

BDC Council 19 January 2021 – For Information

Draft minute from the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 18 January 2021 for Report BOS/20/1 Town Centre Parking in Babergh

- 5.1 Councillor McCraw made the Committee aware of the decision process for this item and asked for Members to remain apolitical.
- 5.2 Councillor Malvisi introduced the report and stated that the report would be amended to take into account comments from this Overview and Scrutiny meeting and the debate on the petition at Council on 19 January 2021 before being taken to Cabinet in February.
- 5.3 Councillor Malvisi detailed the background for the report and explained that several car parks in Babergh were in need of repair to make them fit for purpose and that action plans were needed for bicycle parking and electric charging points.
- 5.4 The revised Car Parking Review would enable car parks in town centres to pay for upkeep of the car parking spaces and be financially viable for the future.
- 5.5 The Assistant Director - Environment & Commercial Partnerships detailed the main content of the report. She explained how the Car Parking Survey in February 2020 had been conducted and how the observations were made for the use of car parks in Hadleigh and Sudbury.
- 5.6 She stated that any changes should be based on strategic requirements and that parking tariffs were to be used as a tool to change parking behaviours to utilise the spaces available for parking in the town centres. The survey had identified several aspects including the number of cars parking, for how long and if there was enough appropriate parking available. However, a much wider strategic review would be needed but this survey was the first step.
- 5.7 Budgetary considerations had been included in the report and Option 2 was the preferred option. Currently the cost of maintaining and running the car parks was subsidised and the proposal endeavoured to cover the cost of the service and to reinvest into the service. An element of some of the income would be invested in sustainable travel.
- 5.8 The Chair thanked the Assistant Director and proposed possible areas of questioning to Members.

- 5.9 Councillor McLaren stated that the report was comprehensive, however, she felt that the subsidy of parking had been a major point for residents, and that the remainder of the report had been overlooked. She asked if this had been taken into consideration in preparing the report. She also asked how long Babergh had been subsidising car parking in Sudbury.
- 5.10 The Assistant Director – Environment and Commercial Partnerships responded that the car parking service had always been subsidised and that the reaction to the subsidy issues had been anticipated but could not coherently be separated from the report.
- 5.11 Councillor Dawson asked why this report had been brought to Cabinet in January with little or no communication or consultation with Ward Members or other stakeholders.
- 5.12 The Assistant Director – Environment and Commercial Partnerships explained that it had been a corporate objective for some time to review the parking provision within the Babergh District and that the report had been in progress since February 2020 and should have been presented to Cabinet in November 2020. However, this had been delayed due to the redeployment of staff as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic. She added that the report was the initial phase to establish if the current car parking provision was fit for purpose. In addition, a need to address car parking issues in town centres had arisen and she assured Members that all stakeholders would be consulted in the wider strategy review.
- 5.13 Councillor Grandon asked how much research had been undertaken in Hadleigh and why the report had been deferred to January, as Christmas and the Covid-19 restrictions had made a wider debate difficult.
- 5.14 The Assistant Director – Environment and Commercial Partnerships responded that the initial data survey had been completed by Alpha Parking, who had visited car parks on both weekdays and weekends to gather data including any data accessible from the ticket machines.
- 5.15 In response to the timing of the report, the Officer clarified that Covid-19 redeployment had affected the timing, however, she assured Members that members of the public and Councillors had forwarded responses to the report.
- 5.16 Councillor Grandon enquired why Dedham had been included as a good example. When she had visited the town during the summer there appeared to be an issue with people trying to avoid parking charges by parking on the road instead of using car parks.

