

**REGENERATION AND NEIGHBOURHOODS
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Wednesday 28th January 2015**

PRESENT – Councillors *Surve* (Chair), *Roberts*, *Entwistle*, *S.Khonat*, *Whalley*, *H. Khonat*, *Casey*, *Daley* and *Whittle*

Also Present –

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| Cllr Maureen Bateson | Executive Member for Regeneration |
| George Bell | Associate Director – Capita Highways & Transportation |
| Kelvin Rutter | Town Centre Operations Manager |
| Gifford Kerr | Head of Service support to the Committee |
| Paul Lee | Head of Service Support to the Committee |
| John Addison | Principal Scrutiny Officer |
| Sonya Palmer | Scrutiny Officer |

RESOLUTIONS

27. Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Apologies were received from Councillor Hollings.

28. Minutes of the Meeting held on 3rd December 2014

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 3rd December 2014 be agreed as a correct record.

29. Declarations of Interest in items on this Agenda

There were no Declarations of Interest received.

30. Parking and Enforcement

The Executive Member for Regeneration, the Associate Director for Capita Highways and Transportation and Town Centre Operations Manager provided the Committee with a presentation on Parking and Enforcement within the borough.

It was reported that the Highway Authority had a Network Management duty to secure and facilitate the expeditious movement of traffic on the road network. Members were advised that parking restrictions were a contributor for this to be met along with improved road safety for all road users.

Members were provided with key facts relating to parking within the borough:

- There were currently 58,447 vehicles registered to residents of the borough.
- The borough had approximately 565km of adopted highway
- The borough had approximately 687km of yellow lines
- The Council had in its remit 36 car parks within the borough, which were a combination of Pay & Display, permit only and free car parks
- There was 1643 chargeable spaces provided by the Council, of which roughly 400 were on-street parking bays

Members noted that the workplace population of Blackburn Town Centre was 14,542, of which at some point 9,155 had driven to work. It was added that the town centre had a total of 4,439 parking spaces, of which 3,079 were provided by the Council.

It was reported that since 2008 the Council had lost 5 car parks – Alma Street, Market Rooftop, Waves, Montague Street and Jubilee Street, which totalled 700 spaces. To compensate the Council had gained a 510 space multi-storey car park (Fielden Street).

The Executive Member informed the Committee that due to the lack of cheap commuter parking, many people parked on the edge of the town centre. The edge of the town centre was predominantly residential streets, and this had caused issues which had resulted in parking schemes being put in place.

It was further reported that a parking review had considered the current parking opportunities and offers for parking in Blackburn Town Centre. It had looked at the existing parking offers and how it had reached the current situation, along with options for the future, balancing the needs of the general road users, businesses and commuters.

Following on from the review several major issues relating to parking within the borough were identified:

- The lack of long stay commuter parking – as identified by the movement strategy
- Many of the Council owned car parks were in development sites which were either currently being developed or had been earmarked for development within the next 5 years
- Pay & Display machines that were no longer fit for purpose – over 1800 faults last year, issues with new coinage
- Enforcement around schools at drop off and pick up times
- The number of Blue Badge holders both within the borough and commuters who park in the prime town locations all day for free

Members were advised that moving forwards the Council wanted to invest in new Pay & Display machines which would accept new coinage and offer cashless parking (pay with card).

It was reported that the Council wanted to explore the possibility of a 3 hour maximum stay for blue badge holders using on-street bays between the hours of 8am and 6pm to improve the turnover of spaces for disabled visitors to the town centre.

It was further reported that the Council wanted to investigate whether a CCTV car could be used to help with the enforcement of parking around schools.

The Executive Member advised the Committee what parking offers were currently provided by the Council:

Free Saturday parking on Council owned car parks

- 1155 spaces provided for free
- An increase on average of 4% from figures in 2013
- On average 53% of all spaces were occupied at any one time, with car parks closest to the centre occupied 100% throughout the day
- Since free Saturday parking was introduced the town centre had seen an increase in footfall and shop vacancy rates reduced
- The Mall multi-storey car park had not seen a drop in numbers

Free parking weekdays after 3pm on all Council owned car parks

- In the 6 weeks running up to and including Christmas week, the Council saw a 12.54% increase in the usage of car parks in general with shoppers, car parks close to the centre had 100% occupancy between the hours of 3pm and 6pm
- Allowed Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO) to concentrate outside of the town centre on troublesome parking hotspots and schools

The Executive Member was pleased to inform the Committee that parking in Darwen town centre continued to be free.

Following on from the Executive Members presentation Members raised concerns regarding Blue badge holders and disabled parking bays, questioning whether the Council would consult with any disability groups with regards to any changes to disabled parking within the Borough. The Executive Member advised the Committee that no decisions had been made and the Council would consult on proposed changes. It was reported that the Council was one of very few authorities that offered free all day parking for blue badge holders.

Members held a lengthy discussion in relation to the difficulties with parking for Blackburn College students. Members felt that the Council needed to look at cheap accessible parking for students.

Members were advised that the Council had held discussions with Blackburn College regarding parking and it was reported that one of the problems was a shortage of temporary sites and the high cost of rates that the Council would have to pay for the site. Members were assured that the Council and Blackburn College were fully aware of the issues and continued to work together to look at alternative solutions.

Concerns were also raised with regards to the lack of parking signage and Members felt that motorists often drove around the borough looking for available parking spaces as they did not know where the temporary car parks were situated and how many car parking spaces were available.

The Executive Member advised the Committee that better signage within the borough was a high priority; however, due to the number of temporary sites currently being used within the borough and the cost of signage it would not be cost effective at present.

Members questioned whether funding could be secured from the Pennine Reach programme for road signage and additional parking spaces. It was advised that Pennine Reach only provided funding for projects such as road improvements.

Members questioned how much it would cost to replace the 70 Pay & Display machines within the borough and were advised that the cost would be approximately £250,000 to buy and install the new machines. The Executive Member informed the Committee that the Council did not plan on spending £250,000 at once but would roll out the programme over a number of years. It was reported that it currently costs the Council £70,000 each year in call out and repair fees which would be offset by the cost of the new machines. It was also added that there would be a review of the Pay & Display machines with a view to reduce the number required.

In response to questions regarding the suggestion of a CCTV vehicle, Members were advised that the Council was not looking at buying a new vehicle and should the Council introduce a CCTV vehicle to help enforce parking around schools, they would look at all option including car lease or third party operators.

In response to a question regarding parking offers a suggestion was made to offer the first hour of parking free as an alternative scheme, however it was advised that this would be difficult to enforce and a business case would need to be made. It was further reported that £88,100, which was split £65,000 and £23,100 centrally from resources that covered the cost of free Saturdays and free after 3 parking.

Members were advised that the current parking and enforcement budget was £1.1m and £170,000 was the target revenue figure for 2014/15. It was added that any profit made by the Council would be paid back into the service.

Members enquired whether the Council offered a reduced rate for weekly/monthly parking permits and it was reported that the Council do not currently offer reduced rate parking.

Members also questioned if the Council had explored the idea of a 'park and ride' scheme. The Executive Member reported that the Council had looked into the idea but were unable to secure a suitable piece of land to use and also felt that the scheme would be unsuccessful in the borough.

Members of the Committee expressed their recognition and thanks to the CEO's for their hard work and continued support and commitment.

RESOLVED-

1. That the Executive Member for Regeneration, the Associate Director for Capita Highways and Transportation and Town Centre Operations Manager be thanked.
2. That the CEO's be thanked for their hard work and continued support and commitment.

31. Performance and downsizing of Environment Task Group

The Principal Scrutiny Officer provided Members with an update report and recommendations on the Performance and Downsizing of Environment task.

Members were reminded that there had been 4 task groups and a site visit previously and following on from this the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee had requested further information, as it was felt that they had only had one perspective and would like to look further into the efficiencies within the various departments.

Before the next meeting of the Committee Members wished to receive a perspective from:

- The Customer – Understanding KPIs, Customer complaints, Performance data, Service requests, Type of calls coming in. Members would like to look at the last three/ five years.
- The Unions - A perspective of their views on what is working, what isn't working and how the service could be improved.
- Staff/Frontline workers - A perspective of their views on what is working what isn't working and how the service could be improved.

The Chair and Vice Chair also made a request to have select Committee/focus group type meetings with the Unions and frontline workers for:

- Highways
- Refuse and Cleansing
- Public Protection
- Grounds Maintenance

Members were advised that the Director of Environment, Housing and Customer Services had informed the Chair and Vice Chair of an intended future service review in his portfolio and the need for an agreement of a 'baseline' of his service.

It was reported that the Director had offered the Chair and Vice Chair a place on the review steering group to join the Executive Member for Environment and other Senior Officers including the Unions in influencing the review moving forwards. It was advised that the review would look at the future of Environment and Highways portfolio for savings, how to better productivity and value for money.

Members held a detailed discussion regarding the offer from the Director of Environment, Housing and Customer Services. Members supported pro-active scrutiny but felt that it would need to be made clear what involvement the Chair and Vice Chair would have in relation to making decisions as part of the steering group.

It was advised that the Chair and Vice Chair would not be making any decisions and would be members of the steering group in an observational capacity only providing regular updates back to the Committee.

Questions were raised as to the membership of the steering group and a request was made for another member of the Committee to be allowed to sit on the steering group.

Members then considered the recommendations as outlined in the report and requested that 4.2 (Resolved 3.2) be altered slightly to include 'as observers in a non-participating capacity'.

RESOLVED-

3. That the Committee support the task group in their request for additional information from Environment and Highways.
4. That a request to the Director for Environment, Housing and Customer Services for another place on the steering group be made.
5. That the following recommendations for the Performance and Downsizing of Environment (with Highways) be agreed:
 - 1) That the report be noted.
 - 2) That the Committee accept the offer from the Executive Member for Environment for the Chair and Vice Chair to sit on the Environment Portfolio review steering group as observers in a non-participating capacity once it starts.
 - 3) That the Committee agree to the additional remit of the performance and downsizing of Environment (with Highways) task group to include reviewing the benchmarking for Environment Portfolio review.

- 4) That once the performance and downsizing of Environment (with Highways) task group has received this additional information it has requested, recommendations be considered and submitted to the Committee meeting to be held on the 16th March 2015.

32. Committee's Work Programme

The Principal Scrutiny Officer reminded Member of some issues and discussions that had taken place with the Executive Members, highlighting the main issues of debate that had been raised.

Members were asked whether they required any additional information in relation to Parking and Enforcement and what they would like to do next.

Members requested the following additional information on parking and enforcement:

1. Members have requested an update (email) on the findings/solutions between Blackburn College and the Council in relation to student parking issues.
2. Members requested a breakdown of parking fines issued Monday to Friday up to 6pm over a 3-4 week period.
3. How successful was the Council's publicity campaign over the Christmas period? Members requested a breakdown of facts and figures.

RESOLVED –

That the request for additional information would be actioned and reported back to the Committee.

Signed.....

Chair of the meeting at which the Minutes were signed

Date.....