

REPORT TITLE: EXTRACT OF MINUTES OF CABINET (TRAFFIC AND PARKING)
COMMITTEE HELD 4 JANUARY 2017

THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

23 JANUARY 2017

PORTFOLIO HOLDER: CLLR JAMES BYRNES - PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR
TRANSPORT AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

REPORT OF HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

Contact Officer: Claire Buchanan Tel No: 01962 848 438 Email
cbuchanan@winchester.gov.uk

WARD(S): ALL

PURPOSE

This report sets out an extract of the minutes of Cabinet (Traffic and Parking) held on 4 January 2017, with regard to consideration of the outcomes and recommendations of the Car Parking Charges and Operational Review (CAB2885(TP)).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That The Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the matters set out in the minute extract below.

1. **CAR PARKING CHARGES AND OPERATION REVIEW**

(Report CAB2885(TP) refers)

The Assistant Director (Environment) advised that the Report recommendations followed on from the principles set out in the Council's Car Parking Strategy refresh which was agreed at Cabinet on 7 December 2016 (Report CAB2874 refers). The Report recommended adjusting parking tariffs to increase differentials between car parks in the centre and the inner and outer rings (Park and Ride). The intention was to promote centre car parks for short term use, whilst still offering the opportunity for longer stays (over 4 hours) in these car parks at a premium charge. This would mean that there would be consistency across the centre car parks and would reduce the potential for drivers to hunt for all-day parking in the central area.

The Assistant Director drew the Committee's attention to two email representations received prior to the meeting. One was from Phil Gagg (WinACC) which contained a WinACC briefing paper regarding the Report which welcomed the increased differential in parking charges and removing various anomalies. Mr Gagg also requested that the impact of the proposed changes on air quality be monitored (Mr Gagg also spoke during public participation as summarised below). The second was from a resident of Petersfield Road who generally welcomed the proposals to discourage people from parking all day in centre car parks but had concerns about the potential impact of increased commuter parking on some residential streets around the town.

Four members of the public and/or representatives from local groups spoke during public participation and their comments are summarised below.

Catherine Turness (Winchester BID) spoke in general support of the proposals in the Report, particularly the aim to discourage long term parking in central car parks. However, she raised a specific concern regarding the proposal to increase parking for over four hours in Tower Street car park to £15.00. Winchester BID had been contacted by various service sector businesses operating in Southgate Street and other nearby areas which had no alternative car parks nearby. Their staff were not able to use park and ride as they were required to use their vehicles for visits at various times throughout the day and/or their business operated outside of the usual park and ride operating hours. She suggested that the Council work with the BID to find an alternative solution for this particular car park, for example offering a £8 permit for local businesses.

Phil Gagg (WinACC) generally welcomed the Report which sought to both reduce pollution and increase parking income (which would be supported if the income could be reinvested in additional measures to improve air quality). He welcomed the increase in differential charges proposed, but suggested inner car parks be renamed "gateway" car parks to avoid potential confusion. He had some concerns about the low charges suggested for short-term parking as this could potentially increase vehicle movements because more

people would visit centre car parks each day and consequently pollution levels would be adversely affected. He suggested visitors could park in the “gateway” car parks and have easy access to the town centre. Finally, he queried the validity of the parking survey, referred to the WinACC survey which was more reliable and therefore representative of local views and highlighted the requirement for further monitoring and measures to reduce pollution.

Kate Macintosh supported the direction of travel of the Report but believed further measures were required. She made comparisons with Oxford where long term car parking in the centre cost over £20 during the week (higher charges too at weekends) whereas she believed that an annual park and ride ticket cost less than in Winchester. In addition, the Oxford Park and Ride service operated more frequently and longer hours. She drew attention to a recent public statement by the Chairman regarding pollution levels in Oxford which she believed was incorrect as levels had decreased.

The Chairman stated that he would write to Ms Macintosh explaining the basis for the comments he made regarding pollution levels in Oxford.

Patrick Davies drew attention to a statement he had made at the meeting of the Central Winchester Regeneration Informal Policy Group on 8 November 2016 regarding the importance of encouraging public transport use for journeys to and from the centre of town. He believed that the Report did not give adequate regard to the need to encourage public transport use as an alternative to travelling by car and bus companies and the Council should examine ways to achieve this.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillors Bell and Godfrey addressed the Committee and their comments are summarised below.

Councillor Bell generally welcomed the Report including the proposals to increase pricing differentials and the Council’s commitment to park and ride. She requested that the third recommendation be amended to remove the words “to investigate” as it was essential that the capacity of park and ride did increase. She welcomed the success of the Pitt Manor Park and Ride but highlighted the capacity issues that had resulted from this, which she believed would continue after the busy Christmas period. She noted that the survey results summarised at Paragraph 6.2 of the Report indicated the same level of disagreement amongst respondents with introducing Sunday car parking charges and using charges to encourage users to park away from the town centre, but the Report only recommended the introduction of the latter. On a general point, she suggested that all Committee Reports include a section addressing “Air Quality” implications for Officers to complete.

Councillor Godfrey welcomed the Report as addressing the lack of capacity in central car parks in a practical way: raising charges for long term parking should free up spaces for short term visitor parking in the centre. He noted some charges for central parking were being increased but those in the inner

ring, such as Chesil Street Multi-Storey car park, were being reduced. He also highlighted that future technology could be employed to enable users to pay for actual time parked. However, as Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Policy he emphasised that the proposals could have a negative impact on parking income and this would require careful monitoring. With regard to the proposed cost of Season tickets in Group B (Tower Street), he requested that this be reconsidered and the cost of tickets be reduced to the equivalent of £12 per day (with a further 20% discount).

The Committee discussed the request from Councillor Godfrey and Ms Turness that season tickets and/or business parking in Tower Street be offered at a further discounted rate. It was noted that any discounted season ticket would be open to any users of the car park to purchase, unless a particular ticket was offered to business users (not currently available), which might be difficult to operate in practice. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services advised that any change to the season tickets as proposed in the Report would require an amendment to the Order to be advertised. In addition, the Assistant Director highlighted that the impact of the proposed change in season ticket prices would not be immediately apparent due to the way such tickets were purchased and their duration. It could take up to a year for the full impact to become apparent. Furthermore, Members would need to be clear as to the reasons why tickets in this car park were being discounted in this way. Members noted that the proposals to increase the cost of long stay parking at Tower Street should result in more spaces being available for visitors during the day. Following further discussion, the Committee agreed not to alter season ticket prices from those suggested in the Report at this time, but to monitor the impact of the changes in, for example, six months time to ascertain whether any further adjustment was required.

With regard to Recommendation 3, one Member suggested that it be amended to include a commitment to investigating increasing the operating hours of the Park and Ride service, particularly later in the evenings. The Assistant Director advised that the Council had run services with later operating hours in previous years but this had been reduced in due to lack of demand. For example when the Park and Ride service operated until 20:30 the last bus only had one or two passengers. The current contract therefore reflected patterns of passenger usage. The Committee noted that the service had operated later in the five weeks prior to Christmas 2016, but that data on passenger numbers was not yet available. It was agreed that this issue be kept under review but that no change in operating hours be proposed at the current time. However, the Assistant Director confirmed that the capacity of the service at peak times, and to take account of the new Pitt Park and Ride site, would be investigated as recommended in the Report.

In response to Members' questions, the Assistant Director advised that the average length of stay varied according to the particular car park. The Head of Finance advised that car parking income was approximately £6m net. The Council incurred capital and revenue expenditure in connection with car park operations and had a specific earmarked reserve for car park works and improvements (further detail in CAB2886(TP) below). With regard to off-street

car parking charges (unlike on-street income), the Council were required to adopt a Parking Strategy and set charges in line with this but there was no specific requirement that all income received be ring-fenced for a particular use.

The Chairman thanked the Assistant Director and other relevant officers for their work in producing the Report.

The Committee agreed to the following for the reasons set out above and outlined in the Report.

RESOLVED:

1. That changes to the parking tariff in Winchester Town be advertised and implemented as set out in Appendix 1 in the Report.
2. That the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to give public notice under Section 35C of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (as amended) required to give effect to a) the changes set out in 1 above for implementation from 1 April 2017.
3. That the Council commits to investigate increasing the capability of the Park & Ride operation by investing in additional bus service capacity so that overall capacity of the service aligns with increasing levels of use particularly at peak times.