

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Car Parking Task and Finish Forum held at Online via the Zoom App on 3 March 2021

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.55 am

63 Public speaking

Ann Membery acknowledged that overnight stays of vehicles brought in extra revenue. However, she was concerned that large diesel vehicle emissions were polluting the environment. An influx of motorhomes and campervans would have a detrimental effect on the environment and prevent parking for others. She was also concerned about fire safety issues. She felt that overnight parking should be banned.

A statement was read out on behalf of Annette Ladbrook. She pointed out that Cornwall County Council and Kent County Council had made the decision to restrict overnight stays for motorhomes in their car parks and urged the forum to contact Cornwall County Council to ask the reasons behind their decision, before EDDC made a decision. She urged EDDC to consider the tourism multiplier effect and suggested that what was needed was the holiday maker who would pay for their overnight accommodation in local campsites and holiday parks, purchase locally produced goods and also pay for their parking when exploring the region.

64 Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2021 were agreed as a true record.

65 Declarations of interest

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Councillor Eleanor Rylance, Personal, had received a number of emails in relation to agenda item 7.

Declarations of interest.

Councillor Joe Whibley, Personal, Exmouth town councillor and had received a number of emails in relation to agenda item 7.

Declarations of interest.

Councillor Kim Bloxham, Personal, had received a number of emails in relation to agenda item 7.

Declarations of interest.

Councillor Maddy Chapman, Personal, Exmouth town councillor and had received a number of emails in relation to agenda item 7.

Declarations of interest.

Councillor Olly Davey, Personal, Exmouth town councillor and had received a number of emails in relation to agenda item 7. An acquaintance, a local resident, had experienced problems with parking his campervan overnight..

66 **Matters of urgency**

There were no matters of urgency.

67 **Confidential/exempt items**

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

68 **A revised policy for Motorhomes and Campervans in EDDC Pay and Display car parks**

The Service Lead – Environmental Health and Car Parks introduced a discussion paper on a revised policy for motorhomes and campervans in EDDC pay and display car parks. He also thanked the members of the public for their contributions.

East Devon was seeing an increasing number and variety of kinds of campervans and motorhomes on its highways and in its public car parks. Increasing numbers also appeared to be actively seeking the freedom of parking overnight in unauthorised locations. The issue was not whether there was a desire to attract these visitors (as they were already in the district) but how to deal with them, what the district council could offer, and whether there was the opportunity to raise revenue.

The Council had previously approved a policy in 2015 prohibiting the parking of motorhomes and campervans in any of its public car parks between the hours of 10pm and 8am the following day. Prior to this it used to specify 'no overnight sleeping' in the car parks, but this was almost impossible to enforce. By 2015 a new problem was emerging whereby with its inexpensive permit tariffs the Council was inadvertently encouraging local campervan and motorhome owners to use some of its car parks as a cheap storage facility for their vehicle when they were not in use. To address this Cabinet decided that EDDC wished to encourage day visitors in motorhomes and caravans, but only between 8am to 10pm daily. A pilot scheme (about to enter its third season, at the request of Exmouth Town Council) was set up to consider the impact of allowing overnight 'camping' for up to three consecutive nights in specified car parks in Exmouth and that overnight parking of any campervan or motorhome would not be allowed in any other car park (to prevent both storage and overnight camping). This pilot demonstrated that there was the demand for this type of parking and evidence was being seen of overnight stays in car parks that had not been included in the Exmouth pilot. Members were invited to consider whether it was EDDC's role to acknowledge that measures to carefully and sensitively fulfil this demand could well have benefits for both town economies and the Council's own revenue.

The forum accepted that the 2015 policy was in need of revision to recognise both the continuing demand for short term overnight pitches for campervans and motorhomes in East Devon's towns and rural areas, along with the issues and tensions that were arising due to vehicles continuing to find unauthorised on-street locations for overnight parking. Another issue for the forum to consider was local residents who used small/medium sized campervans as their main or second vehicles. The current policy prevented them from parking these vehicles overnight in public car parks close to their own homes.

The Exmouth pilot raised a number of unresolved questions relating to rules and regulations that would need to be imposed on any sites where it was considered appropriate to allow overnight stays. Consideration was also required on the level of facilities to be offered to customers, and the possible consequence of encouraging

overnight stays in the absence of such facilities (such as fresh water, waste water disposal, domestic refuse disposal, electric hook ups). Fire safety and separation between vehicles were also considerations. Sufficient resources would be required to properly manage and enforce compliance with the rules and regulations.

The forum were asked to provide policy guidance and recommend a broad strategic framework in relation to:

1. Day visitors.
2. Short break overnight stays – stopovers.
3. Fire safety.
4. Tariffs.
5. Arrangements for local residents.

Discussion of these issues included:

