

Minutes of a Meeting held at Riverside, Lowestoft  
on **Thursday, 6 August 2015 at 5.05pm**

Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Councillors S Barker (Chairman), N Brooks, A Cackett, G Catchpole, J Ceresa, T Gandy, L Gooch, P Light, S Logan, M Parsons and T Reynolds

Cabinet Members in attendance

Councillor C Law, Leader of the Council  
Councillor S Ardley, Cabinet Member for Operational Partnerships and Lowestoft Rising

Waveney Norse

I Gregory – General Manager  
R Rusted – Project Manager  
S Keeble – Operations Manager

Officers present

D Gallagher (Head of Commercial & Leisure Partnerships) and A Stapleton (Democratic Services Officer)

**1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / SUBSTITUTES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Elliott and Topping.

**2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

**3 MINUTES**

Prior to approval of the Minutes, a Member queried why there was so much duplication between the Part 1 (open) and Part 2 (exempt) Minutes set out on the Agenda. The Democratic Services Officer advised that it was usual practice for the Part 2 Minutes to repeat the content of the Part 1 Minutes, with the addition of those elements of the discussion which were exempt. Whilst this did mean there was duplication between the two sets of Minutes, it also meant that full details on discussions held were provided in whichever set of Minutes was being read.

**RESOLVED**

That the Minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 8 July 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**4 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN, RESPONSES OF THE CABINET TO ANY REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OR REPORTS OF ANY DISCUSSIONS WITH THE CABINET**

The Chairman referred to the question-setting pre-meeting which had been held with Members of the Committee for the first time prior to today's meeting, and advised that these would be held as a pilot over the next few months in order to ascertain whether such meetings could make the Committee more effective.

The Chairman also advised Members that she would be carrying out a skills audit of Scrutiny Members in September 2015, in order to be better informed about the skills and experience of each Member of the Committee.

NB: Cllr C Law, Leader of the Council, arrived at this point in the proceedings, at 5.12pm.

## **5 EXEMPT / CONFIDENTIAL ITEM**

### **RESOLVED**

That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

## **6 CAR PARKS UPDATE – PROGRESS REPORT**

The Cabinet Member for Operational Partnerships & Lowestoft Rising reminded Members that consideration of the options for tariff changes and changes to the Parking Order outlined in Sections 4.2 and 4.3 of this report had been deferred from the meeting of the Committee held on 8 July 2015, due to the late hour that had been reached. However, a lengthy discussion of the report had occurred at that meeting, and those discussions, set out in the Minutes of that meeting, would prove useful to today's consideration of the recommendations within the report.

The report set out the progress to date relating to the strategic car parks review, a continuing piece of work covering a range of aspects of the car parking service. The Committee's involvement with the review had commenced in March 2014, with officers being requested to progress a number of recommendations and report back to the Committee at appropriate intervals. This particular update also asked Members to consider options to begin the consultation process on recommendations to vary the Council's Car Parking Fees and Charges, and to refer options to Cabinet for decision.

Developments since the December 2014 meeting of the Committee, where the car parks review was last considered, were set out in the report, and summarised in the Minutes from the 8 July 2015 meeting of the Committee.

There had been no change to car parking fees and charges in Waveney since 2011. Five options for amendments to charges were set out at Section 4.2 of the report; Section 4.3 of the report set out other proposed changes to the Parking Order. The Head of Commercial & Leisure Partnerships advised that two additional proposed changes to the Parking Order had been added to the report since the last meeting of the Committee, but that this was the only change from the original report considered in July 2015.

Any proposed amendments to fees and the Parking Order would be the subject of consultation, and would take into account market conditions, the needs of customers, and the need for income to support the Council's budget pressures and protect the delivery of vital services to residents and tax payers. The Council would also need to ensure that car park tariffs, associated fees and charges were set and remained appropriate and proportionate to current demographics, user and budgetary demands.

Further information was provided in the report to guide Members' discussions, in the form of a schedule of income generated by car parks, showing the highest earning car parks separately and also highlighting the significant variations in takings over the past 10 years. Income from the multi-storey car parks in Lowestoft had fallen, with changes in shoppers' habits and the closure of popular high street stores. Conversely, despite being the most expensive car park in the District, income from Clapham Road Car Park had grown significantly, clearly demonstrating the demand for convenience against pricing.

In Beccles, the opening of the Tesco superstore in 2006/07 and subsequent takeover of the Rainbow site by Roys had seen income from Blyburgate Car Park fall by more than half, whereas the other car parks in Beccles had shown growth in usage.

