

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee**
held in Committee Room 1, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxon
at 2.00pm on **Thursday 11 October 2018**

PRESENT:

Councillors: Alaa Al-Yousuf, Laetisia Carter, Andrew Coles, Derek Cotterill, Pete Dorward, Harry Eaglestone, Ted Fenton (in the Chair), Gill Hill, Liz Leffman, Martin McBride, Alex Postan, Carl Rylett and Harry St. John.

24. ELECTION OF CHAIRMEN

In the absence of both the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, the Committee Officer invited nominations for the election of a Chairman for the duration of the meeting.

It was duly proposed and seconded that Councillor Ted Fenton be elected Chairmen of the meeting.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Ted Fenton be elected Chairman for the duration of the meeting.

25. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12 July 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

26. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor David Harvey, and the following resignations and temporary appointments were reported:-

Councillor Cotterill for Councillor Hilary Fenton
Councillor St John for Councillor Bishop

27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Coles declared an interest in respect of Agenda Item no. 7 as he was an employee of Stagecoach and a Member of the Community Transport Committee.

Councillor Dorward declared an interest in respect of Agenda Item no. 6 as he had been in recent communication with Mr. Ashley Smith from the Windrush Against Sewage Group (WASP).

There were no declarations of interest from Officers.

28. PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC

Councillor Laura Price of Oxfordshire County Council and Witney Town Council was present to speak in relation to Agenda Item no. 7 (review of on-street parking in Corn Street and Church Green, Witney).

In speaking to the item, Councillor Price explained that she was glad to see that the Council had undertaken a review of parking in the area, and considered that the issue was becoming more challenging. Councillor Price informed the Committee that she considered the alterations to restrictions in the areas around Corn Street and Church Green would have the biggest impacts on workers in the town centre, who used the areas to park for the duration of the working day. She explained that the Council had made no

recommendations in regards to a shared-use permit and that consequently, she felt this would only push non-residents out of the town centre. Councillor Price highlighted that any intention to permit authorised pavement parking would only set a dangerous precedent across the district by limiting pedestrian safety and, with regards to Corn Street; added that removal of traffic calming on the street would only lead to increased danger for children from the nearby school crossing the road. In conclusion, Councillor Price stated that she felt the best approach would be to introduce a shared-use permit for non-residents to use for a maximum period of two hours throughout the day, for which there had been a desire by both residents and visitors.

Councillor Fenton enquired if Councillor Price considered that by changing restrictions in the areas, this would simply force the issue outwards to other areas of the town, eventually resulting in a larger review needing to be undertaken. In response, Councillor Price explained that she considered a review should be undertaken on a larger area than just Corn Street as the street was a mixed residential area and had parking restrictions that other parts of the town did not have. Councillor Price also drew the Committee's attention to the survey results which she felt highlighted the areas of the town that needed to be concentrated on.

Councillor Leffman questioned how a permit system would be managed. Councillor Price explained that the County Council had four potential options and that the aim was that all permit holders could park without restrictions in the areas, as opposed to the current systems which necessitated cars being moved after a certain time periods.

In response to Councillor Price's comments, the Group Manager, Council Advisory Services explained that the Council's proposals were clearly contained within the circulated report which explained that a permit scheme would be shared use with unrestricted parking for permit holders but limited waiting for two hours for non-permit holders. The current issue in Church Green was that there were a number of parking restrictions for variable periods which was confusing. The concern was that introducing permit parking would substantially reduce the amount of limited waiting spaces available which could push motorists into surrounding streets. She added that whilst the Council agreed that parking on pavements brought additional safety concerns, a reduction in pavement size on Corn Street in areas where the pavement was extremely wide could enable echelon parking, although the cost would most likely be unrealistic and therefore had not been put forward as a recommendation.

The Manager also confirmed that she had met with County Council Officers and discussed the nearby school and that proposals for a loading bay could complement proposals to improve school safety. She added that the residential street Highworth Place had also been raised as both Councils were aware that refuse collection vehicles were unable to access properties due to parked vehicles blocking the narrow road. The police had also raised concerns that emergency vehicles could not access residents' properties. The cars were not owned by residents and residents were keen for restrictions to be imposed. It was therefore proposed that restrictions in Highworth Place were incorporated into any Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) changes in the Corn Street/Church Green area. The Manager explained that Permit parking was not being recommended so as not to have any ripple effects on nearby areas and because it was considered that there was insufficient support for it.

