

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE

Scrutiny Committee

HELD ON MONDAY 1 MARCH 2021 AT 6.00 PM

THIS WAS A VIRTUAL MEETING

Watch the recording here:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTj2pCic8vzucpzlaSWE3UQ>

Present:

Ian White (Chairman)

Mocky Khan, Anna Badcock, Sam Casey-Rerhaye, Stefan Gawrysiak, Alexandrine Kantor, George Levy, Sue Roberts, David Turner and David Rouaner

Officers:

John Backley, Liz Hayden, Elizabeth Kingdom, Suzanne Malcolm, Candida Mckelvey

Also present:

Cabinet member, Councillor David Rouane.

90 Apologies for absence

None.

91 Declarations of interest

None.

92 Urgent business and chair's announcements

The chair ran through housekeeping for the virtual meeting.

93 Public participation

Two public speakers were registered to speak about the car park order.

The first public speaker to present to the committee was Paul Harrison, a Henley resident. Mr Harrison spoke against the cabinet decision on the car park fees and charges.

Opinions raised included;

- Sunday parking was a tax on prayer
- How would the council pay to enforce?



Listening Learning Leading

- Concern over affecting Sunday trading
- Electric car owners getting discounted charges. Most cannot afford to own an electric car.
- Clarification was asked regarding the volume of church visitors. Mr Harrison responded that there are 6 churches that people, including out of area, come into the centre to visit.

The second speaker was Lee Upcraft, a Wallingford resident. He spoke against the Cabinet decision on car parking fees and charges. The opinions raised included:

- Why a one size fits all approach?
- There are good elements – but where is the evidence, cost analysis and impact analysis?
- Sunday charging was opposed in the survey.
- Sundays should be an opportunity to encourage visitors to come and spend money in the area.
- Clarification was asked regarding the impact on traders and the fact that some stores had now closed.
- Clarification was asked regarding the frequency of buses on a Sunday. Free parking was considered anti-bus – were more buses needed? It was responded by Mr Upcraft that most tourist visitors would not be using buses anyway.

94 Call-in of Cabinet decision on car park order 2021

Councillors Ian White and George Levy had called in the Cabinet decision of 4 February on the car park order. The Head of Legal and Democratic had accepted that this was a valid request.

The reasons for the call-in were as follows:

1. At its meeting on 9 November 2020, a member of the Scrutiny Committee asked that the car parking charges report be brought back so that further consideration could be given following the public consultation, prior to a decision being made. The committee motioned to note the report and for comments made to be considered. This point is noted but not addressed in the officer's report.
2. Public concern has been raised over the consideration of their responses to the consultation, with special concern for residents of Wallingford.

Cabinet member for Housing and environment, Councillor David Rouane, introduced the item.

The Cabinet member explained that he considered fairness whilst producing this report. Regarding Wallingford concerns, there was a long-standing agreement with the Goldsmiths Lane car park, where there was two hours free parking and free Sunday parking. Wallingford Town Council objected to reduction in two other car parks. However, the Goldsmiths Lane arrangement should be ample to accommodate visitors. Regarding the electric car charges – Wallingford was one of the towns under air quality management and encouraging electric car use was part of reducing pollution in the town centre.

Now, on Sundays, in response to comments, the Sunday charge has been reduced by one hour. Further research had been impeded by the pandemic, and car park usage was not as normal.

Questions of clarification on the report followed.

- Cabinet member was asked to elaborate on the fairness issue – was there church representation in the survey? Cabinet member responded that he was willing to listen to special circumstances, but nothing was presented. The Wallingford concerns were mainly regarding visitors blocking car park spaces for shoppers.
- Will there be further research? It was responded that in future there would be reviews. For Sunday, there was no data because there was no charging at present. The charging changes would help address the car park budget deficit. In 12 years, the price had not changed. The car parks need to cover the costs of running, not be in deficit. We were currently making a loss.
- It was confirmed that the changes were to address the deficit and in the interest of fairness.
- It was discussed that it had taken 18 months to get to this point and action was needed now. It had been through scrutiny committee and the Climate and Ecological Emergency committee already.
- Officer added that car parks were in deficit, and parking costs should not fall on the taxpayer, but car park users instead. The car parks were not-for-profit. Fees were set to cover expenditure.
- Cabinet did discuss the consultation, and changes were made in response.
- The electric vehicle spaces were a work in progress, with an estimated 5-7 percent of spaces being dedicated currently.
- The new plan would be implemented for a year with a review.

During debate, a view was expressed that holding action for 6 months of review could be an option.

The idea of encouraging bus use on Sundays was considered helpful for environmental considerations. The desire for pedestrianisation may change needs in the future.

The committee concurred that car park users should cover the costs, not non car using taxpayers.

Committee members debated and concluded that the reports approach did seem fair overall, with the Wallingford arrangement being noted as a compromise. The report was a hybrid that addressed the main concerns.

The committee motioned and voted in favour of the following:

Resolved: to

Support the Cabinet decision from the 4 February 2021 regarding car park order.

95 National Green Grant and capacity/abilities in South Oxfordshire Task And Finish Group

Councillor Sam Casey-Rerhaye updated the committee on the progress of the task and finish group for green grants.

The group were looking for volunteers and they wanted to invite members of Vale of White Horse (VOWH) scrutiny committee, to make this a joint working project.

The Terms of Reference (ToR) had been circulated and no comments raised.

The group is looking to proactively tackle the lack of local expertise to retrofit green home features, such as heat source air pumps. Ideally, a retrofit officer would be in place. Work with Cosy Homes was also underway.

Deputy Chief Executive for Place added that officers were supporting this, and Elizabeth Kingdom had been recruited in the insight and policy team, joining Andy Egan as a Climate Action Lead officer, and she was in attendance at this committee meeting.

Chair confirmed he would write to the VOWH scrutiny chair to invite members.

The meeting closed at 7.46 pm

Chairman

Date