

AT A MEETING
of the
CAR PARKS WORKING GROUP held at
the Council House, Walsall on
Monday 22 August 2005 at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillor Rob Robinson (Lead Member)
Councillor Anson
Councillor I Shires
Paul Leighton
Mark Clough
Glynnis Jeavons

APOLOGIES

Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillor Aslam

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest and Members were advised there was no party whip.

DOCUMENTS TABLED AT THE MEETING

Invitation to tender and brief for developing a parking strategy for Walsall Council
Price List – Walsall Council owned car parks – 1st April 2005
Notes from the DEN meeting 18.8.05

**EXTRACT OF MINUTES FROM EXTRACT FROM REGENERATION
ENVIRONMENT HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY AND
PERFORMANCE PANEL 6 JULY 2005.**

AGREED

That the extract resolution detailing the establishment of the Car Park Strategy Working Group for municipal year 2005/6 and the membership of the group be noted.

INTRODUCTION FROM THE LEAD MEMBER

Councillor Rob Robinson welcomed officers and members to the first meeting of the work group and requested officers and members to introduce themselves and identify their role.

Councillor Robinson referred to the remit that had been identified at the scrutiny panel meeting set out on the agenda document, he said that the remit was too big

and suggested the group would have to focus onto one or two areas to give a clear idea of what it wanted to achieve from this work.

Councillor I Shires agreed that there was a need to drill down onto one or two of the issues initially outlined.

QUESTIONS ABOUT CAR PARKS

Members took advantage of this part of the programme to ask general questions about Car Parks and explore some more radical ideas :-

- Impact of total pedestrianisation of the town centre – officers advised that several key elements for a successful town centre would be affected if no vehicles were allowed in; such as businesses and revenue from car parking in the town centre and regeneration of the centre.
Officers advised that this concept may be a step too far and that a happy medium may need to be identified.
- Park and Ride – members suggested parking facilities on the outskirts of the town and a fast transport option to get to the town centre. Officers advised this was certainly an element to be considered in the car park strategy and would be taken into account by the consultants on behalf of the Council.

Members asked about the financial impact of introducing park and ride and were advised that it may reduce the revenue from Council owned town centre car parks as currently there is no charge for district centre parking.

- Members discussed the type of car parks in the town centre and suggested that the group should explore long stay parking with park and ride from the outskirts of town and or district centres to encourage regeneration of outer areas and district centres; and suggested short stay parking only in the town centre.

MAP EXERCISE

Officers introduced a large map of Walsall town centre showing outer lying areas. Members were requested to spend 5 minutes to identify car parks and mark them on the map. In the time allocated members identified approximately 80% of the parking facilities in the town centre and showed a sound knowledge of where to park.

Glynnis Jeavons car park manager identified the location of short and long stay Council facilities and indicated to members where private car parks were situated.

Members agreed that the exercise had helped to highlight the type and location of car parks to them and discussed the issues that had been raised by the exercise:-

- Whether visitors to the town can easily find appropriate parking
- Do we sign the way to car parks and identify whether long stay, short stay or disabled, car parks or coach parks

PRESENTATION

Paul Leighton advised members that the presentation would give them a background of all issues relating to parking and was intended to aid members in their deliberations when scoping the work programme.

Copies of the presentation were distributed:- (see annexed) Mark Clough and Paul Leighton gave the presentation to members and invited members to comment and ask questions at any time through the presentation.

