

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Cabinet **DATE:** 22nd June 2015
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Commissioner for Social and Economic Inclusion

PART I **NON-KEY DECISION**

REFERENCES FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY – TOWN CENTRE CAR PARKING TASK & FINISH GROUP

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to ask Cabinet to consider the report completed by the above Task & Finish Group, and its recommendations which were approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 3rd March 2015.

2. Recommendations

The nine recommendations adopted by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee can be found on page 5 of the report included as appendix 1.

- (a) The Cabinet is requested to approve recommendations 4 and 8 namely:
4. That land adoption be used to increase SBC's control of parking (e.g. Kittiwake House, the area in Mill Street outside Foundry Court).
 8. That the size of loading and unloading bays be reviewed to facilitate their use by larger vehicles.
- (b) The Cabinet is requested to note that recommendations 1 and 5 will be taken forward as part of the review of the Local Plan.
1. That the current policy of zero parking be reviewed, with a future ratio to be specified subject to further research by Slough Borough Council (SBC) and justification.
 5. That the current limit of 5,000 parking spaces be reviewed, using the justification for at the time of its creation and variations in the situation since this time (e.g. parking at Tesco's, Crossrail) to reappraise the figure.
- (c) The Cabinet is also asked to comment on recommendations 2, 3 and 7 and whether they would wish to receive updated information on requested research, namely:
2. That the potential hire of, or use of parking permits with time restrictions in neighbouring parking facilities (e.g. Tesco car park) be researched;

3. That the time restrictions on areas with single yellow lines be reduced to 6pm in suitable areas (subject to research by SBC); and
7. That the potential expansion of car parking facilities at Slough railway station be investigated.

(d) Recommendations 6 and 9 have been considered by officers but are not recommended for further action. Cabinet is asked to comment on the officers' responses in paragraph 5.7.

3. **The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan**

3a. **Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities**

These recommendations relate to the following priority:

- Economy and Skills
- Regeneration and Environment

3b. **Five Year Plan Outcomes**

These recommendations relate to the following priority:

1. The centre of Slough will be vibrant, providing business, living, and cultural opportunities

4 **Other Implications**

(a) Financial

The potential hire of external parking facilities may have financial consequences, as may any alterations to charging regimes. The overall parking strategy may have indirect impacts on the local economy and footfall in Slough town centre.

(b) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no human rights act or other legal implications arising as a direct result of this report.

5 **Supporting Information**

5.1 The issue of car parking in Slough town centre was referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 11th September 2014. The request emerged on the basis of a request to investigate Slough Borough Council's (SBC) current parking policy for residential development in the town centre. The issues involved in this related to the number of proposals that were coming forward for the development of flats or change of use of offices to flats in the town centre and the fact that currently there is no minimum requirement for car parking in residential schemes in the centre.

5.2 Given the variety of questions involved in the matter, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee commissioned a Task & Finish Group to undertake a detailed review. The Task & Finish Group met on 14th October to compile their draft terms of reference (page 4 of appendix 1) which were then agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 11th November 2014.

- 5.3 The information considered by the Task & Finish Group was then used to compile their final recommendations, which were firstly agreed by the members of the Group before being adopted by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 3rd March 2015.
- 5.4 At the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Chair of the Task & Finish Group explained that the sustainability of the current zero parking policy adopted for the town centre was central to their deliberations. Given future developments such as Crossrail and Heathrow expansion the Group argued that it was necessary to ensure that Slough had a system which could anticipate and accommodate future trends.
- 5.5 In addition, the Group concluded that Tesco should be removed from the limit and the centre limit reduced accordingly as Tesco no longer provided a realistic option for free parking for the town centre or any parking over four hours. This meant that it was no longer a significant provider of parking spaces for anyone other than its own customers and its inclusion in the limit on town centre parking spaces distorted the situation.
- 5.6 A number of local residents also reported that visitors to their property often had nowhere to park and the Council needed to adopt a parking system which was suited to the needs of residents.
- 5.7 The following recommendations from Scrutiny have been reviewed by officers and reported below:

1. *that the current policy of zero parking be reviewed, with a future ratio to be specified subject to further research by Slough Borough Council (SBC) and justification;*

The parking standard of “nil spaces” for residential development in the town centre was introduced in the 2004 Local Plan when comparatively few flats were being built. The scale of residential development that has taken place, and is proposed in the future, means that a wide range of accommodation will have to be provided that will attract a variety of people to live in the centre of Slough. At the same time it is recognised that the lack of parking can cause problems for residents. As a result it is considered that the parking standard should be reviewed by the Planning Committee. This could either be done on an interim basis or as part of the review of the Local Plan.

2. *that the potential hire of, or use of parking permits with time restrictions in neighbouring parking facilities (e.g. Tesco car park) be researched;*

There are already opportunities for residents/businesses to purchase permits from the Queensmere/Observatory shopping centres and also the Council for parking in the respective car parks this has not been taken up. It is recognised that Tesco could be utilised but there is no evidence that residents would prefer to park in an open and unsecure car park. However, we are able to provide overnight permits to residents who are interested in using the Town Centre car parks.

3. *that the time restrictions on areas with single yellow lines be reduced to 6pm in suitable areas (subject to research by SBC);*

These locations can be reviewed on a street by street basis. Locations that contain single yellow lines where parking would be obstructive and dangerous if parked on outside of the enforceable hours should be upgraded to double yellow lines (single yellow lines more than likely used historically). Locations where single yellow lines are

used to combat a commuter parking problem can be reviewed on a street by street basis and the timings can be reviewed to increase parking capacity.

- 4. that land adoption be used to increase SBC's control of parking (e.g. Kittiwake House, the area in Mill Street outside Foundry Court);*

The current proposal to adopt Hatfield Road in order to control parking and ensure that it is properly cleaned and maintained is a good example of where the Council can intervene in order to improve an area. There is a cost to the Council and so should only be reviewed on a targeted basis where there are clear benefits. The Council can also continue to seek the adoption of roads as part of the planning process but this can only be achieved if the land owner is in agreement.

- 5. that the current limit of 5,000 parking spaces be reviewed, using the justification for it at the time of its creation and variations in the situation since this time (e.g. parking at Tesco's, Crossrail) to reappraise the figure;*

The limit on the number of public parking spaces was introduced in the Local Transport Plan and endorsed in the Core Strategy. This was a strategic tool designed to control the number of temporary car parks that have come forward. Recent surveys of the Queensmere and Observatory car parks have shown that they are only around half full even at peak times and so it is not considered that there is a need for more public parking in the short term. A review will be carried out as part of the Review of the Local Plan. In the meantime, the current policy for temporary car parks is to ensure that they are of a high quality design and enhance the experience of visiting Slough.

- 6. that the parking at Slough railway station be removed from SBC's allocation of parking spaces;*

It is acknowledged that that the need for parking at the station is separate from that for the rest of the town centre. The spaces at the station could be removed from the parking calculations but the overall limit would have to be reduced by a corresponding amount and so it wouldn't make any difference.

- 7. that the potential expansion of car parking facilities at Slough railway station be investigated;*

It is recognised that there may be a need for more car parking at the railway station when Crossrail and WRAtH come in. This could be provided on a stand alone basis or in conjunction with the development of adjacent sites.

- 8. that the size of loading and unloading bays be reviewed to facilitate their use by larger vehicles; and*

All parking restrictions and bays are regulated by legislation outlined in the Traffic Signs and General Directions 2002. This legislation states the exact size of loading bays, with the minimum and maximum variance allowed very explicitly stated. Bays can be a minimum of 2.7m wide and a maximum of 3.6m wide. There is no requirement to install them at a specific length, and this is variable at the council's discretion. This can be reviewed for the future.

9. *that further research be conducted into the continuation of free parking after 3pm, or cheaper parking through the use of a 'Slough Card', with a view to a potential increase in high street trade.*

The "Free from 3pm" trial in the town centre ran for approximately 12 months. Surveys were undertaken by the town centre manager to ascertain the success of the scheme, the results indicated that the experiment had not increased footfall or revenues. The recommendation was made to members that the scheme was not made permanent.

With respect to a "Slough Card" the benefits can be realised by residents where parking charges are high such as Windsor. The council has made significant cuts to parking tariffs in the past 12 months to encourage greater use in its car parks which, has proved to be successful and is showing that we are more competitive yet still providing high quality parking. Introducing a "Slough discount card" would not cover the costs of running the car parks or fund the additional administration. It is therefore recommended not to proceed with this scheme.

6 **Conclusion**

- 6.1 On the basis of the supporting information in Appendix 1, the Cabinet is requested to decide upon recommendations 4, 8 and 9 of the final report.
- 6.2 The Cabinet is also requested to comment on the other recommendations as appropriate.

7 **Appendices**

'A' Town Centre Car Parking Task & Finish Group Report

8 **Background Papers**

- '1' - Agenda papers, Overview & Scrutiny Committee (3rd March 2015)
- '2' - Significant Decision on "free from 3pm"