

LETCHWORTH COMMITTEE
12 MARCH 2014

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

7

TITLE OF REPORT: LETCHWORTH AREA PARKING REVIEW UPDATE

REPORT OF STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF PLANNING, HOUSING AND ENTERPRISE

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report is the first in a series of update reports to keep members informed on progress and where required to seek members agreement on the way forward for the Letchworth Area Parking Review. It summarises the findings from the initial investigations carried out on issues previously raised by members as listed in the July 2013 report and seeks the Committee's views on priorities and which schemes to proceed with.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Area Committee agrees the priorities listed in Appendix A for progressing the Letchworth Area Parking Review
- 2.2 That the relevant County Councillors give consideration and agree to joint fund the road safety schemes as listed in Appendix A from their Herts Locality Budgets for 2014/15 to an estimated value of £12k.
- 2.3 That members note the additional areas of work at paragraph 8.9 and the Area Committee receives regular updates on progress with the Letchworth Area Parking Review from officers.
- 2.4 That members support the use of the exiting funding to provide the necessary expertise until the Principal Transport Policy Officer post is appointed to.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 In order to progress the Letchworth Area Parking Review project towards implementation.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 A number of possible parking issues and schemes to be considered are prioritised in Appendix A to this report.

5. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND MEMBERS

- 5.1 The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning and Enterprise has been consulted throughout the process to date. There has been ongoing correspondence with local members over various parking issues. Ward Members and the Committee will be briefed in detail on the proposals as they progress.
- 5.2 Following the meeting of this Letchworth Area Committee it is our intention to liaise with Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation and other external stakeholders in progressing the schemes.

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

- 7.1 The Council's Parking Strategy proposes reviews of parking management in each town on an area wide basis. The Action Plan identified Letchworth as the next town to be considered as part of the Area Wide Review process (2013/14) following Baldock and Hitchin. A report was presented to Letchworth Committee in July 2013 outlining the approach to be followed in undertaking the town wide parking review. This is in accordance with the policies as set out in the adopted NHDC Parking Strategy. The report also provided a list of known parking issues across the town which were discussed, added to and agreed by members to be taken forward for initial investigation. These issues are listed in Appendix A with officer comments.
- 7.2 There has been at least a 6 month delay in the progression of the review due to the Principal Transport Policy Officer resigning in October last year. We are in the process of seeking to recruit to the post for a second time. At present the Strategic Planning & Projects Manager and the Technical Transport Officer have been progressing the initial investigatory work on the schemes listed in Appendix A whilst dealing with other parking issues across the district.
- 7.3 The following has been progressed in terms of the Letchworth parking review:
 - 7.3.1 Detailed on-site surveys have been undertaken of all the current CPZ schemes to establish current usage and take up of permits. The purpose of this is to establish the possibility of altering the restrictions and/or giving consideration to the possible sale of non-resident permits on a strictly controlled and limited capacity basis. Such alterations would be subject to consultation with local residents and ward councillors before progressing with any necessary amendments to the existing Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs).

7.3.2 Detailed on-site surveys have been undertaken of the following areas:

- The Wilbury Ward area - being the Bedford Road, Rowan Crescent, Redhoods Way East and Cowslip Hill Area - for consideration of some form of parking restrictions;
- Rushby Mead area - to consider extending the current controlled parking zone;
- Nevells Road/Cross Street and the Quadrant Area regarding parking issues around the doctors surgeries, where consideration could be given to the possibility of releasing some additional parking for visitors to the surgeries.

7.3.3 Detailed site visits and discussions have taken place with HCC and the police regarding various parking, junction protection and other road safety issues previously raised by Members. These include:

- Parking and safety issues along Norton Way South and Pixmore Way;
- Removal of Saturday parking restriction along Icknield Way East;
- Introducing limited waiting in the lay-by at Norton Way South towards the junction with Station Road; and
- Junction protection at the following locations
 - Bedford Road/Bursland
 - Radburn Way/Quinn Way
 - Sollershot East/Ralph Swingler Close outside the doctor's surgery
 - Marnet Ave
 - Bowershott/Baldock Road

The above listed junction protection schemes fall within the remit of HCC safety requirements and should be progressed as part of the HCC works programme funded from County Councillors Herts Locality Budgets.

8. ISSUES

8.1 This report seeks to provide an update on the various issues raised by Members to the July 2013 report as listed in Appendix A and considers how the schemes could be prioritised to be taken forward.

