

PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6 February 2014

PRESENT – Councillor Long (in the Chair); Councillors Carson, Cossins, Grundy, Harman and L. Hughes (6)

APOLOGIES – Councillors Baldwin, Lawton and EA Richmond. (0)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillor DA Lyonette, Steve Graham, Plumbing and Heating and Beryl Hankin, Guru Boutique. (3)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Steve Petch, Head of Strategy and Commissioning, Owen Wilson, Principal Policy Officer, Economy, Transport and Housing and Karen Graves, Democratic Officer.

P36. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – Councillor Long declared that she was a Residents' Parking Zone permit holder and Councillor Harman declared that he was a resident of Victoria Embankment and a Residents' Parking Zone permit holder.

P37. MINUTES – Submitted - The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meetings of this Scrutiny Committee held on 5, 12 and 20 December 2013 and 8 and 116 January 2014.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes be approved as correct records.

P38. MATTERS ARISING – In relation to Minute P32/Jan/14(d), the Chair reported that a Review Group would not now be established to give consideration to Litter Reduction and Grounds Maintenance as this work was already being undertaken by a Project Group which would be monitored by this Scrutiny Committee.

P39. SCRUTINY – WORK PROGRAMME 2012/13 – The Director of Neighbourhood Services and Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to the work programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee during the current Municipal Year.

The submitted report outlined those areas where this Scrutiny Committee had previously identified it would like to focus its work over the next Municipal Year namely, Civil Parking Strategy, Town Centre Regeneration, Local Development Framework, Carbon Management and Economic Strategy.

It was also emphasised that the work programme was a rolling programme and any Member of this Scrutiny could request an item to be included provided that a Quad of Aims had been submitted to the Scrutiny Committee prior to ensure that it contributed to the strategic aims of the Council.

The submitted report outlined the original Work Programme and requested Members to reconsider the Work Programme to accommodate further issues that need to be included.

The Chair reported verbally on the discussion and outcomes of the Monitoring and Co-ordination Committee held on 27 January 2014 with particular reference being made to the work of the Organisational Planning Team and Scrutiny's involvement in that work.

In relation to the Local Plan, and particularly the Retail/Town Centre Study, Members were advised that a Town Centre Conference was scheduled for 5pm to 8pm on 27 March. The Conference, a joint event with Distinct Darlington, was to give consideration to the role of the Town Centres and would be widely publicised via Darlington Together, flyers and posters displayed in local retail outlets and supermarkets, Ward letters and the social networking sites Facebook and Twitter.

Discussion ensued on the need to keep Cockerton Library and Head of Steam at the forefront of this Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme and Committee were advised that, as Regulatory Services is such a vast topic, a presentation would be given at the next meeting for this Committee to decide which element it wished to concentrate on and how regulatory services could facilitate the work of the Borough.

The Chair requested that Members give consideration to the work they wished to be included on the Work Programme for the next Municipal Year.

RESOLVED – (a) That the current status of the Work Programme be noted.

(b) That the Head of Organisational Planning be invited to the next ordinary meeting of this Committee to give an overview of the work of the Organisational Planning Team and the new Performance Data Collection Framework.

(c) That the Work Programme be updated to reflect the decisions of this Scrutiny Committee.

P40. CAR PARKING STRATEGY – The Principal Policy Officer, Economy, Transport and Housing submitted a report (previously circulated) on the outcome of public consultation on the Draft Parking Strategy and sought Members views' thereon. A PowerPoint presentation accompanied the report.

Details were supplied on the Strategy, approved by Cabinet in July 2013 as the basis of public consultation, which for the period September to early October the public, businesses and transport operators had been invited to comment upon by various means including attendance at 'drop in' sessions, online surveys and by post. Residents in parking zone areas received a letter inviting comments.

The consultation had resulted in many comments being received in relation to Town Centre Parking, Residents' Parking Zones, parking in Cockerton, the Blue Badge Scheme and parking provision for disabled drivers. Some consultees had focused on the recommended actions rather than the overall strategy objectives. Officer responses to the comments received were also detailed in the submitted report.

A local tradesman attended the meeting and detailed some of the problems he had encountered regarding obtaining authorisation to park in Residents' Parking Zone (RPZ) areas whilst carrying on his trade. Officers advised that the problems with the current system had been recognised, work was ongoing to devise a new system which

it was hoped would be implemented by Summer and trades people were to be consulted.

Discussion ensued on the need to make Darlington visually aesthetic to encourage more visitors to the Town Centre, use of universal permits and encouragement of walking, cycling and public transport to access the Town Centre thereby easing congestion.

Particular reference was made to the provision of some form of free parking within the Town Centre as it was felt that many residents would rather travel to Northallerton or Middlesbrough and take advantage of the free parking rather than feel pressured to get back to their car because the car parking ticket was due to expire. Committee were also keen to learn of the contingency plans in place to bridge the gap of loss of car parking spaces whilst the Department for Education and Feethams developments were under construction in order to protect local business interests. Discussion ensued on the car park information signs being reinstated to advise visitors of the spaces available within the Town Centre and the possibility of introducing the first hour free to ensure a quick turnaround of spaces for visitors.

The Principal Policy Officer, Economy, Transport and Housing advised that the average car park stay in Darlington was for two hours as the average ticket costs £2, although it was stressed by a local business woman that businesses would close if people travelled to other areas which provided free and longer stay parking. It was also suggested that better signage was required, particularly adjacent to Neros which was disabled parking only, although able-bodied parkers had been ticketed as they were unaware it was for blue badge holders only.

Details were supplied of contract parking, which was available Monday to Friday, within the Town Centre and it was suggested that any contract parking allocated to multi-storey car parks should be on the upper levels to ensure visitors were not too inconvenienced.

Committee were keen to ensure that it was well publicised that the Traffic Management Act 2004 requires that all income from Civic Parking Enforcement (CPE) including the sale of residents parking permits should not exceed the cost of running the service.

With regards to RPZ's it was suggested that a Universal permit be issued with the cost being borne by all residents through Council Tax, although Committee were advised that residents would need to be consulted and zones which contained shops would require loading areas and clear signage.

Committee were advised that the Council's out-dated Pay and Display machines were to be upgraded to enable more data collection to be made, pay on foot parking was to be introduced and that whilst Sainsbury's were able to utilise ANPR, under the Traffic Act, local authorities were not.

Members then gave consideration to Objectives 1 to 5 of the Review of Parking Strategy Actions and made several comments thereon.

RESOLVED – (a) That the thanks of this Committee be extended to the Principal Policy Officer, Economy, Transport and Housing for his informative presentation.

(b) That the following comments of this Scrutiny Committee be included in the Parking Strategy as part of the consultation :-

- i. Place Scrutiny Committee cannot agree proposals for free parking in Town Centre car parks as outlined in Para 25 of the submitted report and would like to add a further reason '(e) That commuters are likely to take spaces better used for customers using shops and other businesses';
- ii. The suggested review of Resident Parking Zones (RPZ's) include consideration of issues raised by DAD;
- iii. Place Scrutiny Committee questions the use of contract parking in the multi-storey car park although would recommend use of the top storey; and
- iv. Place Scrutiny Committee welcomes the addition of the new objective to ensure that information is publicly available on the revenue generated from Civil Parking Enforcement and Parking charges and how that revenue is spent;

(c) That the following comments of this Scrutiny Committee be included within the Review of Parking Strategy Actions as part of the consultation :-

- i. In relation to Action 1.3 this Scrutiny Committee notes the situation regarding the Oval development and the opposition of residents to the use of Kendrew Street as part of the plan;
 - ii. In relation to Action 1.4 this Scrutiny Committee requests that details of the contingency plans for loss of parking as a result of the Feethams development be communicated to Members in the form of a briefing or e-mail;
 - iii. In relation to Action 1.5 this Scrutiny Committee looks forward to the development of a business case for the provision of car parking at Morton Palms;
 - iv. In relation to Action 1.7 this Scrutiny Committee agrees the course of action proposed for Skinnergate to retain the introduction of parking as one of a series of options after the regeneration attempts planned for this year have been assessed;
 - v. This Scrutiny Committee endorses the removal of proposals to introduce pay and display at Cockerton;
 - vi. In relation to Action 2.2 this Scrutiny Committee welcomes the opportunities for 'pay on foot' when new ticket machines are installed;
 - vii. That this Scrutiny Committee welcomes Actions 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6;
 - viii. This Scrutiny Committee agrees Action 3.1 is necessary due to the complexity of the issue and Officer capacity;
 - ix. This Scrutiny Committee recognises the urgent need to introduce visitor and tradespeople Residents Parking Zone permit which incorporates a system to
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combat abuse and relates the permit to the address, possibly a voucher scheme;

- x. In relation to Action 7.1 this Scrutiny Committee would like to express confidence in the way income is used; and

(d) This Scrutiny Committee would like to investigate why Local Authorities are unable to use the ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) system in its car parks.