

## AGENDA ITEM

### REPORT TO EXECUTIVE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

19 JANUARY 2012

## BOROUGH WIDE CAR PARKING STRATEGY

Response to call-in that has been applied to resolutions 1-8 and resolution 10 but does not include resolution 9 (proposed charging of blue badge holders).

### 1.0 Proportionality

1. The Borough Wide Car Parking Strategy was developed in response to an EIT review, which included the car parking service in 2010. That aside having a strategy that deals with provision of car parking across the borough that reflects the economic position of the respective centres is considered to be good practice.
2. The Borough Wide Strategy made a series of recommendations for each of the Borough's Town centres; Stockton, Thornaby, Billingham and included Norton. In each case, the current provision was examined, issues identified and a range of options considered before making recommendations for action to improve the situation. The range of measures proposed reflected the economic wellbeing of the respective centre and the need to link back to the economic regeneration of some areas and to support growth in others.
3. The report recommended limited action in Thornaby and Billingham where ownership of the centres had transferred to the private sector. However, in the case of Thornaby there is an ongoing issue of long stay parking provision for staff from nearby businesses, where a solution is being pursued. The Council remains committed to finding a long stay car park for Thornaby. In Billingham, it is a case of maintaining a watching brief and the Council will react to changes in parking arrangements applied by the owners, and then only to protect residents and the other Council owned car parks in Billingham. These changes, which may include charging, will likely be at a time when the economic performance of Billingham strengthens further.
4. With Norton, which is not a town centre, there is a need to better understand the issues through market research and options appraisal.
5. The Cabinet report contains a recommendation that tariffs in Stockton are flexible and incentives introduced to ensure that the visitor numbers continue to grow, particularly as the regeneration works are undertaken and in response to the current economic performance of Stockton Town Centre.
6. In Yarm the recommendations are based upon not only the work carried out in the Borough Wide Car Parking Strategy but more recently through the results of a Market Research Exercise carried out in September 2011 in conjunction with the Town Council.

7. One of the recommendations in the Cabinet report relating to Yarm recognises the need to prioritise the provision of long stay car parking in the town. This is being actively pursued in a number of locations, for example in the Backlands.
8. A further recommendation relating specifically to Yarm states that Members note the results of the independent market research which demonstrates that the economic performance of Yarm is being affected by the current arrangements for car parking. In that respect, Members were advised of the key findings of the market research and how the provision of 80-100 additional short stay spaces could support a significant increase in visitor numbers and associated spend in the businesses in Yarm.
9. The market research made it clear that there was no significant demand for parking beyond the two hours available via the disc parking arrangement. However it does not allow for the feasibility for visitors who do choose to stay longer. The findings do highlight the need to introduce not only a more flexible approach but also more short stay parking. Disc parking has been shown to be an out dated and inflexible solution and the only manageable option is to introduce pay and display to support the economic growth of the town.
10. Recommendation 8 recognised that the detail of the pay and display tariff, layout, residents parking arrangements and further consultation be delegated to the Corporate Director for Development and Neighbourhood Services. In doing so it recognises that the consultation and market research had taken place led to the proposal before Cabinet but there is still significant further detailed consultation and design of the scheme that needed to take place.
11. The impact of implementing the recommendations within the Cabinet report are to be evaluated after twelve months. In this recommendation it was clear that a review period is included to assess the outcome against agreed objectives.
12. In summary, the Cabinet decision considers all four Town Centres within the Borough plus Norton and the review of arrangements in each of those centres has been considered in proportion to further supporting their economic growth, which in all four cases is very different.

## **2.0 Due Consultation**

1. Consultation took place in respect of the draft Borough Wide Car Parking Strategy via the web site and e-mailed copy to all Council Members. All Council Members received a copy of draft review document on 9 September 2011. This document set out draft recommendations for each of the Town Centres. Comments were received from a number of Ward Councillors. Those comments, together with others received were collated and responses provided where appropriate.
2. The proposal to conduct Market Research into the parking requirements of Yarm was discussed and the Yarm Town Council meeting on 12 July 2011, which included providing the Town Council with a copy of the brief. At a subsequent meeting on 30 August 2011 the Town Council were provided with a copy of the proposed questions and methodology and details of the company chosen to conduct the research. The Town Council were invited to respond to/add to or amend the draft questions in writing but did not do so.

3. The results of the market research were presented to the Leader of the Council and a number of Cabinet Members together with Yarm Ward Members on 11 October 2011. There were a number of questions from Members and answers provided by the research company.
4. A meeting with Yarm Town Council was arranged on 17 October 2011 to deliver the results of the market research. This was cancelled at short notice by the Town Council and despite repeated attempts to secure an early meeting it was six weeks before the Town Council agreed to meet on 25 November 2011.
5. During the interim period the market research had been utilised to formulate and feed into the Cabinet report on the Borough Wide Car Parking Strategy. At the meeting with the Town Council on 25 November when the results of the research were presented they were also informed of the report being drafted for Cabinet on 8 December 2011.
6. Consultation is planned to take place with key stakeholders in a structured approach. This will include the presentation of the market research results to Yarm businesses to enable them to fully understand the growth potential for the town if a parking solution is delivered. There will be residents group meetings with residents who are to be affected i.e. those living in or close to the high street in Yarm. The outcome of these discussions and how they influence the proposal will be discussed with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Transport, Ward Members and the Town Council.
7. Consultation had reached a stage whereby a decision needed to be taken, but is certainly not concluded. In reality the detailed discussion and detailed design of the proposed scheme will take several months.

### **3.0 Equality**

1. An equality impact assessment was undertaken in respect of the Borough Wide Car Parking Strategy. This was scored at 73 with a neutral to positive affect.
2. The proposal to introduce pay and display charges reflects a parity with Stockton town centre where they have been in place for more than twenty years. The owners of Thornaby Town Centre installed pay and display meters when the redevelopment took place but have decided not to implement changes as yet although there is a two hour restriction in place and penalty charges in place for excess stay. The Cabinet Decision also includes the provision to introduce parking controls in Billingham in conjunction with the Town Centre owner's future intentions.

### **4.0 Clarity of Aims and Objectives**

1. The Borough Wide Car Parking Strategy clearly recognises the differing needs and economic performance of the centres within the study. For example Stockton is well served by private and public car parks, long and short stay, on street and off street. However Yarm is restricted in land availability to easily provide additional car parking

and has a number of residential properties within the high street which is no longer the case in Stockton.

2. The theme within the Strategy, which is reflected in the actions recommended, is further economic growth and supporting regeneration of the town centres.
3. Market Research, commissioned in consultation with Yarm Town Council has provided the evidence base with clear conclusions to develop the proposals within the Cabinet report relating to parking in Yarm.
4. Consultation with businesses, residents and Ward Members will ensure that the proposals can be developed in line with their issues and concerns whilst still seeking to deliver the aims and objectives of the proposals for Yarm.
5. The clarity of the aims and objectives is further supported by recommendation 3 which requires market research to be conducted in Norton to help shape a solution. In this respect it is clear that the strategy is being delivered against a robust evidence base, independently conducted and results presented to stakeholders.