

TITLE OF REPORT: SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH GROUP REPORT ON PARKING

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER

PORTFOLIO HOLDER: COUNCILLOR JULIAN CUNNINGHAM

1. SUMMARY

1.1 The Report of the Task and Finish Group on Parking is attached for Cabinet's consideration.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to
- consider and comment on the task and finish group's report and its recommendations at Appendix A;
 - take into account SMT's comments at para 7.3; and
 - take into account the Scrutiny Committee's comments which will come to Cabinet as a referral from its meeting on 17 March.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 To enable Cabinet to respond to the report of the Task and Finish Group.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 None.

5. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

5.1 The task and finish group was composed of members representing Letchworth, Hitchin, Knebworth and Kimpton giving a good knowledge of urban and rural parking issues.

6. FORWARD PLAN

6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

7. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

7.1 The review took place at the same time as a review of parking by the Council's Senior Management Group (SMG). Its remit was to look at all aspects of parking with particular emphasis on income generation, lower spending and improving operations. The task and finish group's report will contribute to the work of the SMG review.

7.2 The report of the task and finish group is attached at **Appendix A**. The conclusions and recommendations are in section 2 of the report and are reproduced below in para 7.3.

- 7.3 SMT welcomed the report and the flexibility the recommendations gave the Council in how to take them forward. SMT indicated that the Portfolio Holder, Cllr Cunningham, was also broadly content with the report. SMT made some specific comments which are set out below.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: The Council should review its policies to ensure adequate provision of parking for town centre residents. (para 3.1.11)

SMT comment: SMT considered this could be a difficult recommendation to fully meet given the density of development in town centres, high car ownership and pressure on car parking spaces in some town centres. It should also be borne in mind that there are other parking providers and so provision could increase by other parties should demand warrant it.

Recommendation 2. The Council should consider outsourcing the management and maintenance of its car parks, or sharing the costs with another authority, provided there is a good business case for doing so. (para 3.1.15)

Recommendation 3. The Council should consider acquiring land in order to provide new car parks when there is a need and a good business case for doing so. (para 3.3.5).

Recommendation 4: The Council should keep the problem of verge parking under review. (3.4.23)

SMT comment: SMT said that verge parking was kept under review. The underlying problem was a shortage of car parking spaces in some areas and this would be expensive to address by any of the potential means available and risked moving the problem elsewhere.

Recommendation 5. The Council's Parking Strategy should contain a section on parking for rail commuters. (para 3.6.6)

Recommendation 6. The Council should review the opening hours of its car parks. (para 3.6.8)

SMT comment: SMT noted there was provision in the capital programme for improved pedestrian access to the Letchworth multi storey car park, and that money might also be available to do so from sources outside the Council. Discussions are currently taking place with Letchworth BID and this recommendation is also linked to recommendation 9.

Recommendation 7. In order to do so, the Council should gather sufficient data about the usage of car parks, particularly at times when there is no charging, so it can make an informed decision about opening hours. (para 3.6.8)

SMT comment: SMT had no objection in principle, but it would be necessary to think about the cost of such an exercise. The last such comprehensive survey carried out several years ago had cost about £70-80,000. It might be possible to carry out a pilot in which

customers had to obtain a free parking ticket from the machine, even though it was free to park. This would bring costs associated with enforcement of non-compliance and the cost of the TRO necessary to changing the signage

Recommendation 8. The Council should talk to its local MPs to see if they can facilitate a dialogue with Network Rail and the train operating companies about provision of more parking around stations in North Herts. (para 3.7.3)

Recommendation 9. The Council should review its policy on season tickets, including ways of boosting their sales. This could include better publicity; making sure the process of buying them is as straightforward as possible; using alternative outlets such as shops; and allowing season tickets to be transferable in some circumstances. (para 3.10.3)

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 None at this stage as this will depend on which options are taken forward.

9. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

9.1 In terms of a business case for outsourcing, this must include implementation costs and costs of TUPE arrangements, along with the estimated increased levels of income to the council. With regard to acquiring land, a business case would need to explicitly consider estimates of the rate of return on the initial investment.

9.2 In the light of ongoing Government revenue funding reductions it is prudent to explore commercial opportunities and further income generation activities from current or new services. This report makes helpful suggestions of ways in which the council might increase its overall revenue returns from car parking operations.

9.3 The Medium Term Financial Strategy states that the Council may consider the use of capital funds to acquire land and property for development and/or investment purposes with such land used for economic, commercial and business development, or other income generation purposes.

10. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 SMT has provided detailed comments above.

11. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The Equality Act 2010 came into force on the 1 October 2010, a major piece of legislation. The Act also created a new Public Sector Equality Duty, which came into force on the 5 April 2011. There is a general duty, described below, that public bodies must meet, and this is underpinned by more specific duties which are designed to help meet them.

11.2 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of its functions: give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

11.3 There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

12. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are no social value implications directly arising from this report.

13. APPENDICES

13.1 Appendix A – Task and Finish Group Report on Parking.

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15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- NHDC's Parking Strategy 2011-2019.
- NHDC's Civil Parking Enforcement Annual Report for 2012/13.
- Report of the Task and Finish Group on the Implementation of the Parking Strategy 2011.
- LGFutures Report on Sales, Fees and Charges for North Hertfordshire.
- LGFutures Report on Unit Costs in North Hertfordshire.