

SCRUTINY PANEL A

**Meeting held in the Committee Room, Council Offices, Urban Road,
Kirkby-in-Ashfield,**

on Wednesday, 22nd January, 2014 at 6.30 p.m.

Present: Councillor T. Brown, in the Chair;
Councillors Mrs. C. Butler, K. Knight, Mrs. E.A. Mays
L.S. Morrison and R.J. Sears-Piccavey.

Apology for Absence: Councillor J.R. Knight.

Officers Present: Mrs. L. Cain, N. Cotterill, M. Joy, Miss E.P. Saxton and
P. Thomas.

In Attendance: Councillor T.C. Locke.

SA.24 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and Non Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests

There were no declarations of interest made.

SA.25 Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 14th November, 2013, be received and approved.

SA.26 Car Parking Capacity in Ashfield Scrutiny Review

The Chairman introduced the update report and informed the Panel that since the last meeting the Scrutiny Manager and Democratic Services Officer had undertaken a 'straw poll' of car park users and local businesses regarding current car parking capacity in the three town centres. Furthermore, development of the draft Car Parking Strategy had now commenced.

The Scrutiny Manager gave a brief overview of the 'straw poll' analysis as follows:-

Sutton in Ashfield - Business

- businesses were clear in that they considered the newly introduced residential parking permits around the town centre streets had had a significant negative impact on trading figures;
- parking capacity for Sutton town centre workers was inadequate with the current

time limits in the Council's car parks forcing some workers to renew their parking tickets during their lunch hours. This had an even bigger impact on those businesses that relied on lone workers;

- traffic wardens were often considered to be "over zealous" in their enforcement of on-street parking restrictions;
- Some businesses expressed the view that the Council should consider free parking for the first half hour every day to enable customers to briefly drop into shops without incurring a parking charge;
- the Council should consider allocated spaces and parking permits for town centre workers;
- the on-street parking waiting times should be longer (i.e. one hour).

Sutton in Ashfield - Customers

- inadequate on-street parking provision, particularly since the introduction of residential parking permits;
- mixed views were expressed with regards to the price of parking (although this wasn't a question specifically asked) – some considered that 40 pence for the first hour of parking was too expensive, others thought that it was very reasonable;
- the on-street parking signs were not large enough, not easy to read;
- the 'free parking' in January could be better advertised and displayed in the Council car parks.

Hucknall - Business

- parking prices too high and have had a negative impact on the town centre economy;
- overall most considered that there was a good provision of parking spaces in Hucknall;
- lack of suitable 'mother & toddler' parking spaces;
- the 'free parking' in January could be better advertised and displayed in the Council car parks;
- the 'free parking' in January should be for two hours;
- the economy was suffering in Hucknall anyway due to shops being forced to close on the High Street.

Hucknall – Customers

- the car parks could be cleaner;
- the signage for on-street parking could be a lot clearer;
- the Council should consider free parking for the first half hour every day to enable customers to briefly drop into shops without incurring a parking charge;
- the ticket machines in the Council car parks are temperamental and often broken.

Kirkby in Ashfield – Business and Customers

- there is adequate parking provision in the town centre;
- there is adequate on-street parking provision in the town centre.

Discussions took place following the update and Members debated the following:-

- the programmed resurfacing works to Piggins Croft car park in Hucknall and the need for properly marked 'walkways' and 'mother & toddler' parking spaces;

- the implications for parking following the development of the Hucknall relief road and the potential for some additional spaces on a disused factory site on Titchfield Street;
- the problems being encountered by NHS workers/district nurses being unable to tend to patients and park within residential parking zones without incurring tickets/fines for exceeding the time limits;
- the current allocation of income between the County and District Authorities arising from parking tickets and payment of fines;
- various problems being encountered with the 'double yellow line' marking at the rear of the Police station in Hucknall;
- the procedures for allocating residential parking permits and agreeing the potential size of any parking zone;
- the level of 'exemption' to current parking restrictions only making provision for medical emergencies;
- the satisfactory level of car parking provision in the rural areas;
- concerns surrounding the perceived lack of support for traders in Sutton in Ashfield (particularly sole-traders who are having to temporarily close trading to renew their parking ticket) in relation to long-stay parking provision;
- the potential impact of loss of car parking provision in Kirkby in Ashfield once the plaza scheme has been completed;
- the acknowledgement that the current Notts. Parking Partnership agreement needed to be reviewed to ensure a more equal partnership was established between the County and District Authorities for the future.

Regeneration and Car Parking Provision

The Council's Regeneration Manager was in attendance at the meeting to offer his views in relation to how 'car parking provision and capacity' was currently considered as part of any wider town centre regeneration proposal/project.

In his opinion, retail businesses would always require employees and customers to remain viable and so in turn adequate long-stay and short-stay car parking remained essential to a successful business environment. Through experience, high parking prices were a barrier to encouraging customers into shops although this was dependent on the quality of shops on offer. If the retail experience was worth it (i.e. a large shopping centre with a large variety of shops) customers would be prepared to pay a fair and acceptable price to park safely and conveniently.

Customers often didn't include the cost of petrol as part of their shopping experience unlike the cost of having to park their car. Many shoppers would happily travel further afield to retail outlets which offer free parking as opposed to closer shopping facilities that require payment to park their car.

In relation to car parking capacity and the mix of long-stay and short-stay spaces, any regeneration officer, team or group would need to consider this provision as part of any wider town centre project of initiative. The three town centre groups recently established for Sutton, Hucknall and Kirkby have all been charged with considering car parking capacity as part of any developmental work they undertake.

The Regeneration Manager took the opportunity to stress that accurate, up-to-date statistical information in relation to car parking spaces and movement of traffic and shoppers (within a town centre) was imperative to ensure that a credible, longer term car parking strategy could be formulated as part of any town centre regeneration plan. He was aware that Planning officers used a formula for allocating car parking spaces to residential developments but wasn't aware of any such formula that could be applied to town centre retail development.

RESOLVED

that following completion of the review, the under-mentioned draft recommendations be agreed for submission to Cabinet as and when appropriate:-

- (a) a Car Parking Strategy be developed that incorporates an action plan with measurable milestones and clear links to the economic regeneration of the town centres;
- (b) as a result of (a) above, suitable consultation on the draft Car Parking Strategy be carried out with Town Centre Regeneration Working Groups;
- (c) Council officers be requested to work with the County Council to continue to consider the impact of residential parking permits on town centre economy;
- (d) Council officers be requested to liaise with the County Council to identify and review the length of stay for earmarked on-street parking zones to endeavour to make them more functional for shoppers (i.e. 1-2 hours);
- (e) to continue to work towards strengthening the relationship and joint working arrangements with the County Council;
- (f) that signage for parking times and restrictions be improved and made clearer;
- (g) communication and partnership working is carried out with private car park suppliers to ensure the needs of the town centre economy (both shoppers and workers) are met;
- (h) disabled car parking bays to be reviewed as soon as practicably possible to ensure they remain fit for purpose;
- (i) to consider the possible development of a Car Parking Monitoring Working Group with the membership to include Councillors, Council officers and local business representatives.

The meeting closed at 7.43 p.m.

Chairman.