

## **Cabinet**

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday, 8th December, 2011.

**Present:** Cllr Robert Cook (Chairman), Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr David Coleman, Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr David Harrington, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr David Rose and Cllr Michael Smith

**Officers:** N. Schneider (CEO); J. Danks, G. Cummings (R); P. Dobson, R. McGuckin, R. Pondford, M. Chicken, B. Trewick, M. Batty(DNS); D. Bond and N. Hart (LD)

**Also in attendance:** Councillor Julia Cherrett, Councillor Terry Laing, Councillor Ken Lupton, Councillor Mark Chatburn, Councillor Mrs K. Nelson, J. Hadlow (Yarm Town Council), Geoff Siggens (NEMS)

**Apologies:**

### **CAB 97/11**

#### **Declarations of Interest**

Councillors Mrs McCoy, Nelson and Smith each declared a personal, prejudicial interest in respect of the item entitled Borough Wide Car Parking Strategy and, specifically, consideration of the proposals regarding blue badge holders, as each either held a blue badge or had a family member that held one. Each of the Councillors left the meeting prior to a vote being taken on the proposals relating to blue badge holders.

### **CAB 98/11**

#### **Borough Wide Car Parking Strategy**

Cabinet considered a strategy outlining proposed parking management strategies including flexible charging tariffs where appropriate across the Borough to support the planned and on-going economic growth of the Borough's town centres.

Members were reminded of the Environment Select Committee report to Cabinet in December 2010 that applied the EIT (Efficiency Improvement Transformation) process to car parking. Cabinet accepted the principle of charging for car parking on Yarm High Street but stated that it should be introduced as part of a wider review of car parking charges across the Borough. This Borough Wide review and suggested action plan was subsequently agreed as a basis for consultation by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport in August 2011.

Cabinet also asked that further work be undertaken in order to consider the structure of car parking charges in Stockton Town Centre, which would also include the impact on Blue Badge holders.

The report sought to update Cabinet on progress made in the latest 12 months demonstrating how the EIT process could be practically applied to car parking in the following locations including specific proposals regarding car parking provision in each location; the details of which were summarised :-

- Billingham Town Centre
- Thornaby Town Centre
- Norton High Street
- Stockton Town Centre
- Yarm Town Centre

The report highlighted how the proposals would also compliment the regeneration of Stockton and Billingham and could assist in supporting local businesses to maintain or improve the economic positions of Yarm and Norton. The regeneration of Thornaby town centre had improved the ability of Thornaby to compete with other town centres in the Borough and had hopefully secured it's longer term economic viability. Parking was privately owned and managed in Thornaby although the strategy included the town centre in order to prepare for the consequences that would be incurred by local residents should the private owner of the centre introduce parking charges at some point in the future.

As part of Cabinet's consideration of regeneration plans for Stockton town centre later at this same meeting, members were asked to note the results of independent market research recently completed by the independently commissioned NEMS Market Research to gain an understanding of how better management of car parking demand in both Yarm and Stockton town centres could contribute to improved business performance in each location. A representative of NEMS Market Research was in attendance at the meeting, along with ward and town councillors, members of the public and local businesses from Yarm.

Cabinet considered objections to the proposals, regards Yarm, from a ward councillor, the Mayor of Yarm Town Council, and representatives of local businesses. Clarification was also sought and provided regarding the methodology and conclusions reached by the market research.

It was noted that a recommendation to charge Blue Badge holders for off-street parking in Council's owned and managed car parks was recommended by the Environment Select Committee in December 2010. There were approximately 12,000 registered Blue Badge holders in the Borough. Blue Badge holders were able to park for free and with unlimited duration of stay in the Council's car parks, where parking charges were applicable on-street and also for up to 3 hours on single or double yellow lines (except where there was also a ban on loading/unloading activity). The Blue Badge scheme only applied to on-street parking (kerbside parking on adopted highway). Parking charges were already applicable in the two privately managed car parks in Stockton town centre. A consequence of introducing parking charges for Blue Badge holders in off-street car parks was their potential displacement to on-street locations, including on single or double yellow lines for up to 3 hours. A review of the existing waiting restrictions around the town centres, particularly Stockton where parking charges currently only apply, was therefore recommended to determine if parking on those restrictions would cause obstruction to traffic movements or cause adverse impacts upon road safety. Cabinet was asked to accept the principle of charging Blue Badge holders for off-street parking in Council managed car parks subject to further engagement with key stakeholders.

