



CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL CAR PARKS TASK AND FINISH GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD IN PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON THURSDAY, 3RD FEBRUARY, 2022 AT 5.00 PM

PRESENT:

Councillor D. Preece - Chair

Councillors: A. Hussey, J. Ridgewell (Vice Chair) and J Taylor, and W. Williams.

Co-opted Members, Councillors: N. Dix,

Together with:

C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Manager), C. Campbell, (Transportation Engineering Manager) D. Smith (Principal Engineer – Traffic Management) P. Hudson (Business Enterprise Renewal Team Leader).

And Cllr J. Pritchard (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Property) observing.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P. Leonard S. Morgan, B. Owen J. Roberts , G. Simmonds.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were declared at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

3. Caerphilly County Borough Council Car Parks Task and Finish Group – 13th January 2022

RESOLVED that that the Minutes of the meeting held on 13th January 2022.are approved as a correct record.

4. PUBLIC SURVEY PRESENTATION.

Members were advised that the public survey has had a very good response and it closed yesterday, the results have been put into a presentation for the group today.

There were 1545 responses to the survey, this was broken down into 1478 were residents of the county borough, 6 elected members, 19 business persons, 2 third sector, 1 other public sector representative, 17 members of staff and 22 other many of these were classed as visitors. Members were disappointed with the business response but it was hoped that there would be a better response from the business survey.

In terms of responses from areas, the group were advised that the highest responses were 20% were from NP12, 20% CF83, 10% CF82 and 6% NP11. Further analysis will be provided for the final report.

The group were provided with the detail in respect of the towns visited and responses to questions on how often people visit each town, members were interested in comparing this to footfall figures. The group discussed whether markets have an impact on visitor numbers. The footfall figures appeared to show there is no obvious jump in figures, however we would expect Saturday is often busier.

The public were asked how often they travel and how they travel. The responses to how they travel showed that, 1412 stated they are the Car (driver) and 362 as a Car (passenger) – 362, Walking was 412. With fewer stating: Taxi – 24, Bicycle – 31, Motorbike – 14, , Bus – 133, Train – 15, Other – 6.

The survey asked people why they visit the main town that they travel to, and the results showed that 1186 felt it was more convenient, 612 because the service they need is located here, 450 because the selection shops better, then 373 say easier parking, 362 prefer the town, 166 because parking charges are lower.

Members were very interested in this data and shows that convenience, services and selection of shops were higher than easier parking and lower charges.

The group were informed that when asked for the purpose of their last visit, the survey showed that 701 was for non-food shopping, 617 for food shopping and 550 for personal business or appointment. There were 523 who said leisure, 323 to meet friends, 107 for work, 93 for the library, then 25 for tourism and 107 said other.

The survey asked people to indicate how long they usually spend in the town and the majority spend 1 or 2 hours, with 534 stating 1 hour and 667 said 2 hours, 230 said 3 hours.

When asked what would encourage them to spend more time in the town 46% said shops, this was further elaborated into the selection, variety, choice etc. 31% said free parking would encourage them to stay for longer, and 3% said parking charges, with 2% stating better parking or parking fees. Comments was made regarding a recent TV programme which mentioned Cwmbran free parking where it was stated that the costs for running the car parks are passed on to the shopkeepers through higher fees. Members also commented that they have personally experienced difficulty in finding parking spaces, and noticed that there are some businesses are using spaces all day. Members noted that the comments here regarding free parking is contrary to the earlier question where convenience is the higher reason why people visit towns. Members also commented that when the group is considering its recommendations they need to consider the rising cost of living.

The survey asked those that used public transport to visit the towns to give the reason for their choice. There were 515 respondents to this question and the chart showed to the group that the highest number (229) of those travelling by public transport were bus pass holders. 122 said it was greener and 75 because it was more convenient, 63 felt it was cheaper than parking and a small amount because they don't have a vehicle.

The survey asked those people who identified as having a disability to rate some statements as true to see if their disability affected their choice of transport. This showed that 78.6% agreed it was extremely true that they find it easier to travel in a private vehicle.

Respondents were asked to indicate where they usually park when they visit town centres, and this showed that 752 use the paid car park where charges are currently suspended, with 424 stating they use a free car park and 171 use time limited on street car parking, 113 free on street.

The respondents were asked to rate the importance of a number of statements when they consider whether to drive to a town centre and park there. They were asked to score out of 5, where 5 is Very Important and 1 is Not Important. The responses show that respondents consider the most important aspect of car parks are the price of the car parking and availability of spaces. The least important were Information and facilities in the car park and opening times.

The group were advised that there were a number of narrative responses provided by the public:

- 'Free parking - the system just isn't working as far as the Twyn car park is concerned. People working in the town are using this and parking all day, there is never any spaces for visitors or shoppers. Disabled people cannot walk from Crescent Road to the town. Bring in a time limit or make it pay and display please.'
- 'Parking should be free and the council charge everybody for everything, you get rent from the shops so help the shops stay open by encouraging the public to keep returning it's a fact that places with free parking brings the public by the thousands. open and keep the public coming to our shops don't drive people away.'
- 'You charge for parking and your driving people out of the area and turning our towns into ghost towns with empty boarded up shops with no money going to the council on rented shops it doesn't take a genius to recognise the economic consequences of parking fees don't be greedy keeps the shops.'
- 'The most practical method of control is charging but prices need to be cheap to encourage shoppers. I recommend reinstatement of pay and display but with much reduced short stay rates. For example, the current 1 and 2 hour rates could be reduced from 60p and 70p to 20p and 40p and the 3 hour remain at 90p'
- 'Although it has been generous of CCBC to give free parking at the Twyn Car Park, I'm afraid the idea has had a backlash. Many people are parking there ALL day and thus making it impossible for people EVEN THE DISABLED TO PARK AT ALL. The added loss of space due to electric car recharge spaces has only exacerbated the situation - Surely you could now consider charging again and /or restricting parking to 2 Hours perhaps'
- 'Car parking should be free for all shoppers for at least 2 hours after 2 hours they should be charged'

The gender responses were broken down for the group and the age ranges with the highest response from the 50 to 65 age groups.

The group were advised the business survey has now gone out and the responses will be circulated to the group members once they are available and can be discussed at the next meeting.

Members discussed the footfall differences between Blackwood and Caerphilly, and what were the reasons, they were advised that there are a range of reasons including the composition of the shopping offer and Blackwood has performed better on vacancy rates. It was also noted that Caerphilly is close to Cardiff which may attract visitors. The location of the retail parks in Blackwood brings people in and are easily accessible.

The meeting closed at 17:58 p.m.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the next appropriate meeting they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR