

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Car Parking Task and Finish Forum held online via the Zoom App on 11 February 2021

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.30 pm

54 Public speaking

Liz McLean asked whether car parking charges would be increased to pay for electric car charging points as she was aware that other areas had electric charging points funded by private companies and government funding. She then asked what the predicted income for EDDC would be from electric charging points. She was concerned that an increase in parking charges would have a knock on effect for businesses.

Robert Kathro asked the TaFF to consider improving the impact that the increasing number of motorhomes had on Exmouth. He was advised that the TAFF would be meeting again on 3 March to discuss the subject of motorhomes and campervans.

55 Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 2 February were agreed subject to minute number 46, second paragraph being amended to clarify that the belief should be discouraged that motorhome owners could store larger motorhomes in car parks over the winter at a cost of an annual permit for £100. It was noted that current policy prohibited winter storage of motorhomes in car parks, and that motorhomes would be discussed in detail at the next meeting of the TaFF.

56 Declarations of interest

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Councillor Eleanor Rylance, Personal, Broadclyst Parish Councillor and a user of the The Green car park, Broadclyst.

Declarations of interest.

Councillor Kim Bloxham, Personal, Cranbrook Town Councillor.

Declarations of interest.

Councillor Maddy Chapman, Personal, Exmouth Town Councillor.

Declarations of interest.

Councillor Olly Davey, Personal, Exmouth Town Councillor and an investor in co-cars.

57 Matters of urgency

There were no matters of urgency.

58 Confidential/exempt items

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

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

59 **The EDDC climate emergency declaration and action plan and the role of our car parking strategy in tackling this (with specific reference to investment in electric vehicle charging infrastructure and appropriate charging tariffs)**

The Service Lead – Environmental Health and Car Parks explained that the priority of providing plenty of affordable car parking in towns to encourage visitors to spend time and money in town centres was based on sound research and data. However, it was becoming clear that there was a climate emergency and that the Council had committed to an action plan to help reduce the local carbon footprint. This was also a priority for the Council and in conflict with the priority of encouraging motorists to drive to town centre locations.

It was felt that there was an opportunity for EDDC to begin to contribute to the infrastructure for electric vehicle charging infrastructure locally. There could also be opportunities to consider whether the tariffs were currently fit for purpose and encouraging the behaviours that were required to see emerging to help tackle the climate emergency. It was agreed that the timing of any measures was critical.

The Service Lead – Environmental Health and Car Parks suggested that there should be consideration given to a specific budget provision for the rollout of electric car charging infrastructure. A number of options were available across the industry and these were outlined in the Service Lead – Environmental Health and Car Parks' discussion paper.

The Service Lead – Environmental Health and Car Parks reported that EDDC had been working with other district council partners in a collaboration led by DCC, to provide appropriate infrastructure across the region to underpin and encourage the use of electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles locally. Current projects were:

1. DELETTI phase 1. Two fast charging bays to be provided in car parks in Exmouth, Honiton, Seaton and Sidmouth – 8 units in total – being delivered by a contractor and mostly funded through the European Development Fund. EDDC had committed £16,000 in total from existing budgets. There would be a financial return on the sale of electricity over the 10 year arrangement period.
2. DELETTI phase 2. Residential charging funded by an on-street residential charge grant fund. Officers would propose where appropriate charging point infrastructure could be installed, probably in the Green car park at Broadclyst, Brook Street Car Park Ottery St Mary and Lower Station car park Budleigh Salterton. There was unlikely to be an upfront cost to the Council. The phase 2 project was still at an early stage.
3. Exeter rapid charging project. An energy supplier (Gamma Energy) had successfully won funding from Innovate UK to work with EDDC and partners to supply, install and manage rapid residential on-street charge points. There would be no upfront cost to EDDC, with a 3% share of the increasing electricity revenue over a 15 year contract period. It was proposed that 20 50kW rapid charging units be installed and operated within East Devon, but time was critical so the authority was sought for the Service Lead – Environmental Health and Car Parks to present an urgent report to Cabinet seeking authority to enter into the necessary leases without delay.

During further discussion the following points were raised:

- There wasn't the need to invest lots of money upfront when providing electric charging points initially.
- If Council funds were invested then EDDC should see a return on that.
- Investment would be required to get what the Council wanted, where it wanted it.
- The public should not subsidise electric car users.
- There was rising demand for electric car infrastructure.
- There should be an even spread of electric car charging points across the district.
- DCC should be encouraged to improve its public transport infrastructure and use electric buses.
- The Government should be pressed to outlaw idling, particularly by buses in town centres.
- People stopping to charge their vehicles were likely to use the local facilities such as shops and cafes.
- Electric car charging points were critical to the survival of town centres. The convenient location of car charging points was a great method of regenerating town centres as people had to stop and pause whilst their car was charging.
- It could be a way of managing flow in short stay car parks.
- Trickle flow charges should be offered to those people who could not park and charge their cars at home.
- In London some lampposts had been converted to charging points.
- Charging provision for ebikes should also be considered.
- Consideration of electric car clubs and electric bike charging points would form part of the climate emergency response.
- There was a recognition nationally that the country would be using a lot more electricity and the challenge was how to balance that out as there was a move away from fossil fuels. The way people consumed electricity was going to change, with a much greater consumption.
- There was capacity in the National Grid.
- Double charging was very unpopular with electric car users.
- Electric vehicle users should be encouraged not to overstay and to leave their cars in the bay once it had been charged.
- Car parking tariffs had not been increased for 10 years and any increase in charges would not be to pay for electric charging infrastructure.
- Cranbrook Town Council had installed an electric charging point the previous day. It also leased an electric vehicle for use by the country park ranger. The Town Council did have a co-car, but it had been taken away through lack of use. However ebikes had proved very popular in Cranbrook.
- There was concern about overstaying charge points and whether a fine should be imposed. The Service Lead – Environmental Health and Car Parks welcomed the Forum's views on this and advised that an over-stay parking ticket was already in operation in Council car parks.
- There was a lot of national dissatisfaction over charging points not working. EDDC would be in a stronger position by working in a DCC collaboration. They would not be dealing with companies with a poor reputation.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the Car Parking Task and Finish Forum endorses the ongoing work with DELETTI phases 1 and 2.
2. that the Service Lead – Environmental Health and Car Parks present a report to Cabinet as a matter of urgency seeking authority to participate in the Innovate UK funded Exeter Rapid Charging project to install and operate up to 20 rapid charging units in EDDC's public car parks this year.

3. that Cabinet also approve that EDDC should investigate the options for providing electric bike charging points and the provision of an ebike rental scheme.

60 **The use of cash and incentives to use alternative payment methods**

The TaFF gave consideration to the use of cash and alternative contactless payment methods in car parks. Contactless card payments, mobile phone payments and cash could currently be used in all council car parks. The revenue streams for online payments, card payments in car park machines (chip and pin and contactless) and pay by mobile phone were all increasing year on year. This has been exacerbated by the covid-19 pandemic, with forced behaviour changes and people using cash less. It was felt that people would naturally cease using cash.

It was noted that there were a number of issues associated with cash, including the cost of collection, along with the risk of theft and attempted theft (which resulted in large repair/replacement costs). The Forum agreed that the same price should be charged for a parking ticket, whatever payment method was used, but that administration and maintenance costs should be built into this.

The Service Lead – Environmental Health and Car Parks reported that five years ago a cashless/cardless car park was trialled in Beer, with people only being able to pay by mobile phone. This appeared to be unpopular at the time, but the use of contactless payment methods had increased since then. It was suggested that in future only cashless card machines be installed in car parks over the next few years when machines were being replaced. It was noted that visitors to the area tended to use cashless payments options more than local residents.

Digital transformation over the years now meant that customers could only purchase parking permits online, although there were technical issues at times and staff had to help some customers. The Service Lead – Environmental Health and Car Parks felt that the cash option in car parks should not yet be turned off. The Forum suggested that a pilot be undertaken whereby two machines in the same car park be used, one with the cash payment option being turned off and only card/mobile phone options being available, but with another machine in the same car park being available for cash purchases.

It was noted that soon Ringo would be the mobile app required for all on and off street parking across Devon.

Members felt that car parking signage was incredibly busy and at times confusing. A request was made for this to be 'slimmed down'. The Service Lead – Environmental Health and Car Parks suggested that revised simplified signage could be an issue for the TaFF to consider at a future meeting.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that in order to encourage the use of cashless payments in car parks a trial be undertaken in a car park with multiple payment machines, making just one machine available for cash use.
2. that the signage in car parks be reviewed by officers in order to simplify it, with revised wording being brought back to the TaFF.

3. that more prominent messaging be added to car park signage notifying East Devon residents of the annual permit available online.
4. that for the time being the same tariff be used for all payment methods.

61 **Alternative sources of revenue (events, advertising, private sector management options)**

The Forum discussed options for using council owned car parks to raise revenue, such as car boot sales, farmers markets, drive in movies and for advertising.

The Forum were asked for their thoughts and to what extent the opportunities should be explored. Members agreed that this could be good use for off peak times and for some little used car parks. It was important to be sensitive to local businesses who were paying fixed rates and to be sensitive to the local area.

Exmouth members expressed caution on using busy car parks and potentially detracting from the Strand café culture. Exmouth already had open areas such as Queen's Drive Space and Imperial Recreation Ground on which to hold events. The Service Lead – Environmental Health and Car Parks reminded members that the use of one of the car parks was given over for the use of the annual Exmouth festival. It was noted that the Council had flexibility to work with event organisers to do this.

The Service Lead – Environmental Health and Car Parks reported that there appeared to be little interest in advertising space in car parks at present. 'Back of ticket' advertising had stopped, which was likely to be a reflection of how people were paying for their tickets, with many using mobile phones and not receiving a ticket at all.

It was suggested that the Service Lead – Environment Health and Car Parks explore possible uses of car parks to raise revenue with the Council's Events Officer, and Economy Portfolio Holder as part of maximising use of Council assets.

RECOMMENDED: that the Service Lead – Environment Health and Car Parks, Portfolio Holder Economy and Events Officer investigate alternative sources of revenue through the use of car parks in East Devon.

62 **Any other matters and next steps**

The Vice Chair advised the TaFF that the next meeting would be held on 3 March 2021 to consider the issue of motorhomes and campervans.

A further meeting of the TaFF would be held, probably late March to discuss car parks that did not generate an income for the district council.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

K Bloxham
M Chapman
O Davey
E Rylance

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

F Caygill
P Hayward
N Hookway
G Jung
D Ledger
A Moulding

Officers in attendance:

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

Councillor apologies:

C Brown
A Colman
M Howe
B Ingham

Chairman

Date: