

HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
PANEL

TUESDAY, 25 OCTOBER 2016

PRESENT: Councillors Hari Sharma (Chairman), Jesse Grey (Vice-Chairman), Malcolm Beer, Maureen Hunt, Paul Lion and Julian Sharpe

Officers: Wendy Binmore and Simon Fletcher

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Gilmore.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Hunt – Declared a pecuniary interest as she owned a flat in the Maidenhead area and the proposed changes to parking permits could affect the value of her property.

Cllr Sharma - Declared a personal interest as he was a full time employee of First Group.

MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Part I minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 19 September 2016 be approved.

PARKING STRATEGY

The Chairman stated he had requested the extra meeting as there was not a Highways, Transport and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel scheduled until December 2016. He added the strategy would last for 20 years so it was a good opportunity to provide feedback to officers and to scrutinise the proposals thoroughly.

Simon Fletcher, Strategic Director of Operations introduced the report and drew the attention of Members to page 24 of the report when the key aims and principles of the proposals could be found.

The Strategic Director of Operations confirmed that the Borough was looking to use temporary parking structures so that when parking was reduced due to regeneration, the temporary parking structures could be used so there was no net loss of parking. The final proposals for temporary parking structures were due to go to Cabinet in December 2016.

The Strategic Director of Operations stated the report acted as a guide and responded to the following issues:

- Long and short stay parking
- Approaches to tariffs
- Enforcement
- The proposals were linked to delivering differently
- The Borough did not have the right skills to deliver everything in house so it would liaise with third party private sector companies
- Consultation took place
- The report did not address the Borough's parking standards.

The enforcement strategy was to help residents, visitors and businesses know where to park and was a fair but firm approach. The Strategic Director of Operations explained that Waitrose had used temporary parking structures and it had been successful. There were four key development sites in Maidenhead and the Borough recognised that as regeneration of the Town moved on, car parks could be lost. The Strategic Director of Operations job was to map out the loss and provide supplementary parking and that was why he looked at steel frame parking. He added that some of the Town's car parks were on the old side and one key strand of the strategy was the parking principle and capacity.

The Chairman stated that free parking for visitors in the Borough were non-existent but a recent study published had said that it was essential for prosperous towns. Cllr Hunt stated that a loss of parking spaces were to be replaced with temporary parking but, where would it go? And long term, if Maidenhead was to be successful where would the parking be? Cllr Hunt also wanted to know what was happening with private partnerships and traffic wardens; would they be moved to a new company. The Strategic Director of Operations stated he needed to look at the structure of Maidenhead and needed to look at the increase in housing. At present, he did not know if there would be enough parking to meet demand. He was currently measuring car park use and it was at around 85% capacity. He needed to work with the Regeneration Team to see what would work as and when the Town changed.

The Strategic Director of Operations confirmed he did not feel there was the expertise or skill set within the council regarding parking enforcement; therefore, he was looking to use a third party for their expertise. It would be a service contract and they would operate the car parks but the council would maintain the control.

The private sector would take over the off street parking to help enforce that so the council could use its own in house team to enforce on street parking. Cllr grey stated he looked forward to the strategy being implemented. The Strategic Director of Operations confirmed Maidenhead would lose 150 spaces between chapel Arches, the Landing, the Town Hall and St Clouds Way by 2019 so there was urgency in putting the strategy in place. The Strategic Director of Operations also stated he was looking to work with the developers to try and include provision for parking. The main aim of the strategy was to have no loss of parking whilst regeneration was ongoing.

The Strategic Director of Operations directed Members to page 28 of the strategy and pp11 on policy principles which were specific to the Windsor area as parking in Windsor did not meet demand. He acknowledged there was not enough emphasis on the parking situation in Ascot.

In terms of using a third party to enforce the strategy, the Strategic Director of Operations stated that some soft market testing had been carried out; some other local authorities were devolving their parking to the private sector but, there was no guarantee in the quality of provision so, the council would not be going down that route. Instead, the council was looking at implementing a service contract where the council maintained ownership of the estate but, the running of the car parks and enforcement would be contracted out to a third party. He had had five or six organisations that wanted to take on the whole operation.

Cllr Hunt stated she was looking for a vibrant town in Maidenhead where housing was being developed alongside commercial buildings. However, there was not the infrastructure for that as there was no tube link and if there was no parking, people would have to get a taxi. The Strategic Director of Operations stated the parking strategy excluded anything which related to the parking standard. The strategy was about parking provision. The parking standard proposals would follow the strategy at a later date.

The Strategic Director of Operations directed Members to page 30, pp.17 where it contained information on emission based parking charges. Pricing and tariffs would be introduced to address the concerns regarding emissions. In terms of where the revenue from parking would be spent, there was no provision for that in the strategy but, the Strategic Director of Operations was happy to talk to Cabinet regarding that. Cllr Beer stated the revenue was to go

into the pot for highway repairs so it was already covered. He added that low emission vehicles already received good discounts while others were paying heavily. He felt it was going over the top to allow electric cars to park for free.

The Strategic Director of Operations confirmed that advantage card discounts were included in the strategy and directed Members to page 27 of the strategy. The parking systems were to be replaced for advantage cards as a lot of the systems were very old and had problems reading the cards.

Cllr Sharpe stated the strategy was mainly focused on town areas but, there were smaller areas where there was pressure on parking. Both of the Sunnings had problems with parking and he did not see how the strategy would resolve those issues without introducing charges which traders would not be happy with. Cllr Hunt agreed and stated it would prove a problem in rural areas. Car parks were not big enough and if charges were implemented, it would make residents and businesses unhappy. The Borough needed more parking. The Strategic Director of Operations stated he was happy to reassure Members that Cllr Cox was equally concerned with rural areas and they would be kept under review within the strategy. He stated they wanted to talk to parish councils about possibly devolving some parking provision. He was not talking about enforcement functions, he had spoken to some who had said they did not want to but, he had also spoken to other parish councils who were happy to devolve parking to their control.

The Strategic Director of Operations confirmed that market intelligence from third party provider would look at park and ride facilities within the Borough. The council did not have the skill set in house to do that. Park and ride had not been ruled out of the strategy and would be regularly reviewed to pin point opportunities for introduction. Cllr Grey stated only 6% of visitors would use park and ride. The Strategic Director of Operations said he had spoken to PRoM and the Maidenhead Town Partnership and they had said that park and ride would put visitors off from going into town. Cllr Beer stated he had taken legal advice which had said that the minority view was to be included in the report so he asked for that to be noted. He added his son lived in Abingdon and the Oxford park and ride was excellent. Oxford was an old town as was Windsor so it was a good comparison. Legoland should use park and ride and he wanted it reviewed.

The Strategic Director of Operations confirmed that any suggestion for congestion charging visitors to Legoland was discussed at the Policy Committee and shelved. He added that no options, including park and ride had been dismissed and they would be regularly reviewed. Cllr Hunt stated she felt that Cllr Beer's suggestion should be put forward as there were hot spots for congestion so she felt park and ride for people going to and from train stations would be good. The Strategic Director of Operations stated it was an important point raised and Stafferton Way was a long stay car park for commuters and he was talking to Network Rail to extend long term parking at the station. However, commuters were choosing not to pay for parking and were therefore, clogging up the surrounding streets. There was something in the strategy to combat that. Cllr Hunt stated to charge for parking was a lot of money for some families. The Strategic Director of Operations agreed and said it was on the agenda to look into. Those parking in the town for free were pushing residents out. Cllr Hunt stated Park and ride could work but would need to get companies on board. If the council offered businesses cheap out of town parking, would clear the streets a lot. The Strategic Director of Operations stated page 23 of the strategy showed a hierarchy which emphasised that.

Cllr Beer stated he had a strong objection to the proposal linking community warders to enforcement roles. The Strategic Director of Operations confirmed it was part of the Delivering Differently proposals. He and Cllr Cox had been to Westminster Council and discussed the linking of roles but, he was now looking at moving away from that model. Cllr Beer wanted his objections to the merge of roles recorded. The Strategic Director of Operations confirmed he would be bringing updated proposals for those two services in the future.

Cllr Beer stated that there should be little or no charge for parking for those who wanted to quickly nip into the bank or post office to run errands. The Strategic Director of Operations stated the council was already doing that and there was a proposal to review it.

Cllr Lion stated the report was very informative with lots of good information and the Panel thanked officers for their work.

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 7.40 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....