

Camberley Multi-story Car Parks Tariff Review - Member Call-in

Summary

To advise the Executive of the decisions of the Performance & Finance Scrutiny Committee, following consideration of a Member Call-in relating to increases to the tariffs in Camberley Town Centre Multi-Storey Car Parks.

Chairman of Performance & Finance Scrutiny Committee – Cllr Katia Malcaus Cooper

Date Signed Off: 23 October 2018

Wards Affected – Town

Recommendation

The Executive is advised to consider the recommendations of the Performance & Finance Scrutiny Committee to

- (i) defer its decision to increase car parking tariffs in its Camberley Town Centre Multi-Storey Car Parks pending the availability of more complete data relating to footfall and income and expenditure being made available; and**
- (ii) consider the proposed increase in charges and the proposed introduction of subsidised permits for those earning below the living wage as two distinct recommendations, with a view to introducing the subsidised permits as soon as possible.**

The Executive is also advised to note that the Performance & Finance Scrutiny Committee agreed to establish a Task & Finish Group to examine council provided parking in Camberley Town Centre.

1. Key Issues

1.1 The Performance & Finance Scrutiny Committee, on 2 October 2018, considered a Member Call-in referring to the Executive decision (Minute 22/E refers) that:

- (i) the car parking tariffs, as set out at Annex 1 to the Executive agenda report of 12 September 2018, be agreed, to come into effect after the completion of the works detailed in paragraph 1.3 of the agenda report and following the statutory Traffic Regulatory Order process; and
- (ii) subsidised annual permits of £150 per annum be made available for Camberley Town Centre workers earning the living wage or below.

- 1.2 The calling-in Members had considered that the following issues were of concern:
- a. The decision to raise car-parking charges had been taken at a time when the income from car parking was falling; footfall in the shopping centre had fallen and work would be underway on the High Street, which would potentially cause disruption to shoppers and traders.
 - b. Recommendations (i) and (ii) in the original Executive report had been combined without adequate debate.
- 1.3 The reasons for the call-in had been indicated as follows:
- The report considered by the Executive had contained insufficient information as to the proper timing of the scheduled works.
 - There was a lack of information on the viability of Camberley Town Centre and the impact of the revenue raised in the current financial year.
 - Bracknell, a competitor town, was reported to have decided not to increase charges in the car parks it manages.
- 1.4 The Committee, at its meeting on 2 October 2018, considered the Call-in document, Executive minute 22/E and statements by the calling in Members. Arising from this discussion, the following key points were made:
- Lack of detail on footfall data, income generation and ongoing costs had been provided to the Executive which had prevented it from looking at car parking in the wider economic context
 - The discrepancy between proposals to increase daytime tariffs at a time when traders were experiencing year on year falls in trading levels, whilst reducing evening tariffs in support of the night-time economy.
 - Feedback from an online, informal survey had indicated that residents did not feel they received good value from Camberley Town Centre and consequently shopped in neighbouring towns
 - Uncertainty about the synergies between the four separate organisations involved in the marketing of Camberley Town Centre and whether BID money could be used to support car parking.
- 1.5 Further detail on the discussion is contained in minute 10/PF, as attached at Annex A to this report.
- 1.6 The Committee was encouraged by the proposals to introduce a season ticket for Camberley Town Centre workers earning less than the living wage and encouraged the Executive to pursue the introduction of this initiative irrespective of the outcomes of the decision to increase car park tariffs. The Committee queried the Executive's suggestion that the subsidised permits constituted a growth item and could therefore only be adopted alongside an increase to tariff and felt there had not had the opportunity to fully debate the individual merits and drawbacks of each aspect of the recommendation.

2. Recommendations of the Performance & Finance Scrutiny Committee

2.1 Having considered the Executive's decision, the information supplied by the Calling-In councillors, and the views expressed at the meeting, the Committee RESOLVED that

(i) The Called-In decision to implement changes to the parking tariffs in Camberley Town centre multi-storey car parks be referred back to the Executive for reconsideration because:

- The decision taken had been based on a report that contained insufficient information to enable a fully informed decision to be made.
- Increasing parking charges at a time when the town centre traders were facing already difficult trading conditions would further depress footfall through the town centre.
- Considering Recommendations i and ii as a single indivisible recommendation had prevented adequate debate.

(ii) The Executive be advised to:

1. Make its decision only when more complete data relating to footfall and income and expenditure was made available; and that
2. The proposed increase in charges and the proposed introduction of subsidised permits for those earning below the living wage be considered as two distinct recommendations.

(iii) A Task and Finish Group be established to examine council provided parking in Camberley Town Centre.

3. Resource Implications

3.1 Resource Implications were addressed in the original report to the Executive but the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee has requested further information of the wider resourcing implications of as part of the work of its proposed Task & Finish Group.

4. Options

4.1 The Executive can:

- 4.1.1 Accept the recommendations made the Performance & Finance Scrutiny Committee to defer the decision pending the receipt of further information, as outline at paragraph 1.6;
- 4.1.2 Work with the Committee's Task & Finish Group to develop a holistic parking strategy for the Town Centre;
- 4.1.3 Reject the Committee's recommendations and proceed with its original decision; or

4.1.4 Consider further options.

5. Proposals

5.1 The Executive is asked to consider the recommendations of the Performance & Finance Scrutiny Committee, as set out in paragraph 2.1, and take any actions considered appropriate.

5.2 The Executive is also asked to note that the Performance & Finance Scrutiny Committee agreed to establish a Task & Finish Group to examine council provided parking in Camberley Town Centre, with the suggested remit as follows:

- The total parking package offered in town centre car parks
- Looking at the whole parking offering and charging regime to include a reasonable provision of free parking with not less than one hour.
- The provision for disabled parking.
- The support that the Council gives to retailers to include the Government's Business Rates Retention pilot.
- A report from Collectively Camberley on the work that they do to promote the town.
- Review the subsidised permits of £150 per annum for those on a living wage.

The Terms of Reference of this Task & Finish Group will be formally agreed by the Performance & Finance Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 5 December 2018.

6. Supporting Information

6.1 The minutes of the Performance & Finance Scrutiny are attached at Annex A.

7. Corporate Objectives And Key Priorities

7.1 The operation and charging policy for Camberley Town Centre Car Parks falls under the Council's Key Priority 1 – to deliver an improved Camberley Town Centre.

Annex	Performance & Finance Scrutiny Committee Minute 10/PF
Background Papers	<u>Executive report and minutes – 12 September 2018</u> <u>Performance & Finance Scrutiny Committee agenda – 2 October 2018</u>
Author	Richard Payne – Lead Officer for Performance & Finance Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a Meeting of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, Surrey Heath House, Knoll Road, Camberley, GU15 3HD on 2 October 2018 (extract)

+ Cllr Katia Malcaus Cooper (Chairman)
+ Cllr Darryl Ratiram (Vice Chairman)

- Cllr David Allen	- Cllr Robin Perry
+ Cllr Rodney Bates	+ Cllr Chris Pitt
+ Cllr Bill Chapman	+ Cllr Joanne Potter
+ Cllr Surinder Gandhum	Cllr Ian Sams
+ Cllr Edward Hawkins	+ Cllr Wynne Price
Cllr Paul Ilnicki	+ Cllr Victoria Wheeler
+ Cllr David Lewis	+ Cllr Valerie White
Cllr Max Nelson	

+ Present
- Apologies for absence presented

Substitutes: Councillor Bates for Councillor Allen
Councillor Gandhum for Councillor Perry

Members In Attendance: Cllr Mrs Vivienne Chapman
Cllr Paul Deach
Cllr Colin Dougan
Cllr Craig Fennell
Cllr Josephine Hawkins
Cllr Alan McClafferty
Cllr Adrian Page

Officers in Attendance: Julia Hutley-Savage, Principal Lawyer
Richard Payne, Executive Head: Corporate

10/PF Member Call-In - Car Parking Charges

The Committee considered a Call-In in respect of a decision taken by the Executive on 12th September 2018 to change the parking tariffs in Camberley Town Centre multi-storey car parks.

The Call-In, which had been submitted in accordance with Part 4 Section C of the Council's Constitution by Councillor Edward Hawkins and Councillor Valerie White, cited the following elements of the decision which gave grounds for concern:

- i. The decision to raise car-parking charges had been taken at a time when the income from car parking was falling; footfall in the shopping centre had fallen and work would be underway on the High Street, which would potentially cause disruption to shoppers and traders.

- ii. Recommendations i and ii in the original Executive report had been combined without adequate debate.

In their submission, Councillors Hawkins and White also set out the following reasons for their decision to submit the Call-In:

- The report considered by the Executive contained insufficient information as to the proper timing of the scheduled works.
- There was a lack of information on the viability of Camberley Town centre and the impact of the revenue raised in the current financial year.
- Bracknell, a competitor town, was reported to have decided not to increase charges in the car parks it manages.

The Committee acknowledged that the decision taken by the Executive had been a finely balanced one. However the Committee felt that the original Executive report lacked sufficient detail, particularly in relation to footfall data, income generation and ongoing costs, and this had prevented the Executive from looking at car parking in relation to the wider economic situation. Consequently, it was considered that the Executive had not been in a position to make a fully informed decision.

Councillor Hawkins reported that feedback from residents on the proposals had been negative with many expressing the opinion that they did not get good value for money from Camberley Town Centre and consequently elected to shop in neighbouring towns. Traders had also expressed concerns about the impact that raising car parking charges at a time when trade levels continued to decrease year on year would have on future trade.

The Committee noted that it had been proposed to increase all parking charges except evening charges which would be reduced in order to support the night time economy. It was felt this discrepancy was contradictory at a time when traders were experiencing year on year falls in trading levels. Furthermore, the Council should be working to develop strategies that supported local businesses.

It was noted that four different organisations, Collectively Camberley, Standard Life, Montagu Evans and Surrey Heath Borough Council, worked to promote Camberley town centre. The Committee questioned what synergies there were between the four organisations and whether this was effective. It was also questioned whether some of the BID money might be used to support car parking.

The Committee noted the proposal to introduce a monthly parking pass. However, it was queried why buying either three or six individual monthly passes was cheaper than buying a three or six month pass. It was clarified that the one-month parking pass was administered online and therefore the cost of a one-month pass was lower than the three and six-month passes, which required an element of officer input which had to be incorporated into the pricing.

The Committee also raised concern that in combining recommendations i and ii without an adequate explanation, the Executive had been deprived of the opportunity to fully debate the merits and drawbacks of each aspect of the recommendation at the time the decision was taken. Notwithstanding this, the Committee strongly

supported the principle of introducing subsidised annual permits for those working in the town centre who were earning the living wage or below and agreed that introducing these subsidised permits should be carried out as quickly as possible.

It was agreed that the establishment of a Task and Finish Group to examine the provision and offering of the car parks in Camberley Town Centre would be an appropriate way forward. It was suggested that if a Task and Finish Group was to be established then its remit should include:

- The total parking package offered in town centre car parks
- Looking at the whole parking offering and charging regime to include a reasonable provision of free parking with not less than one hour.
- The provision for disabled parking.
- The support that the Council gives to retailers to include the Government's Business Rates Retention pilot.
- A report from Collectively Camberley on the work that they do to promote the town.
- Review the subsidised permits of £150 per annum for those on a living wage.

It was acknowledged that the suggested Task and Finish Group would report its findings after the Executive decision had been re-examined by the Executive and agreed that if it did go ahead the Task and Finish Group's proposed terms of reference would be considered at the Committee's next meeting on 5th December 2018.

It was agreed that the Called-In decision should be referred back to the Executive for reconsideration with the recommendation that the decision be taken only when more complete data relating to footfall and income and expenditure was made available and that the proposed increase in charges and the proposed introduction of subsidised permits for those earning below the living wage be considered as two distinct recommendations.

RESOLVED that:

- (iv) The Called-In decision to implement changes to the parking tariffs in Camberley Town centre multi-storey car parks be referred back to the Executive for reconsideration because:
- The decision taken had been based on a report that contained insufficient information to enable a fully informed decision to be made.
 - Increasing parking charges at a time when the town centre traders were facing already difficult trading conditions would further depress footfall through the town centre.
 - Considering Recommendations i and ii as a single indivisible recommendation had prevented adequate debate.
- (v) The Executive be advised to:

3. Make its decision only when more complete data relating to footfall and income and expenditure was made available; and that
 4. The proposed increase in charges and the proposed introduction of subsidised permits for those earning below the living wage be considered as two distinct recommendations.
- (vi) A Task and Finish Group be established to examine council provided parking in Camberley Town Centre.

Chairman