

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

At a meeting held on Monday, 12th November, 2018

Present: Councillors Ms E Colling (Chairman), G W Allanson, G Coulson, G Dennett, Mrs J Jefferson, T Randerson, G A Backhouse and Mrs L Bastiman.

Apologies: Councillors C Pearson, D Jeffels and J Mortimer.

In attendance: Councillors A Abbott, M Donohue-Moncrieff, M Smith (Cabinet Member for Leisure) and P Cross.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

2. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions received other those considered under item 3, Call-in of a Cabinet Decision: Proposed Introduction of Residents' Parking Concessions on off-street Car Parks in the Borough (Objections/Amendments).

3. CALL-IN OF A CABINET DECISION: PROPOSED INTRODUCTION OF RESIDENTS' PARKING CONCESSIONS ON OFF-STREET CAR PARKS IN THE BOROUGH (OBJECTIONS/AMENDMENTS)

The Chair outlined what the item concerned and the outcomes being sought which the Board needed to consider. A decision (report ref 18/237) made by the Cabinet on 16 October 2018 for the proposed introduction of residents' parking concessions on off-street car parks in the Scarborough Borough had been called-in by some non-executive members for further consideration.

The report and call-in notice formed the basis of the Board's considerations. A previous iteration of the decision (report ref 18/129) relating to similar proposals had also been called-in. The second decision had been considered sufficiently different in content so that the second call-in request was valid.

The Chair explained that a recommendation was being sought from the Board to be made to Cabinet on the winter car parking / residents' concessions decision (16 October) to ensure good value for money.

It was important that:

- Any additional income exceeded implementation costs over time
- Residents benefited (e.g. proposed residents' virtual pass discount for 'off-street' car parks)
- Visitors still came to the area and spent money here, i.e. benefiting traders
- The timing of the proposals, i.e. now, next winter or to be set aside for now

These were the broad outcomes being sought which the Board needed to consider. The decision being reviewed concerned the Council's 'off-street' car parks. The Chair added that it was worth noting that Cabinet recommended Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) reviewed the scheme (if implemented) after one year.

She explained that North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) was separately responsible for 'on-street' parking, i.e. on residential and other streets. So whilst clarity of car parking information was important that was not the primary decision being sought. Likewise, equity of car parking across the district was important but again not the primary decision being sought.

The Chair referred to the call-in request. Background concerns related to the principle of free winter parking and confusion for drivers of the two-tier parking system (Scarborough Borough Council and NYCC) but the last section of the call-in ultimately formed the basis for what was being requested:

'.....save Council expense / additional enforcement.....for limited period November - March in selected free parks.....retain free parking in November - March for the selected free parks.....still have the free virtual pass offset by proposed tariff increases.....O&S review within a year'

The Deputy Car Parking Officer had confirmed that the scheme could still be implemented this winter subject to approval.

The Chair added that the next Cabinet meeting was on 13 November 2018 so it was important that the Board made clear recommendations. The Chair invited Cllr Janet Jefferson to briefly outline the reasons for her call-in and what was being sought. Cllr Jefferson explained that there was a lot of confusion concerning the proposals and range of charges.

The original proposal had been to offer residents a £10 permit which would give them access to discounted off-street parking, i.e. public car parks. Residents currently had to pay £30 for on-street parking, i.e. residential and other public streets. NYCC was responsible for the £30 charge.

The £10 charge was now proposed to be replaced by a free residents' 'virtual' pass for discounted parking. However, she stated that there were still potential new costs, in particular a £1 charge (24hrs parking) proposed for the winter period (originally start of November to start of March) in selected car parks which had previously been free. The £1 charge aimed to offset the costs of the free 'virtual' pass scheme.

There were also increases in tariffs for durations of up to four hours parking. She added that the Cabinet decision had not effectively explained all proposed changes to tariffs, e.g. five hours parking in Filey was affected.

Cllr Jefferson referred to the timing of the proposals over the winter period and potential confusion. Signage in some car parks referred to charging between the start of March to the end of October. She had enquired with

parking services what would be happening for the winter period (start of November to start of March) and was informed that there would be no change to existing free car parks from the start of November to the start of January.

She highlighted that introducing charges between the start of January to the start of March would create more confusion for a relatively short period and would not provide value for money given the costs of signage, software and enforcement. In particular, the increased tariffs and £1 charge (projected income of around £45,000) would put off visitors thereby impacting upon traders and the local economy.

Cllr Jefferson re-iterated the risk of confusion, in particular citing the north end of Marine Drive (Scarborough), evolving into Royal Albert Drive and also West Cliff in Whitby. She had been advised by NYCC that these on-street areas would remain free from the start of November through to the start of March.

All in all, she felt that the costs of the proposed scheme and parking confusion for residents and visitors were not offset by the listed benefits. She proposed that the free 'virtual' pass for residents' discounted off-street parking be introduced and subsidised by the increased tariffs across car parking. However, proposals to introduce the £1 charge in selected free car parks needed to be dropped.

Cllr Martin Smith, Portfolio Holder for Leisure was invited to explain the Cabinet decision. He relayed that, following the first call-in of the proposals, further consultation had been undertaken and duly considered with the proposed £10 charge for a residents' permit, allowing discounted parking, to be replaced by a 'virtual' residents' pass at no cost to residents. The proposals aimed to be cost-neutral with the costs of projected residents' discounts offset by increased income through tariff rises and costs of the free 'virtual' pass met by income from the £1 winter charge for car parks which were currently free.

He reported that he had been informed by NYCC that it was considering what changes the Borough Council made before deciding whether to introduce potential on-street charges in the Royal Albert Drive area. The advice that Cllr Jefferson and himself had received from NYCC appeared to be confusing.

Jane Wilson, Deputy Car Parking Manager was invited to provide factual information concerning the proposals. She referred to the original report which had proposed the residents' discount schemes.

Any resident could apply for a discount permit ('virtual' pass) and could save anything on parking tariffs from 30p to £1 (up to 20%) at the Council's car parks depending on how long they parked for. She added that the proposals aimed to create a self-financing scheme with discounts to residents funded by increased tariffs and the 'virtual' discount pass funded by the proposed £1 winter charge. The 'virtual' pass also saved on printing and other costs.

The offer aimed to be attractive to residents who could apply online. She added that the new software and use of handheld devices for enforcement officers would allow for effective control and costs as Automatic Number Plate Recognition would be used. The scheme was for the long-term.

The Chair invited the public speakers to make their representations.

James Corrigan, a local business owner based in the South Bay area of Scarborough commented that the proposed scheme was complex, confusing and ad-hoc. He added that the timing was poor given that long-term austerity measures were still in place and trading conditions were tough. He referred to Marine Drive and that this was a popular area with numerous visitors and traders. The proposals would have a negative impact on a lot of people.

He noted that NYCC allowed free parking on Foreshore Road with many council staff parking there. This sent a poor message to residents. He suggested parking meters should be introduced there and on Sandside to generate income.

He didn't feel that the costs were justified given the limited benefits and negative impact. He referred to other aspects which impacted upon visitors such as previous closure of free public conveniences citing the many coach trips to the area and people needing access to facilities. Whilst the Council was pursuing major capital investment projects, small fine details were being missed, e.g. Castle Ward had six complex parking schemes. He felt that a comprehensive review of car parking and relating aspects was needed.

John Senior, representing the South Bay Traders Association concurred that trading conditions were getting more difficult with local trade down 15% compared to the previous year. He had had to make job losses this year too. He referred to austerity and that the Borough needed to attract not deter visitors. The timing of proposed charges was wrong. He added that local traders were a valuable economic asset. He referred to the proposed introduction of a £1 charge in currently free car parks and that the projected income of around £45,000 was not economically significant enough to be justified. He also agreed that introducing charges along Foreshore Road and Sandside were overdue and lack of free public conveniences was an issue citing it as the most complaint amongst visitors.

Board Members were invited to comment.

Members recognised that car parking and public conveniences were of public interest given that the Borough was a tourist area that needed to offer facilities and also be unique. They supported the proposal for a free 'virtual' pass for residents giving them some discounted parking opportunities. They also recognised that trading conditions were difficult.

Members accepted that a small charge (£1 for 24hrs) could potentially increase long-term stays and visitors might expect to be charged. However, they were not sure how much additional income could be created given that

many visitors to the Borough came from not very well off areas so just a few pence was of significance to them and they might not visit or would spend less. Attracting people to town centres including residents, i.e. footfall, was important and particularly encouraging them to spend money. They were informed that many businesses marketed the town with the free parking offer so any change would create out-of-date publicity. Members were generally against introducing the £1 winter charge. Comments were also made that free 'park and ride' buses were poor value given the low usage.

Jane Wilson advised that forecasting had been based on the last three years car parking usage, ticket sales and trends. This feedback assumed 60% of users were residents and 40% were visitors. Discounts would be available at 42 car parks across the Borough. The costs of funding discounts to residents came to around £157k against additional income from increased tariffs at around £107k a shortfall of £50k. In addition, the costs of signage, software and legal notices meant there was a net deficit of £84k. The proposed £1 winter charge would generate estimated annual income of £42k, i.e. over two years would deliver the £84k contribution required. She also clarified which car parks were currently free.

Recommendations were proposed for Cabinet to consider.

In summary, Members supported the free 'virtual' pass for residents' discounted parking which provided some benefit to residents but were opposed to the £1 charge in currently free car parks in view of needing to boost the wider local economy. They were strongly concerned that car parking information was generally confusing and would be made more so by the winter charging proposals. They were unsure of the income projections against costs so advocated that the free 'virtual' pass scheme and wider car parking proposals should be reviewed after a full financial year. It was suggested that Autumn 2019 would be a more appropriate time to allow for a sufficient period to analyse and in order for any recommendations to feed into any winter proposals for 2019/20. After further consideration, one calendar year was also suggested.

Resolved -That the following recommendations were put forward by the Overview and Scrutiny Board for Cabinet decision:

1. Maintain free winter car parking (November-March in the selected car parks referred to in the 18/237 report)
2. Adopt the proposed permit scheme for residents' discounted parking (through offer of a free 'virtual' residents' pass referred to in the 18/237 report)
3. After one calendar year (January - December 2019), Overview and Scrutiny to review the budgetary (and wider) outcomes of the proposed permit scheme for residents' discounted parking (in time to inform any future winter proposals and budget planning)

4. Scarborough Borough Council (responsible for 'off-street' parking) to continue working with North Yorkshire County Council (responsible for 'on-street' parking) to streamline the various car parking schemes operating within the Borough to support clarity of understanding of parking schemes for the public

Chairman