

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 10 DECEMBER 2019

REPORT BY CHAIRMAN OF TASK AND FINISH GROUP

REPORT OF A TASK AND FINISH GROUP REVIEW OF ELEMENTS OF  
EAST HERTS DISTRICT COUNCIL PARKING POLICY

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

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**Purpose/Summary of Report**

- To report on the work of a Member Task and Finish Group established to review elements of East Herts District Council parking policy.

<b>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:</b>	
<b>That:</b>	
<b>(A)</b>	<b>The findings and recommendations of the Task and Finish Group set out in paragraphs 2.2, 2.3, 2.7, 2.12, 2.16 and 2.17 be noted;</b>
<b>(B)</b>	<b>The Committee confirms its support for these recommendations to the Executive;</b>
<b>(C)</b>	<b>The Committee recommends adoption by the Council of the modified Resident Permit Zone Policy and Operational Guidance set out in Essential Reference Papers 'D(i) and (ii)'; and</b>
<b>(D)</b>	<b>The Committee supports the Group's recommendation that it be requested to undertake further scrutiny in the areas identified in paragraph 2.18 to this report.</b>

1.0 Background

1.1 On 11 June 2019 the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee elected to examine elements of East Herts

Council's current parking policies as part of its work programme for the 2019/20 civic year.

- 1.2 A Member Task and Finish Group was established to undertake this review. The Group was comprised of:
  - Councillor Holly Drake (Chair)
  - Councillor John Wyllie
  - Councillor Sophie Bell
  - Councillor Mari Stevenson
  - Councillor Ian Devonshire
  
- 1.3 The terms of reference agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were to review the following policy areas:
  - Town centre parking policies, focussing on Bishop's Stortford and Hertford, but looking also at the needs of other towns and villages
  - Resident Permit Zone (RPZ) policy
  - Parking standards within planning policies
  - Climate change/sustainability implications of parking policy
  
- 1.4 At its meeting on 23 July the Task and Finish Group agreed that due to time constraints the strand of work relating to East Herts planning policy would be deleted from the programme.
  
- 1.5 Since East Herts Council adopted its Transport and Parking Strategy in 2011/12 a number of changes have been made to parking policies and we are witnessing shifting attitudes towards the role of parking in tackling global challenges such as climate change and sustainable living.
  
- 1.6 Whilst the remit of the Task and Finish Group was not to produce a new parking strategy for the Council, its terms of reference, the evidence gathered and conclusions reached all form a useful basis for such an endeavour. It is hoped the findings of the Group will be considered as part of the emerging discussions and priority setting exercise being

undertaken through the emerging Corporate Plan (due to be recommended to full Council in early 2020).

- 1.7 This report picks up on individual recommendations against each of the policy areas identified in the group's terms of reference; however some general conclusions have also been reached through the process of deliberation and analysis over the past five months.
- 1.8 The main conclusion of the Group is that the Council's approach to parking policy needs to serve the needs of the following stakeholders:
  - Residents
  - Commuters
  - Business employees
  - Town centre shoppers/ visitors
- 1.9 It was acknowledged that an individual can find themselves in any of these categories depending on the purpose of their journey. With that in mind parking policy needs to balance the needs of all these stakeholders and offer a fair and equitable solution for all.
- 1.10 Equally it was acknowledged that use of the car will remain an important feature for East Herts residents in the future, given the geographic make-up of the county, but that there is unlikely to be wide support within the public sector for investing in new car parking facilities. The Council's parking policies therefore need to address the fundamental challenge of making best use of a finite resource as well as encouraging behaviour change amongst stakeholders along with demand management.
- 1.11 The issue of car park charges as an important tool for addressing behaviour change was acknowledged; however the remit of the Task and Finish Group was not to address directly tariffs in Council owned car parks. Accordingly, no explicit recommendations have been made in this area. It is anticipated, however, that emerging Corporate Plan priorities,

as referenced in 1.6 (above) will be mindful of the overall findings and recommendations of this Group.

- 1.12 Lastly, the group noted that the Council is only one of the organisations playing a role in parking provision within the district and that private sector transport operators also have a responsibility to address these challenges.
- 1.13 The general conclusions for each of the policy areas reviewed can be found below:

Town centre parking policies, focussing on Bishop's Stortford and Hertford, but looking also at the needs of other towns and villages:

- Making better use of existing car park capacity to accommodate town centre shoppers/ visitors, employees and commuters is a key priority.
- Employees of town centre businesses should be recognised as a distinct set of stakeholders where a different approach should be considered.
- Rail commuters should be discouraged from using town centre parking facilities where possible.
- Parking policy in Bishop's Stortford should support the aspirations set out in the AECOM report.

Resident Permit Zone (RPZ) policy

- Residents living in RPZs value them and the terms of operation of existing schemes should not be adjusted.
- Many residents would like to have RPZs implemented in their local area and the current policy and process to enable this should be made less stringent.

Climate change/sustainability implications of parking policy

- Parking policy should support the overall direction of travel set out in the County Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP4).

- Supporting investment in modal shift is a key means to alleviate both climate change and pressure on parking capacity.
- We have a pro-active approach to support for e-vehicles and this approach should be built upon.

## 2.0 Report

### Town Centre Parking Policies (Part 1- Bishop's Stortford)

- 2.1 On 23 July the Task and Finish Group took evidence from representatives of the Bishop's Stortford Business Improvement District (BID). It noted also the publication in May 2019 of a Bishop's Stortford Parking Strategy and Action Plan (AECOM) which was felt to offer an accurate and comprehensive analysis of the current situation in the town together with a range of useful strategy proposals.
- 2.2 The Group's principle findings and recommendations from this session are summarised below. They are developed in greater detail in **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**.
- i) Design and implement measures to encourage rail commuters to park in station car parks rather than Council owned facilities on the basis that this will increase the availability of town centre parking spaces for town workers and shoppers.
  - ii) Revise the designation of Council owned car parks, placing most long stay provision at the edge of the town centre with charges set at a level that supports town centre workers in particular.
  - iii) In parallel with (ii), improve the accessibility and availability of short stay parking in the town centre with the aim of promoting the town's economic wellbeing. This to include an increase to the number of limited waiting, free bays where possible, throughout the town.
  - iv) Introduce a permit scheme for employees of town centre businesses to incentivise them to park away from the

town centre (through the shared use of Resident Permit Zones (RPZ) where possible).

- v) Better publicise the existing on-street business permit scheme in the 'Chantry' RPZ, widen the criteria for eligibility for permits and offer more flexible payment terms such as monthly/quarterly payment options.
- vi) Review Blue Badge provision in Council-owned car parks with a view to moving towards the 6% proportion recommended by the DfT where there is demonstrable demand.

### Town Centre Parking Policies (Part 2 - Hertford)

2.3 At its meeting on 22 August the Task and Finish Group took evidence from a representative of the Hertford business community and from Hertford Town Council. The Group's findings and recommendations from this session are summarised below. They are developed in greater detail in **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**.

- i) Improve the quality and quantity of on-street directional signage to the town's car parks. Including the use of digital availability signage where possible (use of S106 from developments to fund this)
- ii) Support offering town centre workers use of the Wallfields staff car park at weekends due to the additional pressure on parking in Hertford at present arising from the temporary loss of the Bircherley Green multi-storey car park.
- iii) Implement a permit parking scheme whereby town workers can park at a lower charge in lesser used, edge of town car parks.
- iv) Review Blue Badge provision in car parks with a view to moving towards the 6% proportion recommended by the DfT, where there is demonstrable demand.

## Parking Policies in Other Towns

- 2.4 At its meeting on 13 November the Task and Finish Group took evidence from Parish Councillors from Stanstead Abbots and St Margarets and from the District Councillor for Watton at Stone to gain insights into the parking situation in our smaller communities.
- 2.5 Task and Finish Group Members noted that many of the problems described by the representatives from these villages appear more operational in nature than policy oriented and suggested that many could be mitigated through liaison between the villages' representatives and the Council's Parking Services team.
- 2.6 The Group accepted also that many policy options that might be appropriate in a larger town would almost certainly not be suitable in smaller towns and villages and explained the importance of making local Councillors aware of significant problems in order for them to lobby the appropriate body for a solution.
- 2.7 The Group's principle findings and recommendations from this session are summarised below. They are developed in greater detail in **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**.
- i) Support the Parish Council in an approach to the provider of the free car park at Watton at Stone station, requesting that they increase the number of parking spaces in the station car park.
  - ii) Encourage the provision of improved, secure bicycle parking facilities at ALL stations.
  - iii) Encourage the delivery of improved public transport, including 'on demand' services that will link with train arrivals and departures and serve the needs of residents of outlying villages who currently have to drive to St Margarets or Watton at Stone to catch the train.

## Resident Permit Zone Policy

- 2.8 At its meeting on 24 September the Task and Finish Group took evidence from two East Herts District Councillors – Cllr George Cutting (Bishop’s Stortford) and Cllr Jonathan Kaye (Ware). Both identified significant and growing problems with the availability of on-street resident parking, with a growing influx of parking in residential streets by commuters, town centre workers and (in the case of Bishop’s Stortford) ‘airport parkers’.
- 2.9 Councillors Cutting and Kaye identified Resident Permit Zones (RPZs) as part of the solution to these problems and requested the existing RPZ Policy and Operational Guidance be revised, in part to lower the threshold for eligibility. It was accepted that new schemes must be designed to operate at maximum efficiency, with non-resident parking allowed on a managed basis where this could be achieved without significant detriment to residents.
- 2.10 The Task and Finish Group requested also that a short resident survey be undertaken to gauge the reviews of residents already within an RPZ and those not currently in a scheme area on the role of RPZs in their community.
- 2.11 The survey elicited one thousand responses which were reviewed at a meeting of the Task and Finish Group on 15 October.

Key survey findings include that a majority of residents living within a scheme value the benefits it brings and that a majority of residents in non-RPZ areas badly impacted by non-resident parking would like to be considered for a scheme as part of a package of measures to prioritise residential parking in their predominantly residential streets. A summary of the responses is offered in **Essential Reference Paper ‘C(i)’**. Problems with ‘airport parking’ were also cited by a



considerable number of Bishop's Stortford residents and these are summarised in **Essential Reference Paper 'C(ii)'**.

2.12 The Group's principle findings and recommendations from the two Task and Finish sessions on RPZs are summarised below. These are developed in greater detail in **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**.

- i) Review the current RPZ Policy and Operational Guidance, in part to create more favourable eligibility criteria and terms on which new schemes might be awarded and operate. (The proposed amended version of both documents is offered as **Essential Reference Paper 'D(i) and (ii)'**).
- ii) Require that through their design, new RPZs maximise parking availability to non-resident motorists on a managed basis where this can be achieved at little or no detriment to residents (to include the creation of permit-based parking for business workers where appropriate).
- iii) Require that the implications of a proposed RPZ for the wider parking and traffic management situation in the town be fully understood and appropriate mitigations identified before that scheme is granted.
- iv) Require that scheme set-up costs are recouped over a defined number of years through the permit charge levied against residents within that RPZ.
- v) As a quid pro quo for agreeing to (ii) above, the permit charge to residents to be offset by the revenue generated from the sale of permits to businesses and their staff.

#### Climate Change/Sustainability and Parking Policy

2.13 At its meeting on 13 November the Task and Finish Group received a joint presentation from Trevor Brennan (HCC) and David Thorogood (EHDC) concerning the sustainability and climate change aspects of parking policy.

- 2.14 The central role of the County Council's Local Transport Plan 2018-2031 (LTP4) and its impact on parking policy was explained. Members noted that just as the Task and Finish Group has effectively arrived at a hierarchy of provision in situations where parking is a contested resource, with residents at the top of the pyramid, so the County Council has created a hierarchy in respect of highway users, with measures to discourage journeys at the top of the pyramid and any additional provision to meet the needs of private motorists at the bottom.
- 2.15 Air quality and congestion problems arising primarily from the use of privately owned petrol and diesel vehicles were discussed and the need to plan for and support a rapid growth in the number of electric vehicles was also underlined.
- 2.16 The Group's principle findings and recommendations from this session are summarised below. They are developed in greater detail in **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**.
- i) Establish an initial 5% of bays in EHDC car parks as electric vehicle (EV) charging bays and commit to increasing this proportion in anticipation of growing demand.
  - ii) Place a time limit on the use of EV charging bays to ensure an appropriate turnover of qualifying vehicles.
  - iii) Consider the erection of solar canopies where appropriate to generate electricity for possible sale to the National Grid.
  - iv) Support an investigation into options for the creation of on-street EV charging facilities, for example from lamp posts and raised kerbs.
  - v) Support the use of electric bicycles through the provision of dedicated charging facilities, including around stations.
  - vi) Implement variable message signage (VMS) to direct motorists to car parks with available spaces (and where appropriate to the location of those spaces within a car park). This is aimed at bearing down on the problem of

vehicles searching for available spaces which is known to contribute significantly to air pollution in town centres.

### Additional Recommendations

2.17 The Task and Finish Group made additional recommendations not directly related to the agreed review areas. These are summarised below and have been developed in greater detail in **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**.

- i) Ensure public transport services are commissioned and operational at the same time as major new residential developments are occupied, to encourage new residents to shift towards public transport use as a first choice.
- ii) Encourage the implementation of car clubs, ideally electric, alongside new residential developments plus the installation of additional electric vehicle charging points throughout the town.
- iii) The Council to instruct that a letter be sent to station car park operators challenging their current parking charges and requesting that they be reduced to something closer to the prevailing all day charge in our town centres.
- iv) Residents to be encouraged to notify MAG of 'airport parking' problems and the Council to be encouraged to publicise the number and website as widely as possible using its own website, social media and other forums. (The airport has a facility to report this but it not everyone is aware of it).

### Recommendations for Further Scrutiny

2.18 In the course of its deliberations the Task and Finish Group identified a number of areas where it recommends additional scrutiny is warranted, as follows:

- Policies and strategies to address 'airport parking' in primarily residential streets (primarily in Bishop's Stortford)

- Policies and strategies to address commuter parking in primarily residential streets.
- Policies and strategies to address the problem of overnight HGV parking in town centres and primarily residential streets.

### 3.0 Implications/Consultation

- 3.1 The Task and Finish Group acknowledged the tensions evident in parking policy. For example, whilst promoting economic wellbeing is a priority for our business communities and therefore the Council, should this generate additional car journeys with their deleterious effect on the environment and an already congested road network, the dis-benefits are likely to outweigh the benefits.
- 3.2 Similarly, whilst Resident Permit Zones are valued by their immediate beneficiaries, the risk of displacing non-resident vehicles to other residential streets must be understood and mitigated against through good scheme design. Whilst a positive effect of RPZs can be that more motorists use town centre car parks, many car parks are currently at or near capacity. Off-street provision must therefore be monitored carefully and utilised to maximum efficiency and new RPZs must be designed so as to allow non-resident parking on a managed basis, again to ensure the efficient use of valuable kerb space.
- 3.3 It is the view of the Task and Finish Group that, taken as a package, these proposed revisions to the Council's parking policies should help it make more efficient use of its existing parking resources both on and off street. The Group considers also that measures such as those proposed in the County Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP4) should be supported in that they will assist East Herts in its delivery of a number of overarching objectives such as its environmental commitments as well as aiding the County Council in its delivery of its network management duty as outlined in S18 of the Road Traffic Act 2004.

3.5 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

#### 4.0 Acknowledgements

4.1 The Task and Finish Group would like to thank the following who gave evidence during its sessions:

- Karen Burton and Gina Thomas – Bishop’s Stortford BID (23/07/19)
- Dominic Woods – Hertford traders representative and Ausra Bitinaite – Hertford Town Council (22/08/19)
- EHDC Cllrs Kaye and Cutting and Sally Andrews – EHDC interim Parking Manager (24/09/19)
- Sally Andrews – EHDC Interim Parking Manager and Andrew Pulham – EHDC Parking Manager 2005-2018 (15/10/19)
- Trevor Brennan – Strategy and Programme Manager, HCC and David Thorogood – Environmental Sustainability Co-ordinator, EHDC (13/11/19)
- Julia Davis – Stanstead Abbots Parish Councillor, Clare Ewing, St Margaret’s Parish Councillor and Joseph Dumont, Stanstead Abbots District Councillor (13/11/19)

#### Background Papers

- Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 11 June 2019  
<http://democracy.eastherts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=515&MId=3544&Ver=4&J=3>
- Draft minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5 November 2019  
<http://democracy.eastherts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=515&MId=3546&Ver=4&J=3>
- Notes of the meetings of the Task and Finish Group on:
  - 27 June 2019
  - 23 July 2019
  - 22 August 2019

- 24 September 2019
  - 15 October 2019
  - 13 November 2019
  - 19 November 2019
- 
- Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 11/06/19
  - HCC Local Transport Plan 4 (2018-2031)
  - Bishop's Stortford Parking Strategy (AECOM, May 2019)
  - Bishop's Stortford Report on RPZ Shared Use Potential (2016)
  - Hertford Parking Demand Study (Project Centre, March 2017)
  - Joint presentation from HCC and EHDC on sustainability and parking policy

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