

**ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**15 APRIL 2015**

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold on Wednesday, 15 April 2015

**PRESENT: Councillor Hilary Isherwood (Chair)**

Councillors Haydn Bateman, Peter Curtis, Chris Dolphin, Ian Dunbar, David Evans, Cindy Hinds, Ray Hughes, Joe Johnson, Colin Legg, Brian Lloyd, Nancy Matthews, Ann Minshull and Paul Shotton

**SUBSTITUTE:** Councillor Mike Peers (for Veronica Gay)

**ALSO PRESENT:** Councillors: Marion Bateman, Helen Brown, Derek Butler, Clive Carver, Dennis Hutchinson, Kevin Jones and Aaron Shotton

**CONTRIBUTORS:** Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Environment, Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation), Parking Manager and Finance Manager (Streetscene & Transportation)

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Environment & Social Care Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Committee Officer

**50. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)**

During discussion on Agenda Item 3, Councillor Joe Johnson declared a personal interest as a Flintshire private hire licence holder.

**51. FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S CAR PARKING STRATEGY**

The Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) introduced a report to seek recommendations from the Committee to Cabinet to approve the Council's Car Parking Strategy and to introduce parking charges at all viable town centre car parks within the Council's ownership. A recommendation was also sought for Cabinet to approve the introduction of a workplace and visitor parking permit scheme at specific Council office facilities and the level of charge for the issue of residents' parking permits associated with local residents' parking schemes. A revised copy of the proposed charging bands had been made available in advance of the meeting.

The Chief Officer explained that following deferment of the item at the previous meeting, consideration had been given to the queries and concerns raised by Members, together with the feedback received from the consultation exercise. As a consequence, a number of changes had been made to the report, a copy of which would be submitted to the next Cabinet meeting, with a verbal update detailing comments raised at this meeting. The Chief Officer went on to highlight the main areas of change and enforcement arrangements, as set out in Section 3 of the report, and explained that the removal of charges for Caergwre and Hawarden would reduce income levels by around £18K which would need to be identified elsewhere in other areas of the budget.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment explained that the same report would need to be submitted to Cabinet due to the committee timescales involved, but gave assurance that comments raised at this meeting would be shared at Cabinet to enable any further changes to be agreed and the report updated prior to its consideration at Cabinet.

The Chair read out an email from Councillor Ron Davies who, as Chair of the Cymru Theatr Clwyd Board, had raised concerns about the impact of a possible £2 charge for parking at the Theatr. The Deputy Leader explained that similar feedback to this initial proposal had resulted in agreement to eliminate evening charges at the Theatr (comparable with other town centre car parks) and an alternative proposal for a levy applied to Theatr ticket prices to be explored further, subject to agreement with the Board. This would represent a contribution towards the maintenance cost of the car park.

The Chair pointed out the disparity in charging all Theatr customers in this way, as some did not use the car park, and added that this increase in ticket prices could prove detrimental to the Theatr. On County Hall, whilst she agreed that the parking charges should apply to both elected Members and staff, she remarked on the potential for Members to reclaim the amount as part of their expenses, as they were not employed by the Council.

The Deputy Leader reiterated that the aim was for Council staff and Members to be charged the same, and that it was the decision of individual Members whether or not to include this in their published expenses.

In welcoming some of the changes, Councillor Nancy Matthews said that a planning issue on car parking provision at flats/apartments had not been addressed and she shared the Chair's concerns about the potential for mandatory parking charges at the Theatr, as many customers travelled by other means. On the first query, the Chief Officer explained that advice from the Planning department had indicated that the provision of free local parking should not necessarily be stipulated on such planning applications. He agreed to pass on the comments in relation to the Theatr.

On the whole, Councillor Peter Curtis spoke in support of the introduction of parking charges which he felt could help some town centres by freeing up capacity in crowded car parks, however he considered the proposed £4 per day charge at Talacre to be excessive. He felt that a fairer approach would be to charge per vehicle parked at the Theatr and not for each customer. On parking at County Hall, he drew attention to the number of vehicles currently parked on nearby roads rather than on the campus.