In supporting the proposals contained within the proposed Car Parking Strategy, members requested that they be accompanied by a 12 month evaluation of their success with the details reported back to Cabinet once completed.

RESOLVED that:-

1. the introduction of parking controls in Council managed, off-street car parks in Billingham Town Centre be supported but should only be introduced in support of economic regeneration initiatives led by Stockland.
2. the Council continues to seek a solution to long stay car parking problems in Thornaby town centre in support of local businesses.
3. the Council commission a survey to assess issues and car parking provision in Norton.
4. Cabinet support a strategy of flexible parking tariffs and car parking promotions to support the economic development and regeneration aspirations for Stockton Town Centre and the detailed arrangements be delegated to the Corporate Director of Development and Neighbourhood Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Transport.
5. Cabinet agree that the Council continue to prioritise the provision of additional long stay car parking in Yarm.
6. Cabinet note the results of the independent market research in Yarm, which suggest that the economic performance of Yarm is being restricted by long stay parking by commuters.
7. Cabinet approve that the research be utilised to design car parking solutions for Yarm which will include 'Pay and Display' on the High Street and increase the provision of short stay parking spaces to improve the availability of spaces.
8. the proposals in respect of Yarm be approved and that details regarding further consultation, charging tariffs and the practicalities of extending the Disc Zone be delegated to the Corporate Director of Development and Neighbourhood Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Transport.
9. Cabinet accept the principle of charging Blue Badge holders for off-street parking in Council managed car parks and that further engagement will take place with the key interest groups as the scheme progresses.
10. Cabinet note the need to evaluate the change in arrangements and that the impact be considered after 12 months. New parking machine technology will allow trends and impacts to be recorded electronically and evaluated to help the Council and businesses understand visitor trends.

**CAB  
99/11**

### **Taxis in Bus Lanes - Stockton-on-Tees Borough**

Consideration was given to a request from the Stockton Hackney Carriage Drivers Association for taxis to be permitted to use bus lanes, which was first raised during the 2010 Housing and Community Safety Select Committee Scrutiny Review of the Taxi Licencing service.

The Association were of the view that they were part of the wider public transport service and were at a disadvantage in not being able to utilise the

dedicated bus lanes in the Borough as it lead to them having to take longer routes in some cases which was not welcomed by their passengers. They also referred to their need to be able to drop off disabled passengers in the central part of Stockton High Street; which was presently facilitated by a permit system. The Association, in seeking support for their proposal, referred to a number of the local authority areas where taxis and in some cases private hire vehicles were allowed to use bus lanes.

Representatives of the Stockton Hackney Carriage Drivers Association were present at the meeting and spoke in support of their request.

As a result of the request a report was compiled with input from a number of stakeholders including the Police, Sustrans, bus operators and Tees Valley Unlimited. None of these organisations supported the proposal and most of which actually objected on a number of grounds but principally on safety concerns, including a potential for an increase in vehicle collisions.

It was accepted that some other local authorities allowed taxis in bus lanes, however officers were of the view that each authority needed to take a view based on their own local circumstances. Neighbouring authorities were contacted by officers to compile a position statement on current policy across the Tees Valley. Authorities from further afield such as Edinburgh and Birmingham were contacted by the SHCDA to understand their policy on taxis in bus lanes. The position varied from taxis and private hire vehicles being allowed in bus lanes to just taxis. In some cases the authorities did accept that there was in practice no enforcement of restrictions. In major cities in particular, many of the bus lanes were 'with flow' and did not carry the same road safety concerns that were associated with contraflow bus lanes, of which are there were three examples in Stockton.

Due to the fact that there were a number of contra-flow bus lanes in the Borough and taking on board the particular safety concerns around allowing taxis in bus lanes from the various stakeholders consulted, it was proposed that the request be not supported. The concerns regards the need to drop off disabled passengers in the central part of Stockton High Street would continue to be allowed for permit holders but the fee of £10 would no longer be required. The facility, including drop off points, would also be addressed as part of the infrastructure improvements for Stockton Town Centre considered later on by Cabinet at this particular meeting.