Issues raised during the discussion on this report were as follows:

- Currently, the charge for commercial vehicles and coaches was cheaper in Southwold Pier Car Park than in Oulton Broad Nicholas Everitt Park Car Park and Lowestoft Belvedere Road Car Park. This decision had been taken in order to encourage more tourism to Southwold.
- Discussions were held on options for Blyburgate, Hungate and Newgate car parks in Beccles.
- Clarification was sought on the cost of any re-introduction of charging for the first hour at all Bungay car parks and The Thoroughfare and Extension car parks in Halesworth. On this issue, a Member asked whether other options had been explored to mitigate the lost income from the concessionary trials. Officers advised that there remained a lack of empirical data regarding the effectiveness of the trials, although local town councils and traders had reported additional footfall. Local businesses had been asked to sponsor the continuation of the schemes, but had declined to make any contributions. Whilst the report recommended re-introduction of charges, officers advised that Cabinet would continue to explore alternative ways to mitigate the lost income before any final decision was made. A period of statutory consultation would also be required before the re-introduction of charges, which may provide the necessary evidence regarding the effectiveness of the trials. Members were of the opinion that any re-introduction of charges should be reviewed after a period of one year. Councillor Cackett asked for it to be recorded that she was concerned re-introduction of charges would have a negative impact on businesses in Halesworth.
- A Member asked whether the scheme in Lowestoft whereby certain shops would refund the first hour's car parking if a customer spent over £10 in their premises had been considered for Bungay and Halesworth, and was advised that this scheme had been introduced by the Lowestoft Town Management Partnership, not the Council, and it would be for the Town Councils to look at introducing such schemes in other towns.
- A discussion was held on the problems experienced with people parking in the loading bays along London Road South, which was not regularly enforced. Officers advised that Councillor Law, Leader of the Council, and Councillor Ray Herring, Leader of Suffolk Coastal District Council, had written to the Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport requesting a meeting to explore the transfer of responsibility for on-street parking to the two District Councils. Both Leaders felt that a greater level of local control of such enforcement would be beneficial, since the two Councils already operated car parking services and enforcement in their Districts. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee resolved to write to the SCC Cabinet Member supporting the two Leaders' request to progress this transfer.
- The trial of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) in Clapham Road Car Park would commence in September 2015, and if effective would be explored for other car parks. It was hoped that the introduction of ANPR would free up inspector time to input more resource into other areas.
- Annual car parking permits were available to purchase which covered every car park in the District except the short stay car parks. Permits were also available for periods of 6 months, one month, one week and weekends only. Whilst a marketing campaign had been undertaken when the permits were first introduced, this had not been repeated for some time, and Members asked that advertising of these permits be undertaken in order to increase their take-up. Officers advised that there were currently issues with the administration of the system, however as soon as these issues were resolved, a further marketing campaign would be undertaken. At that point the potential to sell permits in other locations could also be investigated. A Member suggested that posters be emailed to Parish Clerks for inclusion in newsletters and on notice boards.

- Where new residents' parking schemes were proposed, consultation took place with the affected residents, and new schemes were only introduced where there was a majority of residents in favour of the scheme. Such schemes tended to be located in town centres where there were problems with workers parking all day in residential roads.
- RingGo cashless payment via mobile phone/online was currently only available in Lowestoft car parks, but would be rolled out across the District.
- Concerning the prohibition of the parking of Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) and Passenger Carrying Vehicles (PCVs) from certain car parks, Members asked where problems were being seen. Officers advised that, in particular, there was an issue with Beccles Quay Car Park where regular parking of a lorry was churning up the surface. The Council had recently paid £10k to re-surface the car park, and did not want to see the surface ruined further by the parking of lorries. The addition of such a prohibition to the Parking Order would mean this could be enforced, and Excess Charge Notices (ECNs) applied. Members asked whether drivers or their companies could be prosecuted for any damage done to car park surfaces. Officers advised that the Council would first need to prove the damage, but that if proved prosecution would be an option.
- Following on from the issue of the parking of HGVs and PCVs in the Council's car parks, Members asked whether there was a weight limit set for the car parks, and were advised that the Parking Order included a weight limit of 3.5 tonnes in most car parks. Members asked whether the Council could introduce an excess charge where vehicles were parked which exceeded this weight, and officers would investigate with the Legal Department whether such an excess charge could be introduced.
- Whilst the last increase in car parking charges had taken place in 2011, the Cabinet Member for Operational Partnerships and Lowestoft Rising advised that there had also been a period of three years with no increase prior to the 2011 increase.
- A Member queried whether any increase in charges in Southwold car parks might result in displacement parking along nearby residential streets, and was advised that such streets were already heavily used by visitors to the town, and that particularly in the Summer period, it was difficult to find a parking space in any street in Southwold.
- The proposed changes to the Parking Order set out at Section 4.3 of the report were considered to be sensible, and proposals 4.3.3, 4.3.6 and 4.3.7 concerning Blyburgate Car Park, Beccles, and the issue of HGVs and PCVs parking on Council car parks had been discussed separately in depth. The remaining proposals were recommended for approval.

NB: Councillor T Reynolds arrived during the consideration of this report, at 5.50pm.

### **RESOLVED**

1. That the contents of the car parks update progress report be noted.
2. That the Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee write to the Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport supporting the request from the Leaders of Waveney and Suffolk Coastal District Councils for a meeting to explore the transfer of responsibility for on-street parking to the two District Councils.

### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

3. The Committee made a number of recommendations to Cabinet concerning changes to car park tariffs and changes to the Parking Order which will be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 22 September 2015.

**7 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED**

That the Exempt Minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny meeting (Part Two) held on 8 July 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The meeting was concluded at 6.45pm.

Chairman