On the proposed charges in Connah's Quay, Councillor Ian Dunbar pointed out that the Somerfield car park was used by a number of local residents who had no parking provision at their properties and that the car park was also prone to flooding. The Deputy Leader stated that flooding had only occurred during severe weather and that residents would have an opportunity to purchase parking permits. He went on to clarify that the policy would not cover parking at the Law Courts in Mold as these were not owned by the Council.

The Chair asked about 2/3 day parking provision at train stations and the Deputy Leader noted this for discussion at the Cabinet meeting.

Councillor Paul Shotton welcomed the removal of parking charges for Caergwrie and Hawarden and said that the charges proposed in Talacre would help to alleviate concerns from residents about congestion during the summer.

Although Councillor Chris Dolphin disagreed with workforce charging at County Hall, he felt that the changes to the policy were a fair compromise. He raised concerns about the approach to charging for the Theatr and felt that there was scope to increase residents' permit charge (per vehicle) in line with those of other councils. The Chief Officer advised that neighbouring councils were currently charging around the same level and that the proposed £25 charge for Flintshire included all associated costs in delivering and managing that scheme. Following further detail given by the Chief Officer on plans to write to residents and seek a minimum 50% agreement prior to introducing the residents' permit scheme, Councillor Dolphin withdrew his proposal for an increase to consider this further, once the scheme had progressed.

In response to further comments, the Parking Manager explained that the parking ticket machines were all due to be updated to the same model during the next financial year.

Councillor David Evans queried the rationale behind the charges only being applied in towns where there were in excess of 50 available Council owned parking spaces. The Chief Officer explained that the initial 40+ spaces had been increased to reflect Members' feedback and the cost of installing machines to allow sufficient income generation. In response to further comments, he advised that the car park in Northop was owned by the community council and that concerns on the proposed charges in Talacre would be raised at Cabinet. Following Councillor Evans' concerns on residents' permit parking availability in some areas of the county, the Chief Officer stated the likelihood for there to be more demand above the initial one permit per household and that subsequent permits would be available to purchase for nearby nominated car parks. He noted the request for Overview & Scrutiny's involvement in the annual consultation on the permit charge. Councillor Evans asked why the introduction of charges at County Hall had not been prioritised in order to "lead by example". The Chief Officer explained that the programme of introduced charges was based on resources available and work required on modifications to Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO).

Following concerns raised by Councillor Evans on the need to determine residents' ability to pay in areas of high deprivation, the Deputy Leader said that the proposed levels of charges were deemed affordable for individuals who owned and maintained their own cars.

It was pointed out by Councillor Ann Minshull that some residents who did not own a car, particularly the elderly, may require parking provision to enable their families to visit. Whilst speaking in support of County Hall charges applying to Members, she commented that some attended more frequently than others and asked whether a permit or parking meter would be used. The Chief Officer explained that the opportunity for residents to purchase a permit for their visitors

would be incorporated in the policy and that the charges at County Hall could be paid by either facility, depending on the decision of the individual. Councillor Minshull also felt that the proposed charge for the Theatr was unfair and expressed concerns about the potential congestion on side streets where there was no parking for flats above shops. The Chief Officer reiterated plans to review the impact of the permit scheme after 12 months.

Councillor Mike Peers stressed the need for parking charges to be proportionate to help encourage use of town centres, and asked whether a viability study had been undertaken to assess the impact of the schemes with a suggestion of a free period of short-stay parking as a compromise. He pointed out that the report contained no information on how parking projections for each town had been reached, as previously requested, and that the reason for removing charges in Caergwrle due to the detrimental effect on retail trade also applied to other areas of the county. In addition, Councillor Peers spoke in support of the Council retaining all of the revenue generated from the county's policy but raised concerns about introducing charges in Buckley and Queensferry due to the availability of free parking at nearby Broughton Park. In relation to the zero permit charge for Council employees and modern apprentices whose salaries were on or below the national living wage, he pointed out that individuals in a similar position employed in the private sector would not have the same advantage when parking in town centres. On the projected income from penalty charge notices on the financial model, he commented on the difficulties in enforcement of on-street parking situations and suggested that this figure could be reviewed with a view to relaxing some of the conditions on car parks.