- 5.17 Richard Walker, Parking Partnership Group Manager – North Essex Parking Partnership, explained that the examples in the report illustrated that car parking charges did not discourage visitors and that the management of car parking tariffs improved parking in towns.
- 5.18 Councillor Dawson stated that the report did not address the issue of displacement of traffic and asked why this was not being delayed until after the wider review.
- 5.19 The Chair advised Members of the constraints of timing in relation to the budget.
- 5.20 The Assistant Director – Environment and Commercial Partnerships clarified that on-street parking was not charged for and managed by Suffolk County Council. However, on-street parking depended on traffic regulations.
- 5.21 Councillor McCraw queried whether the suggested tariffs seemed low in comparison with parking in similar towns and asked if this was the case.
- 5.22 The Assistant Director – Environment and Commercial Partnerships replied that she believed that these charges were modest in comparison.
- 5.23 Richard Walker explained that parking management tended to follow what the destination had to offer and that factors had been established by looking across nationally to similar places, type of stay, mode of use and congestion of the network. The introduction of tariffs was not solely about generating an income but also to manage parking issues in a sensible way for residents and visitors.
- 5.24 Councillor McLaren asked if the Shotley Peninsula had been reviewed as there was a shortage of car parks. Especially since Anglian Water had raised car parking charges at Alton Water, which appeared to have resulted in more people parking in quieter lanes and villages.
- 5.25 Councillor Grandon stated that Hadleigh and Sudbury were not comparable, but the suggested tariffs were comparable.
- 5.26 The Assistant Director – Environment and Commercial Partnerships replied that the fee structures were different in Sudbury and Hadleigh in the recommended option.
- 5.27 Councillor Dawson questioned why the survey had been completed in February which was one of the worst times of the year for visitors to the towns.
- 5.28 Richard Walker replied that February was a quiet time of the year, however the car parks had still been full.

- 5.29 Councillor Adrian Osborne queried what would be the impact on the budget if changes were not made.
- 5.30 The Assistant Director – Environment and Commercial Partnerships responded that the current parking budget was showing a £185,000 deficit, which did not include any funding for improving deteriorating car parks. Tables 4a and 4b in section 6.5 of the report detailed the current budget for parking services.
- 5.31 In response to Councillor McCraw’s question for the provision of 3 hours free parking, Richard Walker stated that it was unusual to have such a long period of free parking.
- 5.32 Councillor Dawson asked if enforcements had been considered and Councillor McCraw enquired further if the authority received any income from enforcements.
- 5.33 The Assistant Director – Environment and Commercial Partnerships responded that a service level agreement with Suffolk County Council and West Suffolk Council were in place and that the income from car parking charges were unlikely to cover the cost of enforcement.
- 5.34 Councillor McLaren enquired if any comments had been received from residents, who would gain resident’s parking permits in Sudbury, to which the Assistant Director – Environment and Commercial Partnerships replied that it was expected that views would be made under the wider review.
- 5.35 Councillor McCraw questioned if there was a capacity to amend the timeline in the report and were delays feasible within budget and practical constraints.
- 5.36 The Assistant Director – Environment and Commercial Partnerships clarified that the budget would be a separate issue, however it would be feasible to delay the implementation date.
- 5.37 In response to Councillor Dawson’s questions relating to the alternative options explored, Councillor Malvisi referred to the alternative strategies options detailed in the report.
- 5.38 The Chair invited Members to debate the issues.
- 5.39 Councillor McLaren began the debate by raising the method of consultation and stated that some people felt that their views had been missed.
- 5.40 Councillor Adrian Osborne stated that he understood that the three hours free parking was unsustainable and suggested that the implementation date should be amended to late 2021/early 2022. He added that residents being unable to park near their homes should be investigated as this impacted car parks.

