

Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Tuesday, 29th March, 2016.

Present:- Councillors Plenty (Chair), Morris (Vice-Chair), Dar, Davis, N Holledge, Malik and Wright

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillor Strutton

Apologies for Absence:- Councillors Mansoor and Sohal

PART 1

52. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Dar declared his ownership of a licence from Slough Borough Council (SBC) to operate as a taxi driver.

53. Minutes of the last meeting held on 23rd February 2016

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting on 23rd February 2016 be approved as an accurate record.

54. Member Questions

No questions were received from members prior to the meeting.

55. Transport Issues

The agenda item covered the following transport issues:

Parking facilities for disabled and elderly residents

- Members expressed concerns that parking at some surgeries and health centres was further from the premises than stipulated in the Blue Badge scheme. However, it was the responsibility of health facilities to apply for disabled parking bays. In addition, such bays could be used by any blue badge holder (not just those using the facility). Finally, no applications had been received from GPs for several years.
- Disabled bays cost SBC £261.75 to put in place; this was not passed on to successful applicants.
- Most GP surgeries had on street parking facilities. Any applications for disabled parking would be judged on similar criteria for local residents.
- Blue Badge holders could park on yellow lines for up to 3 hours. This was on condition that a) the clock would be displayed and b) the parking would be safe (e.g. not too near a junction). However, precise definitions of 'safe' were not always clear based on Blue Badge scheme guidance. This made any decisions made by traffic wardens

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subject to challenge, and also made wardens less willing to make such judgement calls when presented with potential infringements.

- Disabled parking facilities, if placed nearer health centres, may prove to be more enforceable. However, police officers and traffic wardens were at liberty to ask drivers to move on as appropriate.
- SBC's review on residential disabled parking bays was undertaken in 2009. It was implemented in 2011, and since then a live list of disabled bays was updated on a rolling basis. Public notifications were vital to the maintenance of this live list. Where work was required to update facilities, SBC placed an order with Amey with SBC conducting a subsequent site visit to check completion of the work. However, it was inefficient to complete single orders so this work was undertaken periodically as a series of bulk orders.
- The possibility of charging for off street disabled parking was being discussed. Time limitations were also being assessed as an alternative option.
- There was no evidence that the issue of visitors from outside of Slough using disabled bays was a major concern. Should this change, the possibility of using byelaws to resolve the matter could be investigated.
- The list of live bays could be circulated to members on a regular basis.
- Parking was included within the Local Plan, and would be carried forward on this basis.

Yellow line parking

The Parking Service collated all requests for additional yellow lines over an annual period, and then appraised the potential for reducing restrictions. However, the reduction in resources allocated to this had caused a delay; this was the focus of work which was passed to Amey for completion in Spring 2016. This covered requests from 2013, 2014 and 2015 although there were difficulties with areas where pavement parking was in operation.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- The list of work to be done was a stand alone project and it was not anticipated that a similar backlog would arise in future. Additional officers had been trained in the area, increasing capacity, and also pavement parking had allowed for a more comprehensive outlook on the policy.
- The waiting restrictions scheme was mainly based on junction protection and road safety. Restrictions were also considered on the basis of requests from Councillors and residents, with opposition to such requests also taken into account. Any final decisions would need to be justified in light of such opposition.
- The possibility of enforcement 7 days a week was being investigated. Officers were aware that some areas were affected on specific days of the week rather than equally at all times.

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- Some ad hoc enforcement at night in areas with high volumes of complaints was undertaken. However, the costs of this for the contract could limit the potential to do this.

Traffic wardens geographical spread

- All schools had enforcement of parking restrictions using a CCTV car. This was only applied to the zig zag lines directly by school gates and would lead to the instant issuing of a ticket. This was done on a rota basis given the similarity in schools' opening and closing times.
- In some areas, schools enforcement had been extended to some yellow lines to limit the impact on local residents. These were also instant tickets given the very short amount of time involved in parking near schools; however, guidance from the Department of Transport (DoT) also applied here.
- Whilst some schools in London were charged with imposing their own parking restriction regimes, the arrangements for London Boroughs was different. However, this could be researched as an option.
- Traffic wardens' beats were assessed to assess whether coverage was uneven. Outside of Slough town centre, enforcement was undertaken by mobile patrols.
- The level of fines imposed in the town centre had fallen; as well as enforcement, increased payment options (e.g. Ringo App) had made it easier for road users to observe regulations.
- In the outlying areas of Slough, roads were covered at least once a day. This was stipulated in the contract, and was undertaken using a variety of mobile resources (cars, CCTV cars and mopeds). The journeys taken by these parking enforcement officers could be tracked.
- There was a hotline number for reporting parking offences. This was not currently on SBC's 'Report It' webpage although could be; other methods of publicity (e.g. mail shot with Council Tax annual statement) were also available.

A4 Brands Hill – update

Since the last consideration of the matter by the Panel, there had been some modifications to the area. Lane designation signs had been added and road markings widened, as well as the imposition of a 30mph speed limit. As a result, there had been a decrease in collisions (although statistics did not include the whole period up until the time of the meeting due to reporting mechanisms).

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- The definition of 'slight' collision was laid down by DoT. This indicated that injuries suffered did not exceed a certain level (e.g. broken finger). Whilst no fatal collisions had occurred, it was noted that a collision which involved death may be recorded as 'serious' as opposed to 'fatal' should the time between the incident and the loss of life be sufficiently delayed.

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- The garage turning could not be enforced with an extended road island as this would reduce the Eastbound carriageway to one lane. Thames Valley Police have also stated that they would not be able to enforce a 'No Right Turn' sign, so the decision had been made to opt for a 30mph speed limit.
- Whilst a 'No Right Turn' sign at the garage could be introduced as part of a wider initiative (e.g. the Rapid Transit Scheme) there were other considerations. Some land in the area was privately owned, whilst there was also some apparatus belonging to utility companies. Diverting this could involve a significant cost.
- Should SBC decide to erect a 'No Right Turn' sign, the police objection would have to be stated in the notice of a significant decision. The erection of a black on yellow advisory sign was also an option.
- Regular Traffic Management Liaison Meetings were held between SBC and Thames Valley Police to aid communications. One meeting had discussed the garage issue and heard SBC's views on the matter.

Vehicle Activated Signs

The procurement of signs was well advanced, with orders due to be placed before the end of the 2015 – 16 financial year.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- The delay between the decision to procure by Cabinet and procurement by SBC had been caused by work with other local authorities. This had been undertaken to achieve economies of scale and value for money, but was delayed when other authorities opted into the scheme in November 2015. One contractor challenged the new arrangement, causing the agreement to be redrafted.
- Vehicle activated signs (VAS) would be received within one month of the order's placement, and would be erected soon afterwards.
- VASs were less intrusive than some other traffic calming methods (e.g. speed humps) but were better suited to some areas than others. For example, long straight roads required humps to ensure that compliance was maximised.
- The problem with previous signs becoming broken had largely been caused by their movement to different locations being too frequent. As a result, the procured VASs would only be transferred between sites every 6 months.

Resolved: that the update be noted.

56. RAC Report - 'Local Authority Parking Finances In England'

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- SBC's disclosure to Government, on which the RAC report was based, covered a series of issues. These included the costs of the contract, the costs of officers employed on the service, revenue raised and also

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any hidden costs (e.g. office space). This was compiled by Finance rather than Transport.

- SBC's position to Reading Borough Council may be due to Reading's enforcement of bus lane penalties. The legal costs of fixed penalty notices and SBC's contract may also have a detrimental effect on its relative standing. Equally, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead's in house enforcement team may have cut their costs.
- The net expenditure of £204,000 did require some addressing given the need for value for money. However, safety, coverage of all areas and the desirability of a balance between enforcement in the town centre and outlying areas also needed consideration.
- There was no limit on the number of tickets which could be issued per year; there used to be, but this had been rescinded by Government.
- Internal recharges and service level agreements were other potential methods for reducing net expenditure.

Resolved: that the Transport Team liaise with other local authorities to compare costs and circulate information to the Panel.

57. Home To School Transport - Taxis

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- The service was recognised as being costly and was also being subcontracted. A review on costs had been undertaken, but given the contract's ownership by Cambridge Education they had received the benefits of any savings. The new contractual arrangements, due to be in place for September 2016, would not allow this to continue.
- Equally, SBC had paused its efforts to make savings and would realised further measures for efficiency once the new contract was operating.
- Many Slough companies had declined to offer the service given the high level of responsibility and care it required. As a result, work had been awarded to providers from outside of Slough.
- Safeguarding issues were considered in deciding routes and allocating escorts. All children's provision was reviewed on an individual basis.
- Members raised some concerns over checks on drivers for routes involving children with special educational needs, and whether they were enforced in all cases or whether drivers could be swapped over with insufficient disclosure being undertaken.
- One school was in charge of operating its own transport, and the growth of multi-academy trusts could facilitate more schools doing this.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Transport Team would circulate licensing information to the Panel.
- 2) That the item would return to the Panel in 2017.

58. Attendance Record 2015 - 16

Resolved: that the attendance record be noted.

59. Date of Next Meeting - 27th June 2016

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 9.23 pm)