

VALUE AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday 5 November 2012

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillors Mills (Chair), Rowley (Vice-Chair), Fooks, Gotch, Haines, Kennedy, Malik, McCready, Sanders, Simmons and Van Nooijen.

OFFICERS PRESENT:

21. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mohammed Niaz Abbasi, Anne-Marie Canning (Councillor Gill Sanders attended as a substitute) and James Fry (Councillor Beverley Clack attended as a substitute).

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

23. CALL-IN - PARKING IN PARKING AREAS ADJACENT TO PARKS - MONITORING

The Head of Law and Governance submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) following a call-in by the Chair of the Value and Performance Scrutiny Committee of the decision by the City Executive Board held on 12th September 2012 concerning Parking in Parks Review. An extract from the minutes of this meeting plus additional information concerning income and penalties was also submitted.

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and outlined the reasons for the call-in that should have been taken into consideration when the original decision was taken:

- (i) The impact on neighbouring areas;
- (ii) The balance between revenue from charges and penalties;
- (iii) Whether there are other factors in play which might be distorting the comparison of user numbers.

The Committee had invited local residents to attend the meeting to give information on the affect of the charges in their neighbourhoods. A number of residents had chose to submit details in writing (appended to these minutes) while others who had also submitted responses in advance (details appended to these minutes) chose to come to the meeting and address the Committee.

Suzanne Mclvor, from the Harbord Road Area Residents' Association spoke and highlighted the following:

- (i) Main cause of the problems in Harbord Road was the charging for parking in Cutteslowe Park;

- (ii) Parked cars blocking resident's driveways;
- (iii) Informed that a review was to be funded by the Council and did not understand why this had not taken place;
- (iv) Complaints made to both City and County Councillors;
- (v) No thought had been given to the wider issues before the charging had been introduced.

Barbara Hossier a local resident spoke and highlighted the following:

- (i) Cars were parking on both sides of the road turning the road into a single track;
- (ii) Residents were unable to reverse out of their driveways because of the parking;
- (iii) The issue was made worse during the weekends, school holidays and days when events took place in the park;
- (iv) A white line in front of resident's driveways along with a single yellow line on the road would help the situation;
- (v) Large vehicles including many Council vehicles used the road to access the park.

Following the presentations by the local residents, the Committee debated the call-in reasons and the issues raised by the residents. Comments raised included:

- Parking got worse since the introduction of the charges;
- County had proposed a scheme which was too restrictive to residents and so a new proposal was being worked on;
- The Park was not used by commuters;
- Nearly £10k had been raised from penalties, but only £2k from charges;
- An hour free parking would help the situation;
- Council had to introduce charges due to the cut in grant funding from Central Government;
- County Councillors could use the Area Stewardship/Locality Funding to help the situation;
- There is a displacement problem and it was clear this had been taken into consideration by the City Executive Board;
- Cutteslowe seems to have a particular problem;
- City Council underspent in 2011/12 by £500k and some of this should have been used to ease the problems such as a free first hour.

Councillor Colin Cook, Board Member, City Development attended the meeting as his portfolio included car parks. He said that charging had to be introduced to balance the budget due to the cut in Government funding. He highlighted that only 2 complaints had been received by the Council and 3 by the Police, although 2 of the 3 received by the Police were in the previous year. He said that the money raised from these charges helped the Council to provide front line services. The Council was no longer in a position to provide some services free of charge. He added that the charges formed part of the Council's budget which was being cut year on year and he hoped that the City Council could work with the County Council on the parking issues as the County Council was the enforcing authority.

The Committee agreed:

- (a) To disagree with the call-in.
- (b) To recommend the City Executive Board:
 - (1) To allocate additional funding to allow for improved signage at the car parks adjacent to Parks, better explaining the charges;
 - (2) To continue to monitor the charges and to undertake a review with the next six months.
- (c) The Value and Performance Scrutiny Committee to revisit the issue, six months from the date of this meeting.

The meeting started at 5.30 pm and ended at 6.20 pm

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Minute Item 23

Value and Performance Scrutiny Committee: Monday 5th November 2012

The following comments are submitted by Suzanne McIvor as representative of The Harbord Road Area Residents' Association. The car park referred to is the main Cutteslowe Park car park at the end of Harbord Road.

BACKGROUND

- During the "consultation" prior to the introduction of parking charges a large number of representations were made to the Council and to this Scrutiny Committee. The concern was that park-users would simply park for free in the side roads adjacent to the park. (This concern was also recognised by the Council in the City Executive Board Report which initially proposed the charges (dated 8th Sept 2010)).
- **As predicted parking charges have caused real problems for residents of the roads adjacent to Cutteslowe Park. Many park-users choose to park on side roads and walk just a few steps to avoid the parking charges. Although Harbord Road has the greatest problems many other roads are also affected, for example in the Kendall Crescent Area.**
- In view of the large number of park-users and peak usage at certain times this causes serious congestion in Harbord Road. **Park-users park either side of narrow driveways and opposite driveways. As Harbord Road is only three cars wide residents cannot get their cars out of their driveways with the problem being greater for the more elderly residents of which there are many.**
- **The area close to the park gets especially congested and the mixture of pedestrians and cars opposite the turning to Park Close is dangerous.**
- For those who do not know this area, as well as being used for leisure purposes by many people, a large number of groups use Cutteslowe Park. Examples are Summertown Stars (in very large numbers on Saturday), runners for the growing Saturday Parkrun, other footballers, a large number of dog walkers, CPMR – the miniature railway (can have 400 visitors on a busy afternoon). It is also used as an overflow car park for the BRN hockey / tennis club.

COMMENT ON THE REPORT "PARKING IN THE PARKS REVIEW" (dated 12th Sept 2012)

- **The Customer Feedback Section 7 of the report produced by Mr Summers is not accurate. The complaints made to local Councillors have been relentless from the time the charges were introduced.**
- **There has been no review of the effects of the introduction of parking charges and any small enquiry would have quickly revealed the extent of the problems.**
- **It is not merely a claim that park-users are using Harbord Road as an alternative to parking within the car park, it is the truth. The effects on residents are considerable, worsening and widespread.**
- As the report states, The County Council is currently consulting with residents in Harbord Road. However, the consultation actually covers a much wider area than just Harbord Road and the proposals are currently being extensively rewritten as a result of the responses received.
- **During this consultation, most people of the many who responded cited the introduction of parking charges as the main reasons for the parking problems in the area, particularly Harbord Road.**
- The County Council has stated that there are insufficient funds for a Residents' Parking Scheme so the outcome may well be an unsatisfactory compromise.

PROPOSAL

- **It would not be unreasonable to expect a review of the current situation rather than this inadequately researched report.**
- **Residents would like to see the parking charges abolished because this would have an immediate and beneficial impact on surrounding residential areas.**
- A less satisfactory alternative would be to remove the charges for parking 0 – 1 hours as this would take a lot of users out of the charging bands so they would use the park car park rather than the residential streets.

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Comments from local residents who are unable to attend the meeting in person – Value and Performance Scrutiny Committee, 5th November 2012

From Pete Goodgame, Templar Road

This council must be naive to think that people will pay to park their cars when they can park for nothing in the side streets.

Since the meters have been in the Park the parking problem in the side streets has got worse and worse. I have asked people where they have come from. Some as far as Wantage friends and family have told them to park in the side streets so they don't have to pay.

People that use the pavilion are now parking in the side streets as are the Saturday runners and the Summertown all stars.

There was no forward thinking on behalf of this council. They have caused this problem so it is down to them to sort it out, as it is only going to get worse in the future.

From Denise Daly, Cavendish Road

Many people use the park who don't live within walking distance and have to drive there, particularly older people (with or without dogs); for them it is a pleasant sociable outing, especially for those who live alone.

We are encouraged to keep healthy and exercise - what better place to do it than in our local park. Car parking charges will put people off enjoying what should be a free facility. Already people are using side roads to park to avoid charges. This has led to an unsatisfactory situation for the residents there. I understand that now there is a plan for private residential parking to be considered – would the Council please drop the parking charges, and give us all a free walk in the park.

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