Councillor Postan enquired if Councillor Price was aware of any work the County Council had undertaken in regards to the possibility of number plate recognition for any potential scheme. In response, Councillor Price explained that she was not aware of any work undertaken by Officers but explained the issue mainly related to workers who ‘dumped’ their cars in the areas during the weekdays.

Councillor Carter expressed her concern at the equability of any scheme and explained that the suggested scheme would in essence be ‘gifting a space’ to those local residents and that this had the potential to cause difficulties across other parts of the District where similar problems were also being experienced. Councillor Dorward explained that he supported this view and added that none of the town’s car parks were located far from the shops and therefore the need for potential schemes should be judged in that context.

29. REVIEW OF ON-STREET PARKING IN CORN STREET AND CHURCH GREEN, WITNEY

The Chairman announced that he had decided to vary the order of business to consider this matter at this stage, in view of the submission and discussion reported at 28 above and the presence of Councillor Price for the item.

The Committee received and considered the report of the Group Manager Council Advisory Services, which informed it of the responses to the public consultation on parking in Corn Street and Church Green, and highlighted the implications of the responses and the recommendations that were proposed to be made to the County Council, following consideration of the matter by Cabinet on 14 November.

In presenting the report, the Group Manager informed the Committee that the overall problems were the nature and locations of the two areas and that the issue was not easy to resolve. She explained that an open public survey undertaken by the Council had received 709 responses and showed that the majority of those parking in Church Street were doing so to go shopping in the town centre. The survey also confirmed that the greatest pressure on the area was on weekdays between 8am and 6pm and if space was unavailable in Church Street; drivers would park in the town’s car parks as opposed to the surrounding side roads when there were no spaces in Corn Street.

The Group Manager also apprised the Committee that there was no support for a change in regards to yellow lines and there had only been around 50% support for a permit parking scheme with a charge. In regards to issues with a nearby school, she also explained that as there was no signage regarding the zig zags, these markings were unenforceable. With reference to Corn Street, the Group Manager added that a no-stopping bay was currently being used for parking by delivery drivers to businesses and those using the nearby takeaways and that further publicity would be undertaken, coupled with continued enforcement, in an attempt to stop this activity. She also confirmed that discussions with bus companies would be undertaken by Officers.

Councillor St John enquired whether a survey had been undertaken in regards to the use of the town’s multi-storey car park. In response, the Group Manager explained that the car park was well-used as each floor constituted a different permitted maximum-stay time, with the top floor being most used by town workers for an all-day period.

Councillor Leffman expressed her view that a number of those who had objected to the implementation of a parking scheme were visitors to the town who should be being

directed to park in the town's car parks. She added that, given this, there seemed to be a balance in-favour of a parking scheme at Church Green.

In response, the Group Manager explained that there all motorists needed to be considered as anyone paying road tax had an equal right to park on the Highway, and that there was support both for and against one permit being given, but highlighted that many residents may own more than one car. She also explained that the Council, if minded to approve a parking scheme, would aim for a virtual scheme to register; enabling permits to be swapped between vehicles registered to an address. Charges would not be for parking but for administering the scheme and for increased enforcement.

Councillor Cotterill questioned whether the Council would enforce any parking scheme between certain hours and added that he wished to see more car parking space made available on The Leys with CCTV and signage, with overflow onto Church Green. The Group Manager responded that a permit would entitle residents to park for as long as they wished but that The Leys was under the control of the Town Council and the suggestion was contrary to what the Town Council had been considering.

Councillor Postan expressed his concern regarding any implementation of a scheme as suggested and highlighted that, in his view, the Council had failed to recognise technology, specifically number plate recognition, in regards to future plans for any potential scheme. The Group Manager informed the Committee that number plate recognition could not be used legally, but confirmed that the Council had undertaken research in regards to technology in the Council's car parks, such as Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCPs).

Councillor Coles commented that his main concern was in relation to the loss of 255 parking spaces at Woodford Way which had been a key area for workers to use for parking and raised additional concern in regards to the recommendations by Officers in regards to Corn Street. He added that, in his view, a lack of enforcement had been the main cause of the situation and explained that opening up Church Green to two lanes of one way traffic would only prove dangerous.

RESOLVED: That, in the opinion of the Committee;

- (a) a Parking Scheme should not be introduced in the Corn Street and Church Green areas, despite the suggested support of residents as this 'gifted' a valuable town centre parking space to some residents of the town, whilst potentially excluding others;
- (b) increased enforcement should be provided by the Council in regards to tackling inappropriate parking in the areas around Corn Street and Church Green; and
- (c) increased publicity should be focussed on the availability of free parking within the Council's town centre car parks.

30. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2018/2019

The Committee received and considered the report of the Head of Democratic Services which gave an update on progress in relation to its Work Programme for 2018/2019.

The Chairman informed members of the recent successful Water Day meeting organised by Councillor Harvey and attended by approximately 80 people including representatives from Thames Water, the Environment Agency and the WASP Group.

Councillor Coles, on behalf of the Committee, wished his thanks to be recorded to Councillor Harvey for his work in relation to the meeting.

The Group Manager Council Advisory Services informed the Committee that a report would be presented at the next Committee Meeting in regards to fly-tipping.

Councillor St John commented that he felt more publicity was needed in regards to fly-tipping, to which Councillor Coles also added that a recent Penalty Charge Notice had been served by the Council for fly-tipping in Moorland Road but had received no publicity. The Group Manager stated that she would report these comments to the Head of Communications.

RESOLVED: That progress on the Committee's Work Programme for 2018/2019 be noted.

31. CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received and considered the report of the Head of Democratic Services, which gave Members the opportunity to comment on the Cabinet Work Programme published on 18 September 2018.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Work Programme published on 18 September 2018 be noted.

32. PROVISION OF IN-CAB TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE THE WASTE SERVICE

The Group Manager, Council Advisory Services provided a verbal update to the Committee. She explained that there had been a number of issues with the new waste collection service with high levels of missed collections when the service was launched, but at present there was no system in place for the accurate recording of issues by the collection crews. She explained the Council's intention was to install a tablet style device into the cabs of collection vehicles, featuring a pre-installed route. This facility would enable crews to report any issues with collecting bins including if the bin had failed to be presented, featured non-recyclable items or was inaccessible.

It also meant that issues such as Assisted Collections or properties which had suffered repeat missed collections could be highlighted on the system so that crews had to indicate that they had made the collection before the system would enable them to move on to the next street. The web-based system would be seen in real time by customer services who could then respond quickly to the customer. The system should reduce missed collections and improve customer service.

Initially it had been planned to procure an in-cab system but with the development of the Council's digital transformation project and the transformation of Customer services, in-cab was being embedded in these projects. An in-cab system could then be built onto the digital platform being developed for the Council by Salesforce or would be procured separately if that was decided to be the best route. She concluded that it was hoped that this would lead to the Council's service being more customer focussed and would also help to reduce costs from crews returning to missed collections.

Councillor McBride expressed his support for this and suggested that provision should also be made for members of the public to report any potential issues with collections.

In response to various questions, the Group Manager reported that all collection vehicles were tracked by GPS and that this assisted greatly if there were any issues with collection

vehicles such as breakdowns; that the in-cab system would be web based; that the system would be simple to use and training would be given as the Council recognised that there were some potential issues in regards to language barriers with some crews; and that there were no definitive costs or start date yet known, but it was anticipated that this would be around October 2019.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

33. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Councillor Ted Fenton asked:

“How many/what proportion of the new blue-lidded recycling bins have had to be replaced because of damage since their introduction? Is this greater or less than the existing grey residual household waste bins and is it an acceptable figure? If it is a higher figure than expected do we need to consider a higher specification bin, if available, more staff training or is it the cost within budget?”

In response, the Group Manager Council Advisory Services explained that, reflecting upon data from 1 January to 10 October 2018, the number of swapped 'like for like' blue lidded recycling bins had been 1,166 in comparison to the number of refuse bins being 81. She reported that, having researched collection methods, Officers did not consider there was a problem with the way the bins were being handled or emptied by collection crews. The Manager confirmed that the Council had now changed supplier as it was considered that the hinges may be weak, leading to breakages. Broken bins were refurbished and reused where possible or alternatively recycled.

Councillor Coles requested that this item be added to the Committee's Work Programme to enable future updates to be presented to the Committee.

The meeting closed at 3.45 pm

CHAIRMAN