- Relocating 'wild camping' visitors, currently parking in unauthorised places such as laybys, areas of natural beauty and on-street residential areas, to better run facilities off street.
- By formally allowing overnight stays the Council was not creating a campsite and licensing conditions would not apply. However, the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 would apply to the car park site where separate controls applied. Advice was that the sensible 'safe' separation for visiting motorhomes or campervans should be at least 3 metres. This meant that overnight parking would only be allowed in a 2.4 metre wide bay where there were then two empty bays between vehicles. This separation was not required during daytime hours and compliance should be enforced between 10pm and 8am.
- Local residents could not currently store over winter or park their campervans overnight in EDDC car parks. Residents should be allowed to park in a nearby car park provided they could meet certain criteria. Permits for winter storage should not be allowed.
- There was an opportunity at Exmouth lorry park to provide a dedicated site for campervans and motorhomes, generating revenue for the council from its asset and encouraging tourism to the town, boosting the local economy. This would require consultation and planning permission. It was thought that Natural England consent could be a hurdle.
- Future planning should include the provision of electric charging points for motorhomes.
- The issue of parking provision and facilities for motorhomes and campervans was nationwide, not unique to East Devon. Providing off street provision would help to alleviate 'wild camping'.
- There was not much freedom anywhere in Britain to stop and stay unexpectedly. Offering such freedom would increase footfall to areas considerably. Campervans and motorhomes would not stop coming so should therefore be managed in a certain way and overnight parking facilities provided. People should be drawn to where the council wanted them by offering a policy.
- Town and parish councils should be consulted with.
- Other areas of East Devon owned land that could be used should be identified, and included in the Local Plan.
- If tariffs in car parks were too high, campervans and motorhomes would go elsewhere.
- Where would the budget for providing facilities come from? What charges would be required to cover the costs of facilities and enforcement? It was thought that £15-£20 for an overnight stay would cover the cost of fresh water provision and

domestic refuse disposal. Electric hook-ups and effluent disposal facilities would only be provided at dedicated sites, such as the proposed Exmouth lorry park.

- All East Devon car parks should have fresh water provision for all its users.
- Farmers were permitted to provide up to 5 pitches for 28 days, without the need for planning permission.
- There was no provision in the Local Plan for campervans and motorhomes.
- The Town, District and County Councils had set up a Campervan and Motorhome TAFF, which had instigated the pilot in Exmouth. However, it had not met in over a year. It was hoped that it would continue, with all three authorities remaining involved and discussing the TaFF recommendations.
- Concern was raised over the way parking along Queen's Drive, Exmouth was split, with one side being operated by EDDC and the other by DCC. There were not parking bays marked out on the DCC side so huge motorhomes could park there all day and pay the same tariff as a small car. This anomaly should be addressed. There were also fire safety concerns as there was no separation spacing on these Queen's Drive echelons. The echelon parking was not suitable for motorhome and campervan parking. It should be in enclosed off street car parks only.
- There should be no fires or use of barbeques.
- Signage for permitted overnight stays should include 'no idling of vehicles'.
- In order to avoid conflict areas for overnight parking could be zoned off.
- Bays for overnight stays should be clearly marked out to give clarity and ensure separation of vehicles.
- Enforcement would be required. It was difficult to enforce overnight spacing at times, without confrontation.
- The current capacity of the enforcement team (4.5 full time equivalents) would need to be extended to 5 full time equivalents at an additional cost of £10,000-£15,000.
- The council did not have the facility to offer pre-booking of spaces, however this would be considered for a designated site for campervans and motorhomes.

The Service Lead – Environmental Health and Car Parks was thanked for his work on the complicated issues surrounding a revised policy for motorhomes and campervans in EDDC pay and display car parks.

RECOMMENDED: that the Car Parking Task and Finish Forum recommend to the Scrutiny Committee policy guidance and a broad strategic framework in relation to the following:

1. Day visitors – no change is necessary to the current policy. If a vehicle took up more than one parking bay then it would be expected to pay for multiple simultaneous parking sessions.
2. Stopovers – overnight stays in car parks be allowed (subject to strict terms and conditions) in any of the district council's pay and display car parks that are deemed suitable in consultation with ward members and the relevant town or parish council. It may be appropriate to allow overnight stays of up to two or three consecutive nights in suitable locations. In addition to a parking space, self-contained vehicles could be offered drinking water facilities and domestic refuse disposal facilities, the costs of which would be covered by new overnight charges. No barbeques or fires would be permitted.
3. Fire safety – overnight stays would only be allowed in circumstances that were compliant with relevant fire safety legislation. To ensure there was safe separation of vehicles overnight designated parking bays, 3 metres apart, would be provided in suitable car parks.

4. Tariffs – motorhome and campervan users would not be eligible for purchasing any of the standard car park permits, and could only use the pay and display car parks on a ‘pay as you use’ basis. A 24 hour tariff should be in the region of £15-£20, to ensure costs were covered but not to deter parking in off-street car parks, or displace vehicles to on-street locations.
5. Arrangements for local residents – local residents would not be able to purchase a parking permit to use the council’s public car parks for long-term storage of motorhomes and campervans when they were not in use. However, ‘exemption’ permits would be considered on a case by case basis for residents who could demonstrate that they relied on a small campervan as their regular daily transport and that they did not have suitable alternative off-street parking facilities available elsewhere. The vehicle would need to be registered and insured at the resident’s home address and the resident must live in close proximity to the long stay car park in question. The vehicle should be no longer than 5.1 metres and no overnight stays would be permitted.
6. Dedicated sites – officers should explore the possibility of creating dedicated motorhome/campervan pitches to allow longer stays and for which a premium overnight rate comparable with commercial campsites could be charged. Officers should begin a formal consultation process with local members, the town council and Natural England to consider the impact of the first such development on the site of Exmouth’s former lorry park, adjacent to the estuary. Further consideration would then be needed in terms of financial investment decisions and planning permission.
7. Local Plan – a policy for campervans and motorhomes should be incorporated into the new local plan.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

K Bloxham
C Brown (Chair)
M Chapman
O Davey
V Ranger (Vice-Chair)
E Rylance
J Whibley

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

D Bickley
F Caygill
N Hookway
G Jung
D Ledger
A Moulding
M Rixson

Officers in attendance:

Andrew Ennis, Service Lead Environmental Health and Car Parks
Susan Howl, Democratic Services Manager
Alethea Thompson, Democratic Services Officer

Councillor apologies:

A Colman
M Howe

Chairman

Date: