



**JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
(ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY SCRUTINY AND  
HOUSING & REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEES)  
– 15TH DECEMBER 2020**

**SUBJECT: CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL CAR PARKS  
TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE  
SERVICES**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report seeks to inform a joint meeting of the Environment and Sustainability and the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committees of the findings of the joint task and finish group that was established to review car parks managed by Caerphilly County Borough Council. The joint scrutiny committee is asked to consider the recommendations of the review group and determine its recommendations to Cabinet.

**2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 This report outlines the findings and recommendations of the joint scrutiny task and finish group established to consider car parks in the Caerphilly county borough. The review group agreed its terms of reference as 'to determine if the current strategy and regime for the management and operation of the Councils Highway owned off-street car parks is still appropriate and what alternative options should be considered in future.'

**3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The Environment and Sustainability and Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committees are asked to consider the findings of the Caerphilly County Borough Council Car Parks Task and Finish Group. The scrutiny committees are asked to consider the following recommendations and make their recommendations to Cabinet.
- 3.2 Current hourly tariffs at pay and display highway owned car parks available for the public should be standardised across county borough for long term and short-term parking respectively it is suggested that charges are set at a current lower level.

- 3.3 To remove the parking charges at the 5 country parks agreed in 2014 in order to recognise the significant health benefits to residents
- 3.4 Caerphilly County Borough offer local businesses reduced charge parking permits for their staff to park in car parks, therefore officers to investigate most appropriate car parks where this could be offered, with the aim to reduce use of central car parks by workers and free them up for visitors/shoppers.
- 3.5 Where there are car parks in close proximity to schools, that are having parking issues during school drop off and pick up times, officers are given discretion to allow a free parking concession to parents/carers for a limited time and in consultation with local ward members.
- 3.6 Remove Sunday parking charges at Twyn Car park on Sundays – this has been an historical arrangement that is no longer required and will provide parity.
- 3.7 That the council not enforce car park charges on St David's day.
- 3.8 That Cabinet review their position on not charging at Park and Ride in view of the costs to maintain these car parks.
- 3.9 That consideration of charging at free car parks is deferred and reviewed at a later date once the coronavirus is no longer having an impact on people's ability to shop and socialise freely in the county borough.
- 3.10 That priority is given in the county wide review for consideration of zoning of residential parking areas of main towns.
- 3.11 That the criteria for residential parking permit areas is reviewed to offer a more flexible approach that takes into account areas outside of principal towns where customer parking to access local businesses impacts on residential areas.
- 3.12 That the current non-enforcement of parking charges at council owned car parks is extended after 31st December 2020 for three months and then reviewed to consider if the impact of covid-19 on town centres is ongoing at that time.
- 3.13 That the current approach to the use of car parks for trading and events be allowed to continue and officers are permitted to continue to use discretion in respect of applications that have community benefit.
- 3.14 That consideration should be given to cease locking the car parks at Thorncombe 3 and Wesley Road Blackwood during the night upon the retirement of the member of staff. To be done in consultation with local ward members. If night-time locking ends the impact should be monitored and options to install additional CCTV and/or upgrade the quality are explored if required.
- 3.15 All surplus income generated from parking charges to be ring fenced for maintenance and improvement of car parks, through a planned maintenance programme, including improved directional signage and lighting improvements.
- 3.16 That opportunities to improve existing CCTV be explored where grant funding or match funding is available.

#### **4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 These recommendations have been suggested to improve the car park provision across the county borough.

#### **5. THE REPORT**

- 5.1 The review of council owned car parks was first considered by the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee at the meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2016. The scrutiny committee considered a scoping report that set out a proposed review of the operation and management of the council car parks and the potential for future changes to the parking regime and parking tariffs. A member task and finish group was subsequently established and was made up of the following Members;

Councillor L Aldworth  
Councillor J Bevan  
Councillor N Dix - Chair  
Councillor C Elsbury  
Councillor R Gough – Vice Chair

The scrutiny committee were also informed that because of the size of the group there were instances where only three members attended meetings. Therefore, Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee were asked to nominate additional members to the group. The additional nominees were:

Councillor M Adams  
Councillor L Harding – subsequently withdrew.  
Councillor D Price

- 5.2 The task and finish group completed a significant amount of work carrying out site visits to main car parks and meeting with representatives from Community and Town Councils as well as business representatives. However, with the anticipated implementation of Civil Parking Enforcement the group felt that any recommendations they might make should be with the benefit of CPE already in place in order to deal with any parking infringements that may result from changes. Therefore, the group agreed to report to the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee with their findings at that time and set out a few options. The scrutiny committee agreed at its meeting on 4th July 2017 to revisit the task and finish group later once civil enforcement was determined and review the terms of reference accordingly.
- 5.3 A further report was then considered by the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2019 giving an update on Civil Parking Enforcement and asking if the scrutiny committee wished to reconvene the car park task and finish group, Members agreed to re-establish but also wished to invite the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny committee to establish it as a joint task and finish group, the Housing and Regeneration scrutiny committee agreed at the meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2019.
- 5.4 The Members of both Environment and Sustainability and Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committees were subsequently contacted on 28th November 2019 and on 7th January 2020 asking for expressions of interest to join the task and finish group. The task and finish group was then established and made up of the following Members:

Councillor J Ridgewell  
Councillor R Gough - Chair  
Councillor C Elsbury  
Councillor Tom Williams  
Councillor Denver Preece - Vice-Chair  
Councillor Lindsey Harding  
Councillor John Roberts

- 5.5 The group met for the first time on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2020 but subsequently Councillor J. Ridgewell became the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure and was invited as an observer at the remaining meetings. The Independents group also asked that one of their group join in July 2020 and subsequently Councillor B. Owen was invited to the meetings from September 2020 alongside Councillor N. Dix who was invited as an observer/witness because of his interest and previous involvement.
- 5.6 The group held its first meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2020 to review the background to the previous work of the task and finish group and agree the terms of reference and methodology. The terms of reference agreed were 'to determine if the current strategy and regime for the management and operation of the Councils Highway owned off-street car parks is still appropriate and what alternative options should be considered in future.' The group also agreed to write to Community and Town Councils who had submitted their views previously to allow them the opportunity to update their submissions. Members also agreed to carry out site visits to familiarise themselves with the car parks, particularly because 5 Members were not on the original group. However, following this meeting and before the site visits could be organised the Coronavirus pandemic lockdown was implemented, with all meetings cancelled. The next meeting of the group was held on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2020, with further meetings held on 14<sup>th</sup> October and 28<sup>th</sup> October 2020.
- 5.7 The group reviewed the previous reports considered by the group and responses from the Community and Town Councils at the 21<sup>st</sup> September meeting and agreed to consider each issue that had been identified and draw their conclusions. Members also agreed to review car park charges at the 5 country parks where charging was introduced in 2014 (Cwmcam already charged for parking prior to this) in their deliberations. The group also considered the recent impact of non-enforcement of car parking fees across the county borough because of the coronavirus pandemic.

### **Car Parks**

- 5.8 The review group was provided with a list of all car parks (appendix 1), the tariffs charged for pay and display (appendix 2), for which the group agreed to only consider car parks with 25 or more spaces. The group agreed to contact Town and Community Councils to inform them that the group had been established to outline the terms of reference and invite them to submit their views and attend a meeting of the group to give evidence.
- 5.9 The review group received a variety of responses during its consultation on car parks, a summary of the views expressed is outlined below:

Argoed Community Council – There should be consistency across the county borough, all free or all charging.

Bargoed Town Council – Strongly stated that the introduction of charges at their free car parks would have a detrimental impact on the Town centre which is struggling.

People will go elsewhere or park in side streets, it will have a negative impact on low paid shop workers. The regeneration hasn't been fully completed and they were told no parking charges would be introduced until it was complete.

Blackwood Town Council – In 2017 the town council highlighted that 64% of annual car park income is generated by Blackwood and didn't feel that the town benefitted and mentioned that the town council has recently taken over floral displays in the summer. The town council felt that other towns were treated far better and if charges were introduced in line with Blackwood the level of charges could be reduced. Suggested short term free parking at the Bus Station Car park to assist people using the Library & Cash office and 2 hours free parking at Christmas. In 2020 the town council welcomed the free parking during the pandemic.

Caerphilly Town Council – asked that the council consider the introduction of free parking allowances for schools during drop off and pick up hours. To also 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.

Gelligaer Community Council - Ystrad Mynach area – limited car parking serving a town with 2 primary schools and a secondary school, a hospital and college. There are issues with traffic volume and limited park and ride capacity causing commuters to park in residential areas. Ask the council to consider more car park spaces and some free parking hours agreed with giving free parking for parents taking children to school. Also asked if there could be a buffer after ticket has expired before penalty is given.

Gelligaer Community Council – Hengoed & Pengam area - 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 car park is in close proximity to a well-used community centre and provides a safe parking environment for its users. Hengoed park and ride is near to the community centre so if a charge is introduced to park and rides a request is made that a concession to the centre users after 4.30pm.

Llanbradach & Pwllypant Community Council - The continuation of free parking be upheld and that the first hour free of charge be implemented in car parks 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 current provision be maintained, and that consideration be given to improving directional signage to the car parks. Parking required for the school and local businesses. Highlighted parking on streets and vehicles using pavements, which is very dangerous, better road safety measures required.

### **Pay and Display Car Parks**

- 5.10 The group were advised that pay and display car parks are located in the main towns of Bargoed, Blackwood, Caerphilly and Ystrad Mynach. Parking tariffs are shown at appendix 2. The group were advised that differences apply for various reasons. In Ystrad Mynach the tariff is set at the lowest rate because it is the only car park available with the first hour set at 60p up to a daily charge of £2,20. The Twyn in Caerphilly is in high demand because of its location, hence has the highest rate

which is to encourage turnover and starts at 80p for the first hour up to £6.20 daily charge. Some car parks allow a weekly charge £10 (£8.50 Ystrad Mynach), a quarterly charge £105 and an annual charge £385, with some lower annual rates offered to residents in Blackwood at £83.

- 5.11 Members felt that where charging at car parks is currently in place that there should be parity across the county borough, so that residents can feel assured that everyone makes the same payment. Members noted Welsh Government Research found that visitors were more interested in available spaces, traffic flow, signage to direct them to car parks and the vibrancy of the towns. Therefore, there is a need to retain pay and display to support the provision but on a fairer basis across the county borough. There was no support to offer an initial free parking period as it was felt that this would be used by people working in towns and not encourage visitors and shoppers.

### **Country Parks**

- 5.12 Charges at Country Parks were introduced following a report to Cabinet in July 2014. The charges were introduced at the following country parks, Bargoed Woodland park; Parc Cwm Darran; Parc Penallta; Pen-y-Fan Pond; Sirhowy Valley Country Park. Cwmcarn already charged for parking before 2014 and because of the level of visitors and need to ensure turnover of spaces Members agreed not to include Cwmcarn in their review. Charges at Country Parks are £1.00 for up to 2 hours and a daily fee of £3.00. Season tickets are available at all of our country parks and Cwmcarn Forest, and currently cost £50 for an Annual Season Ticket and £25 for a Half Season Ticket. The review group considered the projected income when the car parking fees were introduced in 2014, when it was anticipated that based on the existing visitor numbers it was estimated that an annual income of £85,000 would likely be generated. However, it was acknowledged that the exact level of income would not be known until the scheme became operational.
- 5.13 The group reviewed the actual income generated since 2016 (appendix 3) and the total income for the 5 country parks is £274,737 over a 6-year period. There has been no income in 2020/21 as there has been no charging due to Covid 19. However, including Cwmcarn the total income has been £729,729 showing that Cwmcarn generates the most, followed by Pen-y-fan Pond. When comparing the full years (2015/16 to 2019/20) since the charges were introduced the average income for the 5 country parks is £49,626 per annum.
- 5.14 Members discussed the benefit to the public in accessing green spaces during the current pandemic and agreed that the relative low income generated per annum for the 5 country parks against the benefits to peoples mental and physical wellbeing were not justified. Reference was made to a recent Welsh Government publication on the importance of public access to open green spaces to benefit health.
- 5.15 It was agreed that the charges at the 5 country parks, car parks should be ended but retain the charges at Cwmcarn which has high visitor numbers and would need to control parking use and turnover through charging.

### **Parking by staff employed in local businesses**

- 5.16 The task and finish group had received consultation responses from Bargoed Town Council highlighting that many people working in towns are often low paid and charging for car parking would have an adverse effect by dispersing car parking into residential areas. In Caerphilly where there are pay and display car parks workers are often parking in residential areas and returning and moving their cars during the

day to avoid enforcement action. There are also towns where some pay and display car parks are underutilised because they are less convenient, and it was suggested that these could be offered to workers in towns at reduced rates.

- 5.17 Members also received feedback that people employed in Blackwood and Caerphilly towns are currently using the central and most convenient car parks since free parking has been introduced since the coronavirus pandemic. This has resulted in spaces occupied all day from early morning with little turnover of spaces thereby preventing other visitors from using the car parks.

### **School Parking**

- 5.18 Members considered the feedback from Caerphilly Town Council and agreed that the current informal concession at Crescent Road Car Park in Caerphilly to allow Parents and Carers to park for a short period of time whilst dropping off children and picking them up is useful in reducing congestion. There are still people choosing to park close to the school but it was recognised that without this concession the situation would be much worse. Members were also advised that Libanus School in Blackwood is taking part in an exclusion zone so parents and carers are using the current offer for free parking in car parks close to the school and there is concern that the once free parking ends that there may be issues with the exclusion zone.

### **Sunday Parking**

- 5.18 During the consultation carried out with Town and Community Councils the group were asked to consider allowing free parking at the Twyn car park in Caerphilly on Remembrance Sunday. Members were inclined to agree that this was a reasonable request. It was subsequently identified during discussion that this is the only car park in the county borough to charge on Sundays and it appears to be an historical matter. Members were advised that to remove this charge altogether would have no significant adverse impact. Therefore, in order to provide parity and in line with the Members views of consistency the group agreed that charges should no longer be applicable at the Twyn car park on Sundays.

### **Free parking concessions**

- 5.19 Following discussion about the Twyn Members considered if the Council could offer free car parking on St David's day across the whole county borough. It was agreed that this would be best done by a general message through Communications as opposed to changing signage and covering payment machines as this would have resource and time implications.

### **Park and Ride**

- 5.20 During the discussion on the costs to maintain car parks such as maintenance, energy and NNDR it was clarified that the council is responsible for all costs associated with maintaining and running park and ride car parks. Members expressed concerns that residents paying car park fees and using our towns were effectively subsidising free parking for those travelling to Cardiff on the train. The group were advised that Welsh Government has indicated that it 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. Members considered that a small charge would be reasonable and agreed to suggest that Cabinet consider the introduction of a small charge.

## Free Car Parks

- 5.21 The previous task and finish group in 2016/17 were able to visit a number of car parks in the main towns and villages giving the members an opportunity to see the condition of the car parks and locations. Members also took into account the views submitted by Community and Town Councils as well as some business representatives. The views summarised in 5.9 of this report show that concerns regarding parity and perceived fairness, alongside provisions for local workers as impact on the high street were submitted.
- 5.22 The group were provided with research reports commissioned by Welsh Government 'Assessing the Impact of Car Parking Charges on Town Centre Footfall – 2015' and some of the findings are highlighted below:

*Charging for car parking is a complex issue. It is only one aspect of a complex interplay of factors influencing willingness to travel by car, time and money spent, and business activity in town centres. It is very difficult to separate the influence of car parking charges from other factors.*

*Whilst a 'blanket' free parking strategy has been suggested to encourage more car park users, these were generally found not to benefit target visitors (for example, the spaces were used primarily by town centre workers who were taking up the spaces all day, rather than shoppers) and consequently had an unexpectedly negative impact on footfall*

*Beyond anecdote, there is very little published evidence which links changes in car park charges to changes in town centre footfall. Local Authorities and other stakeholders similarly rely mostly on anecdote when relating car park charges to footfall. However, their feedback does suggest that a relationship exists.*

*Visitors to town centres suggested that car park charges impact on how long they remain in the centre and, consequently, how much they spend whilst there. However, the general availability of spaces is felt by visitors to be more important than cost in their overall decision about visiting. Traffic flow and parking signage are felt by visitors to have the same, if not greater, effect on their decision to visit the town centre, how long they spend there, and how much money they spend.*

- 5.23 Welsh Government has also commissioned a report – Research into Car Parking Charging Strategies – 2017. This report found that there are contrasting views on the importance of completely free car parking and there was insufficient evidence on the relationship between car park charging and town centre footfall. The report did look at two case studies within Wales mentioned in the report in 5.22 above in respect of Wrexham and Denbighshire county which both implemented completely free all day parking for a period of time and measured the impact on usage and footfall. In Denbighshire County, similarly to Wrexham, the free all day car parking was taken up by workers in the town rather than visitors.
- 5.24 There were a variety of viewpoints expressed by members of the group on whether to consider charging at car parks that are currently free to use. One member stated that all car parks should charge, and it should be the same across the county borough. Another member felt it was important to agree in the first instance why charging would be imposed and was it to raise income to maintain the car parks or to encourage turnover. If there is no turnover issue because of limited footfall and a high number of available spaces, imposing a charge would have an adverse impact particularly where the Town is struggling. Another Member felt that because of the

impact of Covid-19 upon Towns and footfall that any changes should wait until the coronavirus is no longer having an impact. Members received a copy of the footfall figures for the main towns over the past few years and compared the same three months over the previous three years, as outlined in the table below:

Month	Bargoed	Blackwood	Caerphilly	Newbridge	Risca	Ystrad Mynach
Apr 18	44681	134320	106805	30164	33076	60678
Aug 18	49924	149020	115388	33371	35324	52810
Dec 18	37609	182377	109144	52969	32240	53904
Apr 19	46500	130453	98607	65901	32207	57738
Aug 19	50912	139405	106797	67330	32712	48571
Dec 19	40696	153988	107411	53069	30987	52447
Apr 20	13943	29810	32449	21481	16947	23838
Aug 20	35040	82943	81645	26866	22561	37169

- 5.25 A Member provided a personal account that he had recently visited Blackwood just before the new national lockdown was due to start. He informed the group that people were queuing to get into car parks which are all currently free. However other Members stated that free car parks in Bargoed and Risca are never full and there is no turnover issue. There was some discussion on the planned site visits that were cancelled in March 2020, due to the coronavirus lockdown, and whether it was possible to arrange them before deciding on free car parks. Members agreed it was difficult to make a recommendation until they had visited the free car parks which is not possible at the present time. The group also took into account the severe impact of the coronavirus on Towns at the present time. Therefore, it was agreed to defer making any recommendation until the impact of the pandemic has receded.

### **Zoned Parking**

- 5.26 Members discussed parking in side streets in Caerphilly with limited times of 1 or 2 hours which are often used by people who work in the town to park for free. This often results in them returning to their cars during the day in order to move their cars to another free space nearby, thereby frustrating the purpose of the limited waiting areas. Members asked if zoning certain areas to prevent this could be considered and were advised that zoning is already used and may be applicable, but each situation would need to be considered on its merits. Priorities for county wide traffic regulation order reviews had already been agreed with Members and this includes looking at residential parking areas. Each review will engage with local ward members in order to decide what restrictions are most appropriate for their areas.
- 5.27 Members agreed it would be useful to look at zoning across the main towns, to make it consistent and encourage use of car parks and if agreed this will link into the recommendation to offer reduced parking permits for certain car parks to employees of local businesses.

### **Residential Parking**

- 5.28 The group considered the application of the policy criteria for resident parking areas. The residents' parking scheme has mainly been implemented in principal town centres, and the policy criteria stipulates that any location can be considered provided that they are immediately adjacent to major shopping areas, large employment sites, main transport interchanges and colleges. Residents parking schemes are intended to respond to residents' concerns in circumstances where

there is limited available on-street parking (and generally no available off-street parking) that is under pressure from non-residential parking.

- 5.29 Members gave examples where residents parking is impacted by local businesses attracting customers who then park in streets where they could use nearby car parks. However, because these areas are not considered a principal town and/or does not meet the current criteria, residents parking is not considered. The group agreed that they would like to see the criteria reviewed and more responsive to the needs of areas.

### **Temporary Free Parking - Covid-19**

- 5.30 The current administration implemented free car parking across the county borough at the beginning of the coronavirus lockdown. This is due to end on 31st December 2020 and car parking charges are due to be reinstated in January 2021. The group considered this and agreed that it was evident during the discussion on town centres and footfall that areas have seen a considerable reduction in visitors, and this is likely to have an impact into the new year and beyond.
- 5.31 The group also heard that there have been complaints from businesses in Blackwood and Caerphilly that central car parks are being filled early and all day, probably by people working in the towns, thereby preventing visitors from parking in those locations. Options such as charging up until 10am followed by free parking afterwards were discussed. The group agreed that they would like to see free car parking extended beyond 31st December 2020.

### **Use of Car Parks for Trading and Events**

- 5.32 Members discussed the use of car parks for other purposes other than parking. The group were advised that trading in car parks is not allowed but there are some exceptions for community benefit. Examples were provided of trading such as a butcher's van at Rhymney Car Park, a mobile bank or a cancer screening at other car parks. Commercial users would be expected to pay a charge whereas if it is of community benefit it would be free of charge. Members agreed that the current approach should continue, and officers be allowed to use discretion in respect of what is community benefit and which car parks are suitable.

### **Night Closure at Thorncombe 3 and Wesley Road Blackwood**

- 5.33 Members were advised that at present a long-standing arrangement has been in place where the car parks at Thorncombe 3 and Wesley road car parks in Blackwood are locked at night. This work is carried out by one member of staff who may retire in the foreseeable future. Members asked if there were any particular issues that required the car park to be closed at night and were advised that it appears to be an historical arrangement. The group agreed that consideration should be given to cease locking these car parks at night when this staff member retires but the local ward members should be consulted alongside monitoring and options to install CCTV explored.

### **Income and Maintenance**

- 5.34 The Group were advised that the council must pay considerable amounts to maintain and manage car parks, there are charges for energy, NNDR and enforcement to be recouped. The group received details of income and costs for pay and display car parks which shows the surplus income, detailed in Appendix 4. 1. The group were

mindful that should the recommendations to reduce car parking tariffs to the lowest rate and removal of charging on a Sunday in the Twyn will have an impact on income. However, should Cabinet agree to implement fees for park and ride car parks and also encourage a permit scheme for town centre workers (thereby encouraging use of the under used car parks) that will go towards offsetting some of this reduced income.

- 5.35 Members felt that the purpose for charging in car parks should be to support the service and maintain the car parks. There were specific areas that could improve the current provision such as improved lighting and directional signage, that were identified by consultees which would make car parks more user friendly.
- 5.36 The group were interested to discover what maintenance inspections are carried out and were advised that only ad hoc responsive inspections are undertaken, and a formal asset management plan has yet to be completed. Members were keen to see a planned maintenance programme be developed that is informed by a condition survey instead of relying upon a reactive maintenance provision.

### **CCTV**

- 5.37 Members were advised that CCTV is installed at some car parks and varies in quality. Not all pay and display car parks have CCTV however there are constraints in respect of the capacity of the CCTV control room which would impact if additional CCTV were to be considered. In some instances, the quality of the CCTV is limited by the broadband bandwidth. The group would want to see CCTV retained where it is of good quality and agreed that it can act as a deterrent and provides reassurance. Members would like to see opportunities to improve CCTV provision where it is poor by exploring grant opportunities and by providing match funding from council budgets.

### **5.38 Conclusions**

The task and finish group considered a wide range of issues across the county borough car parks and were mindful of the consultation responses received. Members have drawn conclusions in respect of parity on parking charges, removing charges at country parks and offering reduced permits to workers. The group felt that charging on a Sunday at the Twyn should be ended and be free at all car parks on St Davids Day would be a generous concession by the council. The group considered the difficulty of congestion around schools and would like to see opportunities to allow limited free parking in nearby car parks explored.

There were strong views that there should be some charge for park and ride car parks to offset the costs incurred by the Council to maintain them. The group felt that at the present time because of the impact of the coronavirus that any recommendations on free car parks should be deferred because of the impact upon footfall in town centres. The group also felt that the temporary offer of free parking at all car parks should be extended whilst the pandemic is ongoing.

There were some specific issues that the group were asked to provide a view, on trading and events at car parks and night closure at Thorncombe 3 and Wesley Road car parks in Blackwood.

The group considered the impact of parking upon residential areas by people working in the area and visiting local businesses and have made suggestions in respect of zoned parking and a review of the criteria for residential parking.

Finally, having listened to feedback in respect of a need to improve directional signs and lighting and noting that there is no comprehensive condition survey. The group would like to see a condition survey carried out at all car parks and a planned maintenance programme established. The group agreed that surplus income from parking fees should be ringfenced to support this maintenance programme. The group were also supportive of improvement to CCTV were possible.

## **6. ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 It is assumed that having reviewed the previous information considered by the task and finish group and the consultation responses that the group have had sufficient information to form their conclusions and recommendations. The group did not feel it was appropriate to make any changes to the free car parks at this time because of the adverse impact upon footfall in town centres.

## **7. LINKS TO RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES**

- 7.1 Set out here which of the council's policies are relevant to the decision being requested.

### **7.2 Corporate Plan 2018-2023.**

Objective 4 - Promote a modern, integrated and sustainable transport system that increases opportunity, promotes prosperity and minimises the adverse impacts on the environment.

Objective 5 - Creating a county borough that supports a healthy lifestyle in accordance with the sustainable Development Principle within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

## **8. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS**

- 8.1 This review of Highway owned car parks within Caerphilly County Borough contributes to the following Well-being Goals within the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015:

- A prosperous Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A globally responsible Wales

This report contributes to the well-being goals as set out in links to strategy above. It is consistent with the five ways of working as defined within the sustainable development principle in the Act in that Members reviewing car parks within the county borough should consider the goals of a prosperous Wales, a Wales of cohesive communities and a globally responsible Wales.

## **9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Equalities Impact drafted as attached.

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 The financial implications of the recommendations are as follows:

Recommendation 3.2 - Standardised lower tariff county wide: this would result in a loss of income of approximately £40k per annum (based on 2019 figures). There would also be a one-off implementation cost of approximately £20k for the reprogramming of P&D machines and new car park signage.

Recommendation 3.3- Remove charges from 5 country parks: this would result in an average loss of income of £49,626 per annum.

Recommendation 3.4 - Reduced charge for parking permits for local business staff: the existing range of season tickets already offer a substantial discount on the daily tariffs of between 25-60% (depending on the duration of the season ticket and location of the car park).

Recommendation 3.5 - Parents/carers concession for schools: no appreciable financial impact.

Recommendation 3.6 - Remove Sunday charging at the Tywn: based on average ticket sales, this would result in a loss of income of approximately £10k per annum.

Recommendation 3.7 - Free parking for St. David's Day: depending which day this falls on, this would result in a loss of income of approximately £2-3k per annum.

Recommendation 3.8 - Introduce charging at P&R car parks: The potential income would depend on the tariff chosen. There would also be one-off capital costs for implementation and additional annual operational costs.

Recommendation 3.9 - Consideration of charging at free car parks: no impact at this time. The potential income would depend on the tariff chosen. There would also be one-off capital costs for implementation and additional annual operational costs.

Recommendation 3.10 - Review criteria for resident permit parking: no impact at this time.

Recommendation 3.11 - Consideration of zoning for residential permit parking areas: no impact at this time.

Recommendation 3.12 - Extension of suspension of parking charges: estimated loss of income is £50k per month.

Recommendation 3.13 - Trading and events in car parks: nil impact.

Recommendation 3.14 - Cease overnight closures of Thorncombe Road No. 3 and Wesley Road car parks: following the retirement of the Parking Attendant, there would be a reduction in cost for this part time post of approx. £7k.

Recommendation 3.15 - Ring fencing of parking charges for maintenance and improvement of car parks: this would mean approximately £270k (based on actual 2019/20 income and expenditure) per annum reduction in budget available for other parking, transportation, highway and engineering services. Note this rises to approximately £445k if calculated on 2020/21 budgets.

Recommendation 3.16 - Additional/upgraded CCTV: depending on the equipment procured, this could lead to some additional maintenance costs.

- 10.2 Members should note that any loss of income or reduction in budget would result in a direct reduction in available budget for other parking, transportation, highway and engineering services. Therefore, there would be a corresponding reduction in service delivery unless this loss/reduction was covered by other funding.
- 10.3 The total financial impact of those recommendations that could be implemented as a first phase (i.e. 3.2, 3.3, 3.6 & 3.7 above) is estimated to result in an annual reduction in income of £103k and require a one off cost for changes to/removal of signage and P&D machines of up to £40k.

## **11. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 If the decision was made to introduce charges in the car parks that are currently free and similarly with the Park and Ride facilities a review of resources would be needed to ensure sufficient levels of enforcement could be maintained.

## **12. CONSULTATIONS**

- 12.1 Whilst it is for Members to determine which recommendations they support, the following Officer comments on some of the specific recommendations (using the same enumeration as in section 10) are intended to ensure Cabinet is able to make a fully informed decision:

Recommendation 3.4 - The existing package of season tickets already offers a substantial reduction for all users on what are relatively low parking charges. Therefore, Officers do not endorse this recommendation.

Recommendation 3.8 -The introduction of charges in P&R car parks could lead to more on street parking and illegal on street parking in the areas surrounding these car parks. In addition, the overall “message” that this potentially conveys is not conducive to encouraging the use of public transport to reduce traffic on our roads

Recommendation 3.9 Parking in the outer lying free to use highway owned off street car parks are largely used by residents where there is limited or congested on street parking provision and little or no private off street parking provision. Some also support smaller shopping and business areas. The introduction of charges in these car parks could lead to more on street parking, illegal on street parking and significant objections from local residents.

Recommendation 3.15. - Whilst there is no dedicated budget for asset renewal and replacement, investment is required on an infrequent basis, and often not for years at a time. The ring fencing of the net car parking budget would tie up this funding year on year whilst waiting for necessary refurbishment and replacement works. This would be an inefficient way of managing scarce resources (note; this assume CPE

income is excluded). The net car parking budget provides essential funding for the wider transportation, highway and engineering services. Any budget reduction would mean a reduction in service in these areas or that other funding would need to be found to make up the shortfall.

- 12.2 It should be noted that any recommendation supported that results in reduced income will have budgetary consequences. This would have to be funded from additional budget allocation or from reduction in some other Infrastructure service provision.

### **13. STATUTORY POWER**

- 13.1 Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000.

Author: Catherine Forbes-Thompson, Scrutiny Manager

Consultees: Caerphilly County Borough Car Park Task and Finish Group  
Councillor John Ridgewell Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure  
Councillor Tudor Davies Chair Environment & Sustainability Scrutiny Committee  
Councillor Adrian Hussey Vice Chair Environment & Sustainability Scrutiny Committee  
Councillor Andrew Whitcombe Chair Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee  
Councillor Christine Forehead Vice Chair Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee  
Mark S. Williams Interim Corporate Director of Communities  
Marcus Lloyd, Head of Infrastructure  
Clive Campbell, Transportation Engineering Manager  
Dean Smith, Principal Engineer – Traffic Management  
Steve Wilcox, Principal Officer – Town Centres & Business Support  
Rob Tranter, Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer  
Steve Harris, Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer

#### Background Papers:

Regeneration & Environment Scrutiny Committee Report 29th March 2016 – Scoping Report  
Welsh Government Report – Assessing the Impact of Car Parking Charges on Town Centre Footfall - 2015  
Welsh Government – Research into Car Parking Charging Strategies - 2017  
Regeneration & Environment Scrutiny Committee Report 4<sup>th</sup> July 2017 – Update report  
Environment & Sustainability Scrutiny Committee 29<sup>th</sup> October 2019 – CPE Update Report

#### Appendices:

Appendix 1 List of all car parks  
Appendix 2 Charging Tariffs  
Appendix 3 Country Parks Car Parks Income since 2016  
Appendix 4 Income and Expenditure