The Deputy Leader replied that the comments on the viability of town centres had been raised during consultation with town/community councils and that the decision to charge 20p for two hours or £1 per day was considered to be fair. He did not believe that the introduction of charges would be detrimental to areas and pointed out that all feedback from the consultation process, including Overview & Scrutiny, had been taken into account. However, difficult decisions needed to be made which may not suit everyone.

Following a query by Councillor Haydn Bateman, the Chief Officer provided explanation on the level of proposed contributions to local town/community councils where the charges were above the county-wide base level. In response to a request by Councillor Bateman for the proposed 50p charge in Mold to apply to three hours rather than two, the Chief Officer explained the need for consistency across all areas of the county and said that whilst rates differed, the bands were fixed. The Deputy Leader agreed to take the request into consideration.

The Chair and Councillor Brian Lloyd pointed out that local traders had also stated their preference for the 50p charge to apply to three hours.

This view was shared by Councillor Ray Hughes who said that the extra time would assist car users with restricted mobility. He also queried the variances in charges proposed for car parks in Mold.

Councillor Joe Johnson remarked on the effect of the policy on taxi drivers working in town centres where returns were prohibited. The Parking Manager

said that the policy would need to apply across the board and that there was an option to apply for a daily permit.

Councillor Clive Carver, who was present in the public gallery, was permitted to speak on the item. He expressed his gratitude that charges for Hawarden had been removed from the proposals and asked whether the ticket machines would be electronically linked to County Hall. The Deputy Leader replied that this facility was not included as part of the proposals. The Chief Officer provided explanation on the proposed off-street residential permits where more demand was expected.

In response to a question from Councillor Cindy Hinds, the Deputy Leader confirmed that there would be no charge for vehicles displaying a blue badge, parking in yellow disabled bays across Flintshire.

Councillor Hinds commented that charges would not deter her from parking in town centres as she recognised that the Council had more important priorities to deal with. The Chair added that the charges appeared reasonable when compared to other car parks.

Councillor Curtis asked that recommendation 4.06 in the report include provision for the Committee to receive a report back on the annual review of residents' parking permits. The Deputy Leader confirmed that the report would be submitted to the Committee prior to Cabinet. He added that the comments raised at today's meeting would be shared with Cabinet.

On being put to the vote, the recommendations were carried. Councillors Evans and Peers requested that their votes against the decision be recorded.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the Committee recommend Cabinet approves the County Parking Strategy at Appendix 1 to the report;
- (b) That the Committee recommend Cabinet approves the Council wide charging sheet which lists the proposed charging bands (**Appendix 2**) and provides delegated authority to the Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment, to review the charging arrangements applied at each car park on an annual basis;
- (c) That the Committee recommend Cabinet approves the introduction of car parking permit schemes at County Hall and Flint to allow staff and visitors to utilise the car parks within the local parking strategies;
- (d) That the Committee recommend Cabinet approves the proposals to make a contribution to any T&CC with car parking charges above the base rate as highlighted in the Council wide summary charging sheet - detailed in paragraph 3.16 of this report;

- (e) That the Committee recommend Cabinet approves the proposed charge for the residents parking permit and the continued rollout of the residents parking scheme if required by the local parking strategy;
- (f) That the Committee recommend Cabinet grants delegated authority to the Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation), following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment, to review the proposed charge for residents' parking permits on an annual basis and report back to the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee; and
- (g) That the Committee recommends that a report detailing the progress made in delivering the proposals is brought back to the committee in 12 months' time.

**52. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE**

There was one member of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.40 am)

.....

**Chair**