

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Car Parking Task and Finish Forum held online via the Zoom app on 19 November 2020

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 4.20 pm

27 Public speaking

There were no public speakers at the meeting

28 Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 January 2020 were agreed as a true record.

29 Declarations of interest

Minute 33. Declarations of interest.

Councillor Andrew Colman, Personal, Exmouth Town Councillor.

Minute 33. Declarations of interest.

Councillor Eleanor Rylance, Personal, Broadclyst Parish Councillor.

Minute 33. Declarations of interest.

Councillor Kim Bloxham, Personal, Cranbrook Town Councillor.

Minute 33. Declarations of interest.

Councillor Olly Davey, Personal, Exmouth Town Councillor.

30 Matters of urgency

There were no matters of urgency.

31 Confidential/exempt items

There were no items which officers recommended should be dealt with in this way.

32 Review of Terms of Reference

The Service Lead – Environmental Health and Car Parks presented the Car Parking TaFF's terms of reference, as agreed by the TaFF on 7 November 2020. The main section headings were:

- Asset management
- Communities
- Economy
- Statutory
- Climate change emergency
- Equality and health and wellbeing issues

It was suggested that climate change emergency be prioritised in the list of issues to be considered by the TaFF.

33 **Topics for discussion**

The Service Lead- Environment Health and Car Parks' report outlined a number of topics for discussion. These were:

- Climate change emergency.
- Asset management and revenue generation.
- Visitor economy, wellbeing and poverty considerations.
- Campervans and motorhomes.
- Other matters for consideration.

It was noted that the Council currently owned and managed 57 public car park sites across the district. 45 of those public car parks were operated on a pay and display tariff. One (Mill Street, Sidmouth, also offered some reserved parking spaces on short term leases). There were 12 other sites which all operated slightly differently and these were outlined in the report for consideration by the TaFF.

It was suggested that the Exmouth lorry park could be used as a site for campervans and motorhomes. It was also suggested that Upper Station car park in Budleigh Salterton could be brought back within the Council's remit and parking charges applied, or the existing lease to the Town Council could be increased. The TaFF were made aware of how any increase in tariffs could influence how motorists behaved, with possible on street parking congestion. An increase in parking charges had consultation constraints and required consultation with the county council and the police.

The Strategic Lead Finance explained how the payment and income in relation to business rates worked. EDDC paid business rates on everything that it owned, however it also generated income from business rates and that the two should be separated. The amount of business rates paid was specific to each car park. They were rated on 'potential income'. He warned the TaFF that car parks should not be seen just as an income earner and that other factors should be brought into consideration, such as usage of the car parks and attracting people to areas. Car parking revenue was extremely important to the finances of EDDC and charges had not been increased since 2010. Car parking income would be considered in helping balance the books of the medium term financial gap.

The Forum agreed that the Council's car parks should be cost neutral at the very least. Business rates and maintenance costs should be recuperated for the free car parks that the Council currently ran. It was suggested that charges to cover the costs be introduced to these car parks or that they be 'gifted' to the town or parish councils. No car park should be a financial liability to EDDC.

Climate emergency

One of the major challenges facing EDDC was that the provision of adequate affordable car parking was important for supporting town centre economies and local communities, however the current climate change emergency had to recognise the significant contribution that the exhaust emissions from cars made to the district's carbon footprint.

The Forum felt that car parking needed to be part of a strategy that the Council used to address climate change emergency. Raising charges could discourage driving/car use

and the extra revenue could be used to invest in electric vehicle charging infrastructure or better public transport options such shuttle buses.

Asset Management and Revenue Generation

The current turn over for the car parks property portfolio was currently around £4m annually before VAT, which contributed a net surplus of £2.4m after running costs. The Service Lead – Environment Health and Car Parks' referred to his report presented to Cabinet last October which expected the car park revenue could deliver a further £425,000 in 2021/22 by making some adjustments to the current charging tariffs.

The Forum noted 3 initiatives that could generate income:

1. Increase the tariff in the overused car parks
2. To consider the car parks running at a deficit
3. To introduce evening charges in some areas

The Chairman raised concerns that members did not have the required information to make informed decisions and requested that the car parks income and expenditure should be send to the committee members.

Discussions on the 3 initiatives were as follows:

- A suggestion was made for the Service Lead- Environment Health and Car Parks' and the Strategic Lead – Finance to work together to draft a report detailing an affordable way forward. It was agreed a report would be provided at the next meeting;
- Support was shown to increase the tariff in the over used car parks.
- There is a very fine line to walk to keep our towns vibrant and our finances reasonable. Need to consider shorter times as people do not spend all day in towns. This would free up car park spaces.

Visitor economy, wellbeing and poverty considerations

The Forum noted the prospect of increased visitors to the UK and South West next year due to Covid-19 and the potential scope to maximise income in the car parks by looking at changes to the range of concessions and parking permit options for local residents, businesses and workers to help retain a balanced economy.

The Forum recognised the urgency and discussions covered:

- A suggestion was made to increase the cost of the permit to £120 to include the addition of an extra vehicle limited to one car park;
- Introduce a monthly direct debit for the annual parking permit;
- Raising the concessions in beach car parks;
- A suggestion was made to introduce an off peak half price parking ticket.

Campervans and Motorhomes

The Forum noted the success of the pilot scheme and acknowledged the opportunity to review changes to the policy to encourage more visitors in motorhomes and campervans in car parks.

Discussions covered:

- Support the suggestion to use the Estuary Lorry Park as overnight camping to help generate income;

- Concerns raised about how to manage local motorhomes and campervan owners using the car parks as a cheap storage facility for their vehicles. In response the Service Lead- Environment Health and Car Parks' suggested the introduction of permits, clear signage and officer patrols;
- Suggestion to introduce water and toilets and a charge of £15 / £20 per night;
- Need to consider all other coastal car parks;
- Concerns raised about disability spaces and the need for a disability assessment.

Other matters for consideration

The Forum noted the common issue of customers offering another driver the use of an unexpired pay and display ticket and the opportunity to upgrade ticket machines at a cost to introduce registration numbers to maximise potential income.

The Forum felt more evidence was needed. One suggestion was made to look at other councils who use this type of ticket machine and another suggestion was to trail it in one car park using the cheapest upgrade.

34 Dates for future meetings and report back to Scrutiny Committee

It was proposed to hold the next meeting of the Car Parking Task and Finish Forum on Thursday 26 November at 10am, to complete the work of the TaFF and enable the Chair to report back on progress and recommendations to the next Scrutiny Committee meeting on 10 December 2020.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

K Bloxham
C Brown
A Colman
O Davey
M Howe
B Ingham
V Ranger
E Rylance
J Whibley

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

P Arnott
P Hayward
N Hookway
G Jung
P Millar
A Moulding
M Rixson
J Rowland

Officers in attendance:

Jacqueline Collins, Civil Enforcement Officer
Simon Davey, Strategic Lead Finance

Andrew Ennis, Service Lead Environmental Health and Car Parks
John Golding, Strategic Lead Housing, Health and Environment
Wendy Harris, Democratic Services Officer
Sarah Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer
Alethea Thompson, Democratic Services Officer

Councillor apologies:

M Chapman

Chairman

Date: