



ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

Panel Report

Public

Date of Meeting: 9th September 2010

Title: Car Parking in Carlisle

Report of: Car Parking Task & Finish Group

Report reference: OS 22/10

Summary:

The final report of the Car Parking Task and Finish group is attached. The report makes a number of recommendations for action for the Executive.

Recommendations:

Members are asked to

- approve the report and recommend it to the Executive, requesting a formal response;

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**Environment &
Economy Overview
& Scrutiny Panel**

Car Parking Task and Finish Group

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2 Recommendations

The Task Group make the following recommendations to the Executive:

- 1 Residential Parking Schemes should break even and consideration needs to be given how this can be achieved.
- 2 A review should be undertaken into all of the parking zones within the city with consideration to narrowing zones if they are deemed too wide.
- 3 That the Executive instructs an officer to look at how car park assets can be maximised.
- 4 That consideration is given to offering a larger discount for contract parking for Devonshire Walk Car Park.
- 5 That contract parking is available at a pro-rata cost for parking on set days of the week.
- 6 That the Executive give consideration to linear parking charges.
- 7 That consideration is given to introducing Pay by Phone parking.

3 Introduction & Background

3.1 At the Environment & Economy Scrutiny Panel on 3rd December 2009, members agreed to establish a task and finish group to look at Car Parking in Carlisle. This decision followed discussion around the 2010/11 Budget and historical concerns that the Panel had regarding the lack of a Movement Strategy (including a Parking Strategy) for Carlisle. Members had concerns that they were scrutinising the charges and income from Car Parks without being aware of the strategy for car parking in the City.

3.2 Members understood that Car Parking and associated charges is a topic which attracts a great deal of publicity which is more often negative. Indeed a general search on the News and Star Website identified 5 news articles in the month of July 2010 relating to parking in Carlisle:

- 2nd July 2010 "Carlisle Pay and Display Machines Shortchanging Drivers by £12,000"
- 9th July 2010 "Carlisle Council to Debate Rationing of Car Parking Permits"
- 15th July 2010 "Drivers Paying £1,000 a Day in Parking Fines in Carlisle"
- 20th July 2010 "Cumbria Council May Charge Drivers Who Live in Disc Parking Zones"
- 21st July 2010 "Anger Over Cumbria Council Idea to Charge for Disc Zone Parking"

3.3 It was important for Members to understand whether charges were levied at an amount to encourage residents and visitors to the city centre or are parking policies used to discourage the use of cars.

3.4 The membership of the task and finish group was Councillors Bainbridge, Hendry, Rutherford, Vasey and Watson. Cllr Hendry was subsequently appointed as lead member of the group at their initial meeting on 1st February 2010.

3.5 The Task Group determined their Terms of Reference at this meeting as:

- To determine what the council would have a car parking policy for
- To examine the income and expenditure for car parking in Carlisle.
- To research areas of good practice in other Local Authorities and Historical Cities.
- To examine how future car parking relates to the ability to attract visitors and tourists to the city.
- To briefing look at the issue of Park and Ride and the Blue Badge Scheme.
- To look at whether "pay on foot" should be introduced to the cities car parks.
- To investigate any other related issues that come to light during the course of the review.

The Task Group aimed at completing their work in September 2010. A report on the scrutiny review of the task and finish group will then form the basis for recommendations to the Environment & Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel to take back to the Executive and agree, prior to the next round of reporting to Panels.

4 Methodology

4.1 In order to develop the evidence base for the review Task and Finish Group Members considered a wide range of information and data including the following:

- Operational Guidance to Local Authorities: Parking Policy and Enforcement (Department of Transport, March 2008)
- Draft Carlisle City Centre Transport Overview and Draft Carlisle Joint Parking Policy Statement
- Examples from other Historical Cities
- Summary of Cumbria County Council Park and Ride Scrutiny Review 2008
- On-Street Parking Management Accounts 2003-2009
- William Street Car Park Accounts April 2007 – March 2009

4.2 Meetings of the Task Group were held on:

Date	Purpose
1 st February 2010	Consideration of background information and defining Terms of Reference
2 nd March 2010	Consideration of: Cumbria County Council Park & Ride Scrutiny Review Historical City Research Operational Guidance to Local Authorities Income and Expenditure for on- and off-street parking
8 th April 2010	Consideration of: Draft Carlisle City Centre Transport Overview and Draft Carlisle Joint Parking Policy Statement
<i>The Task Group had a break due to the elections and also waiting for the County Council's Local Committee to consider the Draft Carlisle City Centre Transport Overview. This was considered by the Local Committee on 10th June 2010.</i>	
1 st August 2010	Drafting recommendations
9 th September 2010	Draft report to Parent panel for approval

5 Findings & Conclusions

5.1 As detailed in the Terms of Reference, Members first wanted to establish the reasons why Local Authorities need a Parking Strategy.

5.2 The Operational Guidance to Local Authorities: Parking Policy and Enforcement (Department of Transport, March 2008) states:

“Parking policies need to be integrated to a Local Authority’s transport strategy ... Local Authority’s should have policies aimed at tackling congestion and changing travel behaviour. These could include restricting and/or charging for car parking.

Discussions about parking tend to concentrate on enforcement. But all local authorities need to develop a parking strategy covering on- and off-street parking that is linked to local objectives and circumstances. They then need Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) to put in place and appropriate road signs and road markings to show the public what the restrictions mean. This strategy needs to take account of planning policies and transport powers and consider the appropriate number of total spaces, the balance between short and long term spaces and the level of changes.”

5.3 It was apparent to Members that without a Parking Strategy for the city they were unable to have informed debate on charging policies with regard to parking. During the course of this review the Carlisle City Centre Transport Overview and Joint Parking Policy Statement was approved for consultation by Cumbria County Council’s Carlisle Local Committee. At the time of writing the document was waiting to be approved by the City Council’s Executive.

5.4 Members of the Task Group had sight of this draft document at their meeting on 8th April 2010. The strategy sets out “vision and principles for Transport in Carlisle”.

- The Core Principles for Transport in Carlisle:
- Reduce the impact of through traffic in the City Centre
- Promote and encourage the use of sustainable transport
- Provide adequate and accessible car parking

5.5 Appendix 2 of the draft document contained the Carlisle Joint Parking Policy Statement which Members welcomed as they had been calling on a Parking Policy for Carlisle for some time. Consultant on the strategy is currently being undertaken.

5.6 With regard to income, it is detailed in various budget reports that income from Long Stay Car Parking has declined since 2003/04. There was some sign of stability last year for the first time in seven years. Short stay car parking income from ticket sales has remained relatively stable.

- 5.7 The income from car parking charges is ploughed back into the revenue budget of the Authority and therefore decline in proceeds have a real effect on the budget. It is therefore important that Members are confident within the budget setting process that projections for car parking income are based on a sound evaluation and in line with relevant strategies.
- 5.8 Members of the Task Group had debate around Contract Car Parking. This is a system whereby a permit is bought on a monthly or annual basis and motorists receive a 25% discount on normal charges.
- 5.9 Income from Contract Parking has also seen a decrease in recent years. During the course of the scrutiny, Members were informed that Devonshire Walk car park is relatively quiet except for the Christmas period. Members of the Task Group therefore agreed that they wished to recommend that consideration is given to offering a larger discount from Contract Parking on this Car Park which is at the edge of the City Centre. Members of the Task Group would also like to see the introduction of pro-rata Contract Parking for those people who work on a part-time basis and will also be making a recommendation to this effect. For example a Permit could be produced at 60% of the cost for someone who works Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.
- 5.10 Members received summary of costs for the On-street (Residents') Parking Scheme which Carlisle City Council run on behalf of Cumbria County Council. There is a wide belief that the scheme is profitable, however information provided to Members showed that from 1997-2009 the scheme had a deficit of £100,894. Members had concerns and agreed that they would be making a recommendation on this issue.
- 5.11 Towards the end of the scrutiny review Members were informed that the City Council is currently looking at plans to undertake parking enforcement for the whole of Cumbria. Members of the group agreed that they would reconvene the Task Group to scrutinise the proposals when they are available.
- 5.12 The Task Group determined within their Terms of Reference that they would look into barrier systems for car parks in the city. They were informed that consideration had been given to a barrier system following the 2005 floods. However this was discarded as systems can be unreliable and therefore is required to be manned at all times. On this reasoning, Members decided not to pursue this area further.
- 5.13 During the course of the review the News and Star reported on 2nd July 2010 that *"Motorists using Carlisle's car parks are losing thousands of pounds a year because they do not have the right change."* The article went on to state that *"Figures for the last three years show that, at the Lower Viaduct car park alone, revenue from ticket machines was £11,890 higher than the face value of tickets issued. The city council coins it, literally, when drivers pay for a 90p one-hour ticket with a £1 coin because the machines do not give change. It does even better when drivers use two £1 coins for two hours' parking, which should cost £1.80. If the figures for Lower Viaduct apply across the city, motorists are overpaying by £42,000 a year."*

- 5.14 Members discussed this issue at their meeting of the Task Group on 1st August 2010 and made the decision that they would be making a recommendation to the Executive to consider introducing linear parking charges for off-street car parking.
- 5.15 During the course of this debate Members were informed of the pay by phone parking schemes which are run throughout the country. In short, the scheme is a cashless parking payment whereby drivers are advised by a sign to call a number, register and pay for their use of a space. Registration is only required at the first use and their details will be then be stored. Once parked, if motorists are running late for any reason, they can simply extend their parking time by the same method. Allerdale Council are currently using pay by phone scheme, RIngGo, for several car parks in Keswick and many Council's nationally are turning to systems such as this to collect car parking charges. Members were informed that there are several technology companies providing the service and they will take a small fee per user. It is a decision of the individual Council whether the user or the Council bears this administrative charge.
- 5.16 Members of the Task Group agreed that this Council should consider offering this service to motorists in Carlisle.
- 5.17 Members of the Task Group were informed in April that the Government were currently reviewing the Blue Badge Scheme. There is a suggestion that Authority's may want to have independent medical assessments and in turn this may reduce the number of Blue Badge Holders. Members were informed that some areas have a two tier system of Blue Badges whereby improved access would be given to those people with a on the higher rate allowance with severe mobility issues. Members of the Group recognised that this was a County Council function but would support changes made to the system to this effect.