



CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL CAR PARKS TASK AND FINISH GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON MONDAY 20TH SEPTEMBER 2020 AT 5.00PM

PRESENT:

Councillor R. Gough – Chair

Councillors:

L. Harding, J. Roberts, and T. Williams

Together with: -

C. Campbell (Transportation Engineering Manager), (C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Manager), D. Smith (Principal Engineer – Traffic Management) and S. Wilcox (Principal Officer – Town Centres & Business Support).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. Elsbury and B. Owen. The Chair also welcomed Cllr J Ridgewell Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure as an observer of the meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

3. CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL CAR PARKS TASK AND FINISH GROUP – 21ST FEBRUARY 2020

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as correct records and signed by the Chair.

4. PRESENTATION - CONSIDERATION OF EVIDENCE SUBMITTED BY TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS

The Scrutiny Manager gave Members and update on the consultation carried out with Town and Community Councils. When the original task and finish group was established the group agreed to engage with the Town and Community Councils and give them an opportunity to submit

written evidence to the review and/or to attend a meeting and speak directly to the group, this meeting took place in March 2017.

Members agreed the last meeting in February 2020 to make contact again and ask Town and Community Councils if they wished to amend or update their original views on car parks. The scrutiny manager duly made contact and outlined the original and any updated submissions for consideration.

Argoed Community Council – The Council felt that there should be consistency of approach throughout the Borough. i.e. Either all Council car parks should be subject to a parking fee or none at all. There was no update for 2020.

Bargoed Town Council – The Council gave very detailed feedback that stated that free car parks should be retained because of the potential detrimental impact upon the High Street if charges were introduced, where they are currently free. They felt that charging for car parking would deter shoppers, deter workers, de-motivate shopkeepers from setting up businesses in the town centre and it was highlighted that retail workers are low paid. If charges were introduced it would transfer parking into residential areas. Most town centres offer shoppers 2-3hrs of free parking, which would probably be enough for shoppers and they would like to see some kind of allowance/permit for residents/workers to park. In addition the regeneration of the town centre has not been completed therefore introducing charging should not be considered at this time.

Blackwood Town Council - The Council highlighted the high proportion of income generated by car parks in the Town when compared to other towns, they stated that there seemed to be no correlation between the income generated and any benefit to the town. The Town Council strongly felt the disparity between the percentage of charging car parks in Blackwood when compared to other town centres. They were keen to see some free car parking on offer to encourage shoppers particularly in the run up to Christmas. They welcomed the current suspension of parking charges and asked that the group consider that impressive footfall doesn't necessarily equate with retail shopping and can be apportioned to the Cinema.

Caerphilly Town Council – The Council asked that the group consider the introduction of free parking allowances for schools during drop off and pick up hours. In addition, consider enhanced lighting or the provision of CCTV coverage at car parks for those parking late at night and safer routes to and from car parks. There was a specific response from one Member, that referred to difficulties around schools start and end times which causes the Schools and local residents' issues. A local remedy has been agreed with the Council allowing a short 20-minute free parking, this has been successful to some degree but it could be improved and also considered at other schools where there is a council car park nearby.

Gelligaer Community Council – Ystrad Mynach – The council provided an update from the local Member for this area. The town whilst sharing many issues with other towns it was also unique in that its town centre encompassed two primary schools (900 children) and a comprehensive school (500 children) as well as a busy hospital and college, without the necessary parking infrastructure to cope with the increasing demand. The town centre was currently served by only 90 spaces and experienced massive issues with regard to the volume of traffic generated on a daily basis.

The park and ride facility requires expansion, filling very quickly causing commuters to park on residential streets often in an inconsiderate manner blocking access and driveways. The group are asked to consider the introduction of more car parking spaces through the expansion of an existing car park by taking the facility upwards adding additional levels. He agreed with the previous suggestions made regarding the introduction of 2 hours free parking and would also like to see an allocation for parents at school drop off times

Members are asked to consider a 15-minute leeway after the expiration of a ticket before the issue of fine to give users an additional buffer. This would be of particular use to car parks that serve G.P. surgeries, where additional time constraints can easily be incurred at short notice.

Reference was also made to WG funding made available to local authorities for this purpose and which he would like to see used to alleviate these issues.

Gelligaer Community Council - Hengoed & Pengam - The council provided an update from the local Member for these areas. The Member strongly opposed the introduction of any charges to Park and Ride Car parks. This essential provision takes cars away from residential areas and congested town and city centres and the impositions of a charge would cause an unfair and unreasonable burden on commuters and would result in additional cars on the road, illegal parking and increased pollution. The group were advised that the Pengam park and ride provision would benefit from an increase in spaces in order to keep up with demand.

With regard to Hengoed station, Members were advised that the car park is in close proximity to a well-used community centre and provides a safe parking environment for its users. Should a charge be introduced to park and rides the Councillor requested that consideration be given to allowing a concession to the centre users after 4.30pm when the majority of commuters would be returning home and free on weekends, when commuter traffic is greatly reduced, this would prevent the dispersal of cars into residential area and encourage the take up of physical activity sessions provided at the centre

Llanbradach & Pwllypant Community Council – The Council would like to see the continuation of free parking be upheld. First hour free of charge be implemented in carparks in Ystrad Mynach and other towns to fully support our highstreets. Improved car parking signage and free park & ride parking for sustainability and to encourage the use of public transport.

Risca Town Council - The Council asked that in terms of car parking within the Risca town, that current provision be maintained and that consideration be given to improving directional signage to the car parks. Mill street is very busy and that parking is required for the school and local businesses. They highlighted the issue parking on streets and vehicles using pavements, which is very dangerous, better road safety measures required.

5. PRESENTATION - INFORMATION UPDATE

Members considered the information update following questions identified by the group at the meeting in February 2020.

The group were advised that ad hoc responsive inspections of car parks are undertaken. A formal asset management plan has yet to be completed.

There is a need to consider the difference for car parks in town centres and parking facilities in more rural areas - impact on trade and commerce by changes to parking policies is more significant for urban areas than to more rural parts of the county borough.

The Council has not undertaken any analysis of its own in relation to this issue. Welsh Government commissioned some research into car park charging strategies in 2017. The report (which was circulated at the last meeting) doesn't really pick up the rural aspect but, at present, CCBC only charges in town centres. Tourism and Countryside charge for some of their car parks but these relate to leisure use.

The importance of traffic regulation orders and double yellow lining as a way of increasing occupancy in car parks and reducing on-street parking was touched upon in last October's Civil Parking Enforcement update report to the Environment & Sustainability Scrutiny Committee in October 2019 Phase 1 of the prioritised Traffic Regulation Order programme referred to in 5.4.2

of the report (i.e. revoking of parking restrictions) is progressing. Initial engagement with the affected ward Members is ongoing.

At the February meeting Members requested an update on the Park and Ride (P&R) service at the Group's next meeting. The group was advised that the facilities provided have not changed for many years. With respect to charging the current political administration has committed not to introduce charging at P&R sites. However it is worth noting that Welsh Government is interested in having a dialogue with regional transport bodies on the possibility of introducing charges to P&R car parks. This is something they will consider as part of developing their P&R strategy.

A detailed overview was provided on the staff resources, operational costs, ticket sales and income for 2015/16 to 2018/19.

In addition Members were advised of the impact the Covid-19 pandemic is likely to have on the Council's car park and CPE income for 2020/21:

- Highway car parking (off-road) income loss estimate: £590k*
- CPE PCN income loss estimate: £145k
- On street parking permit income loss estimate: £23k

* This is based on the cessation of parking charges since the Covid-19 'lockdown' began and Cabinet's decision to suspend parking charges until the end of December 2020

The meeting closed at 17:45pm

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

CHAIR