF REGENERATION, ENVIRONMENTAL, HOUSING AND  
COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL 15 SEPTEMBER  
2005**

**AGREED**

That members note the panel's request to invite the portfolio holders to this working group meeting.

**MATTERS ARISING**

Councillor Rob Robinson, lead member of the work group welcomed Councillor Adrian Andrew, Portfolio holder for Regeneration. He explained that the purpose of inviting the Regeneration, Environment and Transportation portfolio holders to the

meeting was to share thinking and establish what the cabinet's strategy for car parking in Walsall would be.

Councillor Adrian Andrew thanked members of the work group for inviting him to the meeting. Councillor Andrew highlighted the following key points that cabinet hoped to develop: -

- Creating jobs.
- Expanding car parking within the town centre.
- Developing a comprehensive park and ride scheme.
- Create opportunity to create a new multi-storey car park.

Councillor Robinson asked the portfolio holder what he thought of council car park facilities. The portfolio holder said that if it was identified that council car parks were a liability they should be replaced and a more cost effective solution should be found with the private sector. Councillor Andrew indicated that the council had to retain a certain control over car parking in order to facilitate regeneration of the town centre. Councillor Anson voiced concerns that 500 car parking spaces had been lost in the recent Shannons Mill planning approval. He said that council car parking spaces were full the majority of the time due to the low cost of that parking facility and voiced concerns that private operator's high charges would drive people out of Walsall Town Centre.

Councillor Anson referred to park and ride facilities in other areas and said he was happy to leave his car parked and use alternative mode of transport to the town centres. He expressed an interest in pursuing similar facilities for Walsall. Councillor Andrew acknowledged his comments and said that car park users were more likely to leave their vehicles in a secure, bright and safe place throughout the day and during the evenings. He emphasised that design and safety aspects were of importance to car park users.

Paul Leighton advised the panel members and portfolio holder that all of the things discussed so far would be considered by the consultant during the consultation period and included in the final draft car park strategy.

Councillor Robinson referred to the park mark award for safety standards and asked if there were any benefits in including a car park standard to strive for in the car park strategy. Paul Leighton advised that there were benefits and dis-benefits of applying park mark standards depending on the individual car park and said that the document should be refined to take into consideration the national standards and the need to apply for individual car parks.

In response to further questions the portfolio holder advised that he was waiting for the consultants draft report to be submitted to cabinet to evaluate the document. Councillor Robinson asked the portfolio holder what parking arrangements would be for staff being relocated to the proposed Fujitsu Waterfront Building.

Paul Leighton advised that the currently there was an arrangement to use Walsall College staff car park and confirmed that there was a current agreement for 180 vehicles to be parked on the car park on a Saturday. The portfolio holder asked if the extended opening hours of the college negates the current agreement. Paul

Leighton could not confirm anything at this time. It was suggested by members that a multi-story car park could triple the number of vehicles parked on ground level.

Members considered the car parking situation in the vicinity of Crown Wharf. Members discussed the planning conditions placed on the Crown Wharf Development in particular that it had been agreed to retain council car park charges for a specified period. Members advised that recently car park charging at that site had been inflated and they felt this maybe a breach of planning conditions referred to the problem of cars queuing on the roads leading from the car park. Members requested that further investigations be made to the appropriate officer in the highways section.

Members considered the town centre car parks plan which identified:-

- long stay car parks
- short stay car parks
- additional security
- staff preferred car parks
- permit holder only car parks

Members discussed documents tabled that detailed current long stay car park allocation to council staff. Members also discussed:-

- Park and ride facilities for council staff and the need for secure places.
- Public only car parks in the town centre, long stay and short stay facility.
- Car parks for staff only.
- Spaces allocated to essential car park users on short stay car parks and the Town Hall frontage for members of staff holding essential worker passes who have to regularly travel backwards and forwards to the centre.

Members requested further information to the next meeting of the Car Parks Working Group relating to the number of essential user passes allocated and in regular use.

Councillor Longhi joined the meeting.

Councillor Ian Shires referred to the council owned buildings out in the districts. He said that members of staff do not need to be situated in the centre of Walsall to be able to carry out their duties with the use of new technology members of staff could work either from home or from district centre buildings, thereby reducing the numbers of staff parked on council owned car parks in the town centre.

He said that council staff working in the district centres would help to regenerate the district centres and would encourage local businesses to facilitate the need for staff in the districts. Councillor Longhi, portfolio holder of regeneration welcomed the suggested regeneration of the district centres through relocation of staff. He acknowledged that currently Walsall Council occupied floors at Tameway Tower whilst buildings lie under utilised in the district centres.

Councillor Rob Robinson, lead member highlighted some of the research being carried out with like authorities, the statistical neighbours of Gateshead and Bolton and the geographical neighbours of Wolverhampton and Sandwell. Councillor Robinson referred to car park maps identifying that Bolton had long stay car parks on the outskirts of town centre on the outer ring road and advised that recent correspondence with Bolton had identified that staff car parks were in the outer zone.

He advised that permits were issued for several different car parks allowing essential users to park on different sides of the town dependent on where their site visit or meeting may be.

Members welcomed the further investigation of essential user's car parking in the centre of town and restricting staff to specific car parks on the outskirts. . Paul Leighton indicated there was a need to understand the staff issues and to feed in a co-ordinated response to the consultants work. Both portfolio holders welcomed the work of the car parks work group and requested to be kept informed of its progress.

### REVIEW OF RAIL AND METRO PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

The consultant's questionnaire was considered. Paul Leighton explained that the West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority is currently undertaking a review of management processes for car parks and cycle facilities at rail stations and metro stops in the West Midlands. He advised that members of the car parks working group had been requested to feed into the council's co-ordinated response and welcomed members comments on the consultation document.

Members felt it difficult to comment on the questions on the questionnaire as it was generally felt that a site visit of the facility should be undertaken before the questionnaire is completed. Councillor Anson advised that he regularly uses the Centro Car Park facilities and had found the quality and security aspects of the car parks very good. Members suggested that Councillor Anson complete the questionnaire and return it to the car parks manager on behalf of the car parks working group.

Members asked officers to identify which Centro Car Parks were sited within the borough. Glynnis Jeavons, Car Parks Manager advised that the Bescot Rail Station Centro site was in fact the only Centro car park and is an excellent facility kept in a safe condition with cameras situated around the site; however, she said the site was empty throughout the working day. Councillor Yasin suggested that further enquiries be made in relation to an outside car park for staff parking and possible transportation to the centre. Councillor Longhi suggested that officers make further investigations with Bescot Station / Stadium for use of their car parking facilities during working week.

Officers agreed to bring back further information to the next working group meeting.

### FURTHER INFORMATION REQUESTED AT THE LAST MEETING

#### PROGRAMME OF WORKS – CONSULTANT

Paul Leighton advised that the programme of works was still not available and that the inception meeting would take place on 2 November. Members agreed to receive further information at the next meeting of this work group.

#### RELEVANT EXTRACT OF THE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT ACT 2004

The department of transport document, Network of Management Duty Guidance was submitted. Members attention was drawn to page 22 section 122 – 125 'Ways to Managing Parking and Other Traffic Regulation'. Members were advised of the

authority's statutory duty to manage the network and warned that failure to deliver the statutory duty can prevent Walsall Council becoming an excellent authority. Paul Leighton emphasised that there may be serious implications if we do not manage the network adequately.

Members identified that the risk of not carrying out this statutory duty would have to be managed very carefully as the ultimate regeneration of the town may be affected by not managing circulation of traffic and car parking within the town centre.

Members were advised that the full implications of this act are not yet known, the government has informed councils and local authorities what it expects them to do through the Road Traffic Act 2004. The authority await clarification of how to carry out the requirements of the act.

Members noted the information provided and discussed MIS – the shared information system which can actively seek to transmit information around the town centre.

Councillor Longhi requested the work group to consider continuing the work of this group and feed into cabinet decision making process relating to the Waterfront development. He advised that this is was a unique opportunity at this location of the town and that provision at the Waterfront should work hand in hand with car parking and regeneration issues raised at this meeting. Councillor Robinson, lead member of the work group thanked Councillor Longhi for his invitation to continue working alongside the cabinet in relation to the provision of car parking facilities at the Waterfront and indicated that there was a very tight schedule of work for the car park work group and that the groups remit would have to be extended to consider anything else but that should the group find time at the end of the programme they would certainly like to work alongside cabinet and look at the issues relating to car parking and the Waterfront.

Councillor Longhi welcomed the opportunity to work with scrutiny showing involvement and engagement between the executive and scrutiny work group.

Members were advised that the Waterfront development had very little or no parking facilities shown within the plans for the properties on the Waterfront. Members were advised that supplementary planning guidance was not required for the town centre area and therefore there was no need for parking spaces per property to be provided. Councillor Longhi requested the scrutiny work group to keep the portfolio holders informed.

#### EXTRACT OF DECRIMINALISATION REPORTS TO CABINET

Working group members were advised that the Decriminalisation Report to cabinet was not yet in draft formation and that the legislation was approximately 18 months away. Members agreed to monitor the development of this legislation.

## BRIEFING NOTE – SHOP MOBILITY

Members were advised that the location for the 'Shop mobility town centre scheme' was going to be in the Saddlers Centre Car Park. Members were advised that the disability forum and shop mobility scheme had been consulted and a detailed report to cabinet would be submitted on the 19 October. Members welcomed the location of the shop mobility scheme identifying that the Saddlers Centre was central to all areas of the town and railway station. Members were advised that the Saddlers Centre manager had previously run a shop mobility scheme and was very keen to make a successful scheme for Walsall.

## MAP OF PREFERRED SITE FOR COUNCIL STAFF

An A1 sheet was submitted – Traffic Engineering Location Plan for Car Parks in Walsall Town Centre. The plan detailed long stay, short stay, additional security, staff preferred and permit only parking spaces: -

(see annexed)

Members referred to a previous conversation relating to essential pass users and location of short stay/staff only car parks within the town centre. Officers agreed to come back to the next meeting with further detailed information as requested.

## RESEARCH SUMMARY – EXCELLENT AUTHORITIES CAR PARK STRATEGY FOR STAFF

Members were advised that benchmarking research had been carried out with statistical neighbours Gateshead and Bolton and benchmarked against geographical neighbours Sandwell and Wolverhampton. The results of the research had been to highlight that generally long stay car park facilities were on the outskirts of the town centres and short stay car parks with limited staff usage in the town centres. The majority of long stay council car parks had permits and facilities for town centre workers both council and other staff.

Glynnis Jeavons advised that she was a member of the car park group for local authorities in the West Midlands conurbation. She advised that there were no car park strategies to share with the group, however, many of the local authorities were now striving to create a car park strategy to facilitate the section of the Traffic Management Act 2004 which applies to all Local Traffic Authorities (LTA's) in England which must have regard to the guidance when exercising their network management duty under the act.

She advised that many of her peers from benchmarked authorities were developing a car park strategy at this time.

The chairman, Councillor Rob Robinson advised that the next meeting of the car parks work group would be held in a workshop style to further examine the information submitted to this meeting and information previously submitted. The purpose of the next meeting would be to focus on staff car parking issues in Walsall and alternative parking facilities.

## AGREED ACTIONS:

1. Councillor Anson to feedback to the car parks manager relating to the review of Rail and Metro Property Management and complete the consultation questionnaire on behalf of the car park work group.
2. To prepare information for submission to the next meeting as follows: -
  - Essential car users based in Walsall Town Centre.
  - Essential car users having access to the Civic Centre and Town Hall buildings.
  - Council owned buildings on the outskirts of Walsall Town Centre or in Walsall District Centres with car parking facilities for staff.
  - Implications of reduction of revenue due to less council permits.
3. Officers to check compliance with planning conditions at Crown Wharf relating to car park charging.
4. Officers to report back relating to agreement for college campus car park at Littleton Street, Walsall.
5. Officers to report back on implications of staff transferring to Fujitsu contract and requirement for car parking facilities.

The chairman, Councillor Rob Robinson thanked all members of the working group for their contribution to this evenings working group and in particular thanked the portfolio holders, Councillor Longhi and Councillor Andrew for their contribution and participation in the working group meeting.

## TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 7.40 p.m.