

SOUTHEND-ON-SEA CITY COUNCIL

Meeting of Highways, Transport & Parking Working Party

Date: Tuesday, 6th September, 2022

Place: Virtual Meeting via MS Teams

Present: Councillor S Wakefield (Chair)
Councillors M Berry*, K Buck, D Cowan, T Cox, M O'Connor,
A Thompson and C Walker*
(*Substitute in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 31.)

In Attendance: J Burr, L Delahunty, N Hoskins, T Row and A Turk

Start/End Time: 6.30 pm - 8.20 pm

1 Apologies for absence & Substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Garston (Substitute: Councillor Walker) and Hyde, (Substitute: Councillor Berry).

2 Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared at the meeting.

3 Parking Strategy

Pursuant to Minute 726 of the meeting of Cabinet held on 22nd February 2022, the Working Party received a report of the Executive Director (Neighbourhoods and Environment) on the results of the public consultation on the draft Parking Strategy and Parking Implementation Plan. The comments of the Working Party would be referred to Cabinet for consideration at its meeting in November 2022 with the final draft Parking Strategy and Parking Implementation Plan.

The Working Party discussed the report in some detail. It was noted that the level of response to the consultation had been relatively low, although this was not unusual. The Working Party felt that there was some inconsistency in applying the criteria to determine the proposals to be progressed in the strategy. It was explained that the proposals set out in the Strategy would not be implemented immediately but would be progressed in a phased, structured way over time. The report to Cabinet would be amended to reflect this including the effects of the current cost of living crisis. The Parking Strategy was a live document and would be updated as appropriate to reflect the current situation and relevant data during the life of the plan.

With reference to the aspiration to move to cashless payments for parking, it was suggested that a slower approach to implementing this should be considered. This was essential given the age demographics of the residents of Southend, including the numbers of people visiting the city. Visitors may be deterred from coming to Southend if the facility for all cash payments for parking were withdrawn. The Working Party was informed that the removal of cash payments would not be overnight but would be phased in over many years as the demand and use of cash diminishes and disappears. The Executive Director

(Neighbourhoods & Environment) gave assurances that the report to Cabinet would also be amended to reflect this, including an aspirational timescale. He also undertook to investigate the locations of the car parks where the level of cash used for parking was higher and the possibility of using other cashless/contactless payment facilities such as PayPal or PayPoint.

In response to a question regarding the over rigorous enforcement of the alternative month parking restrictions against residents in the affected roads, the Cabinet Member (Highways, Transport & Parking) gave his assurance that this would be investigated.

With reference to Emissions Based Permit Charging, the Working Party felt that, whilst it was mindful of the need to address the effect emissions and air quality, it could not support imposing such surcharges for diesel/petrol fuelled vehicles to reduce air pollution. The current cost of electric and other alternative powered vehicles was prohibitively expensive for many, including key workers who relied on older forms of transport to travel to and from the city.

The Working Party felt that the wording of some of the questions in the consultation were vague and unclear. It also felt that people may have been deterred from responding to the consultation on the basis that they needed to register on the site before accessing the consultation. There had been limited/no publicity regarding the consultation.

Given the low level of response the Working Party felt it would be difficult to justify the implementation of the Parking Strategy as proposed. Further consultation and dialogue should be undertaken with clearer worded questions and more publicity including the use of other forms of social media, before the final draft Strategy was submitted for approval.

With reference to the Parking Implementation Plan it was suggested that the criteria suggested for implementing parking zones to address parking congestion needed greater flexibility and clearer criteria. The second line of the second paragