

INFRASTRUCTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 4 AUGUST 2004 AT 2.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Mallinson (Chairman), Councillors Allison, Mrs Bradley (substitute for Councillor Im Thurn), Mrs Crookdale, Earp (substitute for Councillor Dodd), Miss Martlew, Mrs Rutherford and Stockdale.

ALSO

PRESENT: Councillors Bloxham (Portfolio Holder for Environment, Infrastructure and Transport) and Councillor Firth (Portfolio Holder for Policy, Performance Management Finance and Resources) were present at the meeting in relation to the call-in items.

Councillors C S Bowman, Mrs Bowman and Mrs Geddes attended the meeting as observers.

IOS.96/04 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Dodd and Im Thurn.

IOS.97/04 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mallinson (Chairman) declared a personal interest in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct in respect of both items on the agenda as she was a Member of Cumbria County Council. She remained in the chair and took part in the deliberations on both items.

IOS.98/04 CALL-IN – OFF STREET CAR PARK EXTENSIONS

Councillors Miss Martlew, Mrs Rutherford and Stockdale had called in for scrutiny Minute EX.142/04 of the Executive meeting on 19 July 2004 dealing with extensions to off-street car parks.

The decision in EX.142/04 was –

That the Executive supports the extensions to the Civic Centre and Bitts Park car parks at an estimated cost of £74,500 and, subject to approval by the City Council, this sum be vired from the budget allocated for additional car parking in Newark Terrace which was unlikely to proceed in the short to medium term.

The reason given by the Members for the call-in was to scrutinise the decision against the Off Street Parking Policy and seek clarification on budgetary matters.

The Members who had called-in the decision were then invited to expand on their reasons for call-in. The Members were seeking reasons why further car parking spaces were needed and whether this complied with the Local Transport Plan.

Clarification was also sought on the proposal to vire funding from the Newark Terrace scheme which had been included in the 2004/05 budget. Members were concerned that Overview and Scrutiny had not been formally informed that this scheme would not now be going ahead in 2004/05 and sought the reasons for this. Members had previously been informed that this site would be used for car parking in the short term and would consolidate the City Council's land holdings in the vicinity.

Members also referred to the fact that a recent planning application to extend Bitts Park car park had been refused by the Development Control Committee and clarification was sought on why a new application would succeed.

Councillor Bloxham, Environment, Infrastructure and Transport Portfolio Holder responded, indicating that the Executive believed there was a need for additional car parking spaces because a number of spaces had been lost as a result of making disabled parking spaces wider. The Civic Centre car park extension would tidy up the land upon which a portacabin had been sited and provide needed short stay car parking for City Centre shoppers. The Bitts Park car park extension had been refused by the Development Control Committee but Councillor Bloxham was of the opinion that there had been a slight misunderstanding at Development Control Committee when the matter had been dealt with. The Committee had been unaware that the County's Local Committee were in agreement with the car park extensions and that they did not affect the policies in the Local Transport Plan. There was additional demand for parking at Bitts Park following the opening of the water feature, the extension of tennis and other leisure activities in Bitts Park and the car park was also used by City Centre shoppers. The Bitts Park car park was used to 85% capacity at peak times.

The Executive considered that these two modest increases in car parking provision were justified and so were recommended for approval. With regard to the proposals for Newark Terrace, Councillor Bloxham understood that the new owner of the site no longer wished to proceed with the sale of the site to the City Council.

Discussion then followed between Members of the Committee, Councillor Bloxham and relevant Officers at which the following points emerged:-

- (a) The proposed land acquisition at Newark Terrace would not now go ahead in the short to medium term as the new owner of the site did not

wish to sell at present. The breakdown of negotiations had not been reported back to Overview and Scrutiny, although it was not normal practice to report such matters.

Members of the Committee considered that background information on the reasons for the breakdown of negotiations could have been circulated to Members with the papers for this meeting.

- (b) Members referred to the fact that Devonshire Walk car park was underused and was close to Bitts Park. Encouragement in the form of either free or reduced parking fees could be considered to enhance usage of this car park, negating the need for an extension to the Bitts Park car park.

It was noted, however, that there was no footpath from Devonshire Walk car park to the water feature in Bitts Park.

- (c) The current Local Transport Plan contained an assumption against providing further long stay car parking in the City Centre. Whilst the City Council had applied all the various measures and policies within the Local Transport Plan, the Plan contained an assumption that, by 2003, 1,250 car parking spaces would have been provided on edge of City sites for park and ride. This clearly had not happened and was unlikely to in the short to medium term. Traffic flows in Carlisle were growing at 2% per annum and shoppers would be discouraged from shopping in Carlisle if car parking provision was insufficient to meet demand.
- (d) Members were satisfied that the proposals for the Civic Centre car park should not be referred back to the Executive.
- (e) A Member referred to the reasons for refusal of the recent planning permission for an extension to the Bitts Park car park and was of the view that nothing had changed and the reasons for refusal were still valid.
- (f) A Member considered that the proposals represented a piecemeal approach to car parking provision and that a proper policy should be in place against which proposals for additional car parking could be measured.

The Head of Commercial and Technical Services pointed out that a Car Parking Strategy had been agreed in August 2002 and a copy had been circulated to Members with the background papers for this meeting. He acknowledged that this Strategy was in need of review. This would be undertaken alongside a review of the Local Transport Plan which was to be undertaken by the County Council in consultation with the City Council. He had, however, taken steps to discuss with Officers of the City and County Council and City businesses options for temporary long stay parking in the City Centre area.

The revised Local Transport Plan should include a requirement for car parking spaces in the City to be reduced when park and ride was implemented to ensure the success of any park and ride scheme. Parking was recognised as a key issue for the revised Local Transport Plan.

- (g) A Member referred to Council land near the Matalan store which had been used as a temporary car park last Christmas.

The Head of Commercial and Technical Services reported that the Head of Property Services was actively marketing the sale of this site for other uses but that it may be used as a temporary car park again this year if still in Council ownership.

- (h) Regarding the Civic Centre car park, a Member considered that access arrangements should be looked at with the aim of providing separate access and exit points.
- (i) A Member considered that parking was a rapidly changing picture and that current policy needed to be updated. There was a need to carry out a comprehensive review of parking policy to include park and ride and residents parking schemes and for Planning to review their policies relating to car parking provision for new development in the City Centre area.

Councillor Bloxham acknowledged that the current Parking Strategy was now out of date and should be reviewed in conjunction with the Local Transport Plan review.

- (j) A Member noted that cars were being parked in the Mayor's drive and the path leading from the Devonshire Walk car park to the Sheepmount. This should be addressed as no parking fees were payable for this parking.

In dealing with the call-in, the Chairman reminded Members that the Committee could :

- (1) refer the matter back to the decision maker, in this case the Executive, for reconsideration, setting out in writing the nature of its concerns.
- (2) refer the matter to full Council;
- (3) not refer the matter back to the decision maker, in which case the decision would take effect from the date of this meeting.

RESOLVED – 1. That this Committee accepts the proposals for the Civic Centre car park.

- 2. That the proposals for the Bitts Park car park be referred back to the Executive for reconsideration for the following reasons:-

- (a) There were concerns that the reasons for refusal following consideration by the Development Control Committee of a planning application for a similar proposal for the Bitts Park car park remained valid and that the planning grounds for refusal had not been overcome.
 - (b) The Devonshire Walk car park was currently under used but was in a suitable location for access to the City Centre and Bitts Park. The Executive could investigate ways of increasing usage of this car park through a review of pricing policy, rather than seeking to extend the Bitts Park car park.
 - (c) The current car park strategy was now out of date and in need of review. It was noted that this was to be undertaken in conjunction with the Local Transport Plan review. This Committee considers that a comprehensive review of parking across the City, to include residents parking schemes, should be undertaken with input from this Committee.
 - (d) The Committee is concerned that virement is proposed from the budget set aside for the purchase of the site at Newark Terrace, which it is noted is unlikely to proceed in the short to medium term.
3. That following discussions on the call-in, the following additional matters be forwarded to the Executive for consideration:-
- (a) the possibility of providing a separate access and exit to the Civic Centre car park.
 - (b) The position regarding car parking on the Mayor's Drive and path leading to the Sheepmount from Devonshire Walk with a view to some form of control being implemented.
 - (c) The provision of a path for pedestrians linking the Bitts Park water feature with the Devonshire Walk car park.

PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED – That, in accordance with Section 100(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in the paragraph number (as indicated in brackets against the Minute) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

IOS.99/04 LAND AND PROPERTY TRANSACTION

In dealing with this call-in, the Chairman reminded Members that the planning applications for development on the Victoria Viaduct site were not the subject of scrutiny at this meeting.

Councillors Miss Martlew, Mrs Rutherford and Stockdale had called in for scrutiny Minute EX.155/04 of the Executive meeting on 19 July 2004 dealing with the proposed transfer of land at Victoria Viaduct from the City Council to the County Council for general highway purposes.

The decision in EX.155/04 was –

1. That the Council proceed with the transfer of land at Victoria Viaduct and appropriate other rights to the County Council in order to enable a highway scheme to be constructed on final terms to be agreed.
2. That the terms include the transfer to the County Council of title to both Viaduct and Caldew Bridges (subject to the City Council obtaining registered title to these structures) in return for the County Council assuming maintenance responsibility in future for both structures as Highway Authority.

The reason given by the Members for the call-in was to seek clarification on the nature of transfer and relationship to planning permission.

The Members who had called in the decision expanded upon the reasons for call-in and the Committee discussed the call-in with Councillor Bloxham (Environment, Infrastructure and Transport Portfolio Holder) and Councillor Firth (Policy, Performance Management, Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder) and relevant Officers.

In dealing with the call-in, the Chairman reminded Members that the Committee could :

- (1) refer the matter back to the decision maker, in this case the Executive, for reconsideration, setting out in writing the nature of its concerns.
- (2) refer the matter to full Council;
- (3) not refer the matter back to the decision maker, in which case the decision would take effect from the date of this meeting.

RESOLVED – That the decision taken by the Executive in Minute EX.155/04 be not referred back to the Executive.

(The meeting closed at 3.38pm)