8.2 With regard to funding, the Council allocates £65k annually for the implementation of Area Wide Reviews. Where this is not required due to sufficient existing funds, officers put part or all of the funding up as an efficiency to be returned to the base budget, this occurred for 2013/14 and 2014/15. It is proposed that part of the existing funding (£178k within an earmarked reserve) is used to provide the required expertise in progressing the review and other on outstanding work associated with the Hitchin and Baldock reviews until such time as a Principal Transport Policy Officer has been appointed to the vacant post. As stated in para 7.3.3 above, some schemes include safety issues which are the responsibility of HCC. However HCC is aware of the review being undertaken by the Council and HCC officers are of the view that such issues should be included as part of the wider review and could be advanced sooner than having to go through the process required to progress schemes through their Integrated Works Programme. This would include junction protection and other traffic management schemes. Such schemes are jointly funded from the relevant County Councillors Herts Locality Budgets (HLBs). It is therefore being requested that some funding is sought through the County Councillors Herts Locality budgets towards some of the schemes identified in appendix A.

- 8.3 Priority 1 issues are those schemes which officers consider following on site investigation with Hertfordshire Highways and the local police and in response to issues raised by local residents and Members should be progressed immediately as a means of addressing highway safety issues (Schemes Ref No 1 and 2 in Appendix A).
- 8.4 Priority 2 issues are those areas without restrictions and suffer from non-resident parking issues, such as the Wilbury Ward area and Rushby Mead. This will require the need to look at the wider area as a means of seeking to manage the migration of non-resident parking elsewhere. It is suggested that pre-consultation commence with the Rushby Mead proposed extension in the spring to then be followed by pre-consultation with local residents in the Wilbury Ward area once the junction protection schemes are implemented, i.e. in the autumn (Schemes Ref No 3 and 4 in Appendix A). This will allow the impact of the junction protection schemes to be assessed and considered as part of the wider scheme.
- 8.5 Priority 3 issues will include those areas that will seek to address known on-street parking issues around various community facilities, and other various junction protection schemes, which could be packaged together to keep costs down. Advancement of the junction protection schemes would be subject to available funding from County Councillors HLBs (Schemes Ref Nos 5, 6, 7 and 8 in Appendix A).
- 8.6 Priority 4 issues include reviewing existing controlled parking zones in terms of their operation, i.e. if their current restrictions need to be reviewed. Consideration could be given to the sale of a limited number of permits to non-residents where the take up of permits is low and there is spare on-street capacity. The intention would not be to undermine the principle of supporting residents and/or local businesses in preference to longer stay non-residential or local business parking. Such investigation would include pre-consultation with local residents and businesses in the areas under consideration. The sale of non-resident permits could help subsidise the cost of resident permits. A full business case would need to be prepared to ensure that the sale of non-resident permits would be self financing in terms of implementation, administration, enforcement and on-going maintenance costs. (Schemes Ref Nos 9a, 9b and 9c in Appendix A).
- 8.7 Priority 5 are those schemes that are considered a low priority compared to the other schemes in the list and should be progressed if available resources allow (Scheme Ref No 10 in appendix A).
- 8.8 The schemes listed under priorities 1 to 4 can all be progressed as part of the Letchworth review subject to available funding. The Committee should be aware that once initial consultation has been undertaken officers will be able to identify a clearer picture of the full scope of schemes and costs required to deliver them. The timescales for these will vary as previously advised these reviews can take 2 to 3 years to complete. Site investigation and pre-consultation work with residents, members and other stakeholders are important aspects which take the most time. Lessons learnt from the town wide parking reviews undertaken in Baldock and Hitchin have demonstrated that this initial work is necessary to ensure that officers are proceeding with the most appropriate restrictions when they come to start the formal Traffic Regulation Order process that meet member and public expectations and can be delivered in the most cost efficient manner. At this stage the agreed programme (based on Appendix A) could potentially be refined.

- 8.9 There were other issues listed and raised by members in the July 2013 report. These are discussed below together with officer comments:
- 8.9.1 *The condition of the Garden Square multi-storey car park* – On-going maintenance of this car park is the responsibility of Property Services. As Members will be aware lighting improvements were made to all levels of the car park in 2013, and quotations have been sought for improving the lighting to the stairwells. Funding has also been sought to improve signage and pedestrian access through the car park to the Garden Square shopping centre. In addition to the re-decking of the car park, completed in 2012, Property Services will be procuring further works to protect the car park structure. It is anticipated that these improvements will be progressed in the next financial year.
- 8.9.2 *Consideration of on street charging; introducing charging at the outdoor Letchworth swimming pool at Norton Common; and consideration of pay on exit* – This is ongoing work involved with the review of tariffs and how the town centre car parks function. This requires more detailed investigation and consultation with other car park providers and the town centre manager. Work has commenced internally and will be progressed once the Principal Transport Policy Officer is in place. An update on this work will be presented to Members later in the year.
- 8.9.3 *Verge and footway parking* – This is under investigation and is potentially a large exercise that will be both resource and cost intensive to implement. Other districts have introduced measures to prevent verge and footway parking on an area wide basis. In Stevenage an experimental order was introduced to assess the public reaction and potential environmental improvements to the area. The implementation of such schemes could cost in the region of approx £10k minimum per area. This cost includes the wide consultation process, preparation of the Traffic Regulation Order, advertising costs and implementing the signs, which would comprise zone entry signs and then a series of repeater signs along the various streets included in the area. Enforcement costs would also need to be factored into such schemes.
- 8.9.4 There is no identified budget to introduce verge and footway parking restrictions in Letchworth. Nor are there currently sufficient resources to progress the investigatory work required to investigate and implement an experimental order. If Members were minded for officers to progress with an experimental order then some of the Priority 1 to 4 schemes listed in Appendix A would have to drop out as a consequence, unless Members were to use their discretionary budgets to fund this work separately. It is the officers suggestion that once the Letchworth review is under way and there are more sufficient resources in place, officers could then carry out further investigations and report back to the Committee in the future with recommendations and a more detailed cost analysis for introducing appropriate controls as part of an experimental scheme.
- 8.10 NHDC's agency agreement with HCC permits the management of on-street parking and creation of Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) to manage parking as the Council considers appropriate. In order to progress the schemes identified under priorities 1 to 5 in Appendix A, officers will work with the relevant local ward Councillors, County Councillors, the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport & Enterprise, Herts Highways, the police, local residents and other stakeholders. The other areas of work listed under paragraph 8.9 above will be reported back to the Area Committee for information and consideration where required, as such schemes will involve other service areas and possible recommendations to Cabinet where policy and funding decisions may be required.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.
- 9.2 NHDC's agency agreement with HCC permits the management of on-street parking and creation of Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) to manage parking as the Council considers appropriate. The Committee will be advised of any TROs required to deliver the Area Review at the appropriate time.

10. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The cost of undertaking the Letchworth town wide review is to be funded from existing budgets. There is £178k in an earmarked reserve that has been set up specifically for TRO work. For 2014/15 the budget of £65k has been put up as an efficiency but will be back in the base budget in 2015/16. A budget of £50k has been set aside under GAF for the on-street charging trial. Efforts will be made to streamline processes and link in with other forms of funding such as HLB where appropriate to deliver schemes.
- 10.2 There is a requirement to progress the Letchworth town wide parking review to meet resident and Member expectations in delivering parking schemes and introducing new initiatives to fulfil the requirements of the NHDC adopted Parking Strategy.
- 10.3 A key risk is that the priorities are not set and the process is delayed. The programme for delivering all schemes listed in Appendix A is planned to be a minimum of 2 to 3 years.

11. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The Equality Act 2010 came into force on the 1st October 2010, a major piece of legislation. The Act also created a new Public Sector Equality Duty, which came into force on the 5th April 2011. There is a General duty, described in the next paragraph, that public bodies must meet, 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, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 11.3 Depending on what option may be considered, any future development proposals for the site, detailed proposals surrounding thoroughfares, access, surface treatments etc and needs of any users for any resulting development will be considered under separate equality analysis at the time of consideration.

12. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 As the recommendations made in this report do not constitute a public service contract, the measurement of 'social value' as required by the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 need not be applied, although equalities implications and opportunities are identified in the relevant section at paragraph 11.

13. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 The ongoing work on this project will be subject to having a full staff compliment in place. Efforts are being made to recruit again to the Principal Transport Policy Officer post. There is potential to use private companies and to use HCC's consultancy service to draft TROs where budget allows. Shared working with other local authorities has been explored but to date no opportunities have been identified with other authorities using consultants only or their staff member is on maternity leave.
- 13.2 The Council will need to consider the resource implications of administration and enforcement as schemes progress and consult staff on any proposed changes to working patterns.
- 13.3 Inconsiderate parking is causing difficulties for people with disabilities and for young children. A resolution of some of the issues covered in this report will help those groups.

14. CONTACT OFFICERS

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15. Background Papers

- 15.1 NHDC Adopted Parking Strategy updated 2012
www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/transport_and_streets/car_parking/car_parking_strategy.htm
- 15.2 Letchworth Parking Review Report – Presented to Letchworth Area Committee on 17 July 2013

16. Appendices

16.1 Appendix A – Letchworth Area Parking Review: List of Schemes to be Progressed