RESOLVED that:-

1. Cabinet agree the policy of not allowing taxis to utilise bus lanes in the Borough.
2. Cabinet note that permits to allow disabled accessible hackneys and private hire vehicles to access the restricted northbound lane of Stockton High Street will now be made available free of charge.

**CAB**      **Stockton Town Centre Regeneration**  
**100/11**

Consideration was given to a report that provided an update on proposals for Stockton High Street and set out revised designs for infrastructure

improvements and public realm.

It was explained that since the public and stakeholder consultation, design work, incorporating comments and feedback had been undertaken. The design process had seen the original concepts for the High Street evolve into a revised scheme that would see the principles of new paving, improved bus and taxi facilities, parking on the High Street, a pedestrian friendly environment, principles of design Central Square established and dedicated space for the market retained.

Members noted the key features proposed for the southern end of Stockton High Street, which included:

- A dedicated 36 space car park south of the shambles.
- 10 ultra short stay parking spaces outside the Post Office.
- A 7 bay 24 hour taxi rank with pedestrian friendly access.

Members also noted the key features of the northern section of the High Street, which included:

- A dedicated car park with 20 spaces located on the current Lindsay House site.
- A 4 bay pedestrian friendly Taxi rank.
- 9 consolidated multi vehicle bus stops.

Cabinet noted the design principles proposed for the central square. It was explained that the final designs were not fully developed but agreement in principle of forming a focal point in the High Street was sought. Cabinet also noted the design principles envisaged for Stockton Riverside improvements, which included the lighting of the Millennium and Princess of Wales Bridges and other interventions utilising the riverside's natural assets.

Members were informed of issues relating to the tenants and interests associated with the Lindsay House Site.

It was explained that the schemes identified would require approximately £11.4 million of which £3.9 million had already been approved. Therefore up to £7.5 million was required to be drawn down from the Council's share of the VAT Shelter and this would be considered as part of the budget report to February Cabinet.

RESOLVED that:-

1. the proposals for infrastructure improvements and public realm on the southern section of Stockton High Street (illustrated at Appendix 1 to the report) be approved.
2. the proposals for infrastructure improvements and public realm on the northern section of Stockton High Street (illustrated at Appendix 2 to the report) be approved.
3. the design principles envisaged for Central Square (illustrated at Appendix 3 to the report) be accepted.

4. the design principles envisaged for Stockton Riverside improvements as detailed in the report be accepted.

5. It be agreed that the acquisition of the interests referred to in this report will facilitate the carrying out of development, redevelopment or improvement on or in relation to land in their area and Cabinet agree that the development, redevelopment or improvement of the land is likely to contribute to the achievement of the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of the area.

6. the use of the Council's Compulsory Purchase powers under section 226(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by section 99 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) to acquire all necessary interests in Lindsay House and the adjacent area required for the implementation of the redevelopment of the Lindsay House site in line with the plan attached to this report at Appendix 2 be approved.

7. the use of all actions necessary in accordance with the serving of Requisitions for Information, the making of the CPO, the representation of the Council in relation to any Inquiry, the confirmation of the CPO, the actions necessary following the confirmation of the CPO either by the authority or the Secretary of State, and consequent orders or actions including the service of Notices to Treat or the making of a General Vesting Declaration, and all other notices, orders or actions required to give effect to the authorisation to acquire the land compulsorily be approved.

8. the processing of Traffic Regulation Orders associated with the infrastructure and public realm improvements by the Corporate Director of Law & Democracy with any objections considered by the Head of Technical Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Transport be approved

9. it be noted that further detailed design work and liaison with key stakeholders was required to finalise individual elements of the scheme and that the Corporate Director of Development and Neighbourhood Services be authorised in consultation with Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport to approve alterations and implement works.

10. it note the need to utilise up to £7.5m to fund schemes identified in this report from the Council's share of the VAT shelter, which will be considered as part of the budget report to Cabinet in February.