During the presentation, Mark Clough said that the information to members is key information which they would need to think about when scoping the review. He suggested members think about what Walsall has got and what it needs and highlighted some of the issues members would need to think about:-

- Car parking in town and District Centres
- Car parking standards for developments
- Operation and management of car parking facilities
- The links with the transport policy
- Specific types of parking provision
- Council staff parking provision

Mark referred to the document circulated prior to the commencement of the meeting 'Invitation to tender and brief for developing a parking strategy for Walsall Council.' He explained that the decision had been made to appoint a consultant following the report to Cabinet relating to the decriminalisation of parking and the need to implement a strategy for parking in Walsall. He outlined the brief:

- Quantify current and predicted changes in parking provision, type, levels of use etc
- Review relevant policies & strategies influencing parking
- Review regeneration proposals & implications for parking
- Determine predicted shortfalls/surplus in parking provision and identify possible resolutions
- Manage a partner workshop in January 2006
- Develop parking strategy for the authority

Members were advised that many of the issues that were identified in this groups brief would be covered by this huge piece of work and that members would have opportunity to join in the consultation event and feed in to the process in January 2006.

He advised members that the bulk of consultation and evidence finding was being carried out by the consultant and that officers had tried to identify one or two areas where this scrutiny work group could add value to the process, look at current issues of public concern and feed into the consultation process on issues that may not be covered by the consultants brief. He gave members details of :-

- Staff Parking in Walsall Town Centre; and
- Disabled parking in Town and District Centres

It was indicated that the consultation event was not the end of the process but that members would be able to review the draft car parking strategy in March 2006.

Paul Leighton, Group Leader Transportation Services outlined the second half of the presentation which indicated to members the current provision:-

- Car parking provision
- Staff permit allocation
- Income generated from staff parking
- Car park occupancy surveys
- Impact of proposed developments

Councillor Robinson asked whether the increase in revenue was due to increase in permits issued or to the amount to purchase a permit. Paul Leighton advised that the increase was more down to the amount issued but that the increase in yearly charge does have an effect.

In response to further questions Paul Leighton advised that a survey of parking in the town centre is carried out on Wednesday and Saturday each week, the results of the survey indicates that on both days:-

- all short stay places are full
- Long stay car parks have a few spaces
- Private sector car parks have approximately 1000 spaces free.

Members asked if this was due to the cost of parking. Glynnis Jeavons circulated a list of Council charges for car parks in and around the town centre, members were advised that the private sector charges were higher often more than double the council parking costs and that this may be a reason for the popularity of the authority sites.

Members questioned the impact of current regeneration projects in particular:-

- the number of additional private sector car parks- highlighting that there was already significant capacity. Officers clarified that the 1000 spaces would be spread across the town and that developers want to encourage as many shoppers as possible especially at Shannon Mill and ASDA developments
- the number of council car park spaces lost. Officers informed members that 93 council car park spaces would be lost and this would impact on revenue

Members were advised of future considerations

- Long term viability of staff parking strategy
- Influence travel choice
- Develop car share initiatives
- Delivery of Network Management Duty and LTP aims for reduction in journeys by private car
- Revenue implications of proposals

Members were informed that the LTP duty to manage requires the Council to manage its car parks and means that the Council will have to report back. They were informed that if we do not comply, Walsall may have a traffic director put on it which can prevent Walsall from being an excellent authority in 2008. Members asked for further explanation about 'traffic director', officers advised that the

Highways authority would intervene if there was not an adequate strategy in place and if the car parks were not being managed satisfactorily.

Members were advised that the completion of the car park strategy is contained within the Service plan for Traffic and Transportation Services team and is included in the risk register for the service area under theme 2 – Improve Management & condition of the highway network assets. Members noted that managing the risk will ensure the car park strategy being completed and lead to improved performance.

Paul Leighton informed members of the current Blue badge provision in Town and District centres and highlighted that there was very little provision for a town of this size both within the centre and in the district centres.

Members were advised that as part of the preparation work for this meeting the Vice Chairman of Regeneration scrutiny Councillor Arif had attended the Disabled Employees Network to hear their views about the Civic square consultation document and the concerns about Disabled parking provision in Walsall Town Centre. His feedback was circulated to the panel and gives a flavour of the contentious issues surrounding disabled parking provision in Walsall Town Centre from an employee's point of view.

What now?

The last slide of the presentation prompted discussion about further background information members requested further information on the following:-

- Programme of works to be carried out by consultant to ensure the relevant areas are being consulted
- Traffic management Act 2004 – power to request sight of blue badge and confirm who it is used by
- Decriminalisation reports to Cabinet
- Shop mobility – report to Cabinet (October 2005)

Councillor Robinson thanked officers for the presentation.

SCOPING THE WORK PROGRAMME

Members were requested to give initial feedback from the information received.

Councillor Anson indicated the following areas of interest:-

- Not enough car parks in the Town Centre
- Park and ride

Councillor I Shires indicated that the areas suggested by officers could be politically sensitive and that all areas of the strategy should be looked at by the work group and in addition how car parking links into public transport and regeneration.

Officers indicated that the consultants brief was to gather information on car parks from a number of partners, service users and service providers and that the scrutiny group would have opportunity to input at the first stage of the process ie

the evidence gathering and also have opportunity to input into the second phase and feedback on the draft car park strategy.

Councillor Shires said that he felt the group should investigate park and ride issues as there is not a strategy and further suggested looking at different kinds of innovative links to the town centre. He referred to an excellent metro system in Strasburg which circles the inner ring to the city with loops into the centre. He felt it important to have a long term vision.

Officers acknowledged the need for short and long term strategy and advised that Park and Ride is one of the elements consultants have been asked to look at. Scrutiny will have opportunity to look at their findings in the draft strategy document early next year and to feed their interest in Park and Ride into the consultants work at the initial data gathering stage.

Councillor Shires referred to the number of employees working in Walsall that do not need to be based in the centre and requested further investigation around re-engineering workers to the district centres to promote the regeneration of district centres.

Members felt it important to get the bigger picture and to invite the portfolio holders to the next Regeneration scrutiny panel to outline the cabinet vision for car parking.

During scoping of the work programme the following issues were highlighted:-

- Need to look at back ground information as previously highlighted.
- Need to think in short – medium and long term strategies for car parks and to get the portfolio holders comments on the vision
- Link in with decriminalising parking
- Need to look at further details about staff parking
- Invite Peter Cromar Walsall Regeneration Company to advise what money is coming into the borough
- Exploring alternative means of getting to work in the town centre ie car share
- Use this input as a start to looking at a long term strategy and the bigger picture
- Request for further information about Staff passes – what types ie - car user / essential, what hours they work, charges to staff
- Request for a map to show where staff prefer to park
- Research about what other authorities do – designated car parks, essential user only passes
- Further information about casual car users requested
- Information about the preferred partner arrangements for TUPE staff transferring and any new staff they appoint.
- Look how to encourage better usage of private sector surplus parking
- Councillor Robinson voiced concerns that this scrutiny panel also looks after the Environmental element and said we should be looking to a cleaner environment and dissuade car usage.
- Members said that on street parking should be included in this work

REMIT FOR WORK GROUP

1. Members agreed that the primary work of the group should be to review staff car parking arrangement in Walsall MBC and to feed into the consultation event in January 2006
2. Members agreed to be included in a focus group during the consultation process to discuss the wider issues relating to parking strategy
3. Members agreed to consider the draft parking strategy on its completion in March 2006 and forward any comments to Cabinet for consideration
4. Members agreed that the secondary work of this group on completion of the parking strategy is to look at the 'future stuff' and how this can be integrated into the wider transport policies and strategies of the authority.

ACTIONS

Action	By	When
Invite Portfolio holders to Regeneration scrutiny panel 15.9.05	DB	25.8.05
Develop programme for scrutiny work group	Scrutiny	15.9.05
Further information on- Programme of works – consultant	PL/MC	
Further information on Traffic Management Act 2004 Extract	PL/MC	
Copy of the Briefing Shop mobility Report to Cabinet	PL/MC	
Map of preferred site for staff parking	GJ	
Research summary – excellent authorities car park strategy for staff	Scrutiny team	
Copy of Decriminilisation reports to Cabinet	PL / MC	

Date of next meeting

To be confirmed

Termination of meeting

8-10 pm