- 5.41 Councillor Dawson agreed that factors of displacement needed reviewing and suggested that this report be deferred until after the strategic parking review.
- 5.42 Councillor Grandon thought that businesses and the public needed time to recover from the effects of the Covid-19 crisis before implementation of car parking charges. She thought that the Sudbury and Hadleigh tariffs should be different and that more work should be undertaken regarding the displacement issues.
- 5.43 Councillor McCraw felt that the tariffs suggested were reasonable and acceptable, however he suggested one hour of free parking instead of the half hour proposed. He thought that a comprehensive parking review was required in addition to considerations of residential parking permits.
- 5.44 Councillor Dawson enquired why Lavenham had been omitted and The Assistant Director – Environment and Commercial Partnerships explained that Lavenham Parish Council had approached Babergh District Council regarding the transfer of responsibilities for a number of services in Lavenham and that it was hoped that these talks would come to a conclusion soon.
- 5.45 Councillor McCraw suggested that recommendation 3.1 in the report be amended so that the commencement date for the strategy review be changed to quarter three and that the implementation date in recommendation 3.2 be amended to '*no earlier than 01 July 2021*'.
- 5.46 Councillor Grandon thought that engineering investments to car parks should not be delayed.
- 5.47 Councillor Dawson suggested delaying the implementation date until after the Strategic Parking Review.
- 5.48 The Assistant Director – Environment and Commercial Partnerships confirmed that the average time for a Strategic Parking review was 12 to 18 months.
- 5.49 Councillor McLaren suggested one-hour free parking in town centres and an implementation date of no earlier than September.
- 5.50 Councillor McCraw proposed a recommendation of no change to recommendations 3.1, 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6 in the report, that the implementation date in recommendation 3.2 be amended to: '*be implemented no earlier than September 2021*' and recommendation 3.3 be amended to a variant of options 2 and 3 to: '*but includes that one hour free parking be provided in Hadleigh and Sudbury*', which was seconded by Councillor Osborne.

- 5.51 Councillor Grandon proposed an amended recommendation for 2 hours free parking and that the implementation date should be 6 months after the majority of the general public had received a Covid-19 vaccination.
- 5.52 The Monitoring Officer advised against using the Covid-19 vaccination as a cut off time for implementation and suggested implementation after the Strategic Review instead.
- 5.53 This was agreed by Councillor Grandon and she proposed that Recommendations 3.1 and 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6 remained unchanged and that Recommendations 3.2 and 3.3 be amended as follows:
- 3.1 *That a comprehensive parking strategy review be undertaken for the whole District, which will commence in quarter two 2021/22 and that delegation be given to the Assistant Director for Environment & Commercial Partnerships in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment.*
 - 3.2 *That the parking management principles and interventions detailed in Appendix A **be not be implemented until the comprehensive Parking Strategy review has been completed.***
 - 3.3 *That additional parking controls or tariffs be applied to District car parks in accordance with Option 2, table 3, paragraph 6.3 of this report **but to include two hours free parking in Hadleigh and that free parking in Sudbury to be determined,** subject to the Statutory Order Process and requirements for consultation, in order to achieve availability and occupancy priorities outlined below.*
 - 3.4 *That residential parking permits be implemented in Mill Lane Car Park, Sudbury for overnight stays, subject to the Statutory Order Process and requirements for consultation.*
 - 3.5 *That a proportion of income generated from chargeable parking will be allocated to the delivery of the sustainable travel agenda.*
 - 3.6 *To resolve to delegate the decision to make changes to the parking orders in order to bring in the agreed changes to the AD for Environment and Commercial Partnerships so that appropriate actions can be undertaken in a timely manner.*
- 5.54 Councillor Dawson seconded the amended proposal, which was put to Members for voting.

By 2 votes for and 3 votes against

It was RESOLVED:-

That the vote for the amended proposal was lost.

5.55 Members returned to the substantive proposal, which was put to Members for voting.

By 3 votes for and 2 votes against

It was RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:

- 3.1 That a comprehensive parking strategy review be undertaken for the whole District, which will commence in quarter two 2021/22 and that delegation be given to the Assistant Director for Environment & Commercial Partnerships in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment.**
- 3.2 That the parking management principles and interventions detailed in Appendix A *be implemented no sooner than 1st of September 2021.***
- 3.3 That additional parking controls or tariffs be applied to District car parks in accordance with Option 2, table 3, paragraph 6.3 of this report *but includes that one-hour free parking be provided in Hadleigh and Sudbury*, subject to the Statutory Order Process and requirements for consultation, in order to achieve availability and occupancy priorities outlined below.**
- 3.4 That residential parking permits be implemented in Mill Lane Car Park, Sudbury for overnight stays, subject to the Statutory Order Process and requirements for consultation.**
- 3.5 That a proportion of income generated from chargeable parking will be allocated to the delivery of the sustainable travel agenda.**
- 3.6 To resolve to delegate the decision to make changes to the parking orders in order to bring in the agreed changes to the AD for Environment and Commercial Partnerships so that appropriate actions can be undertaken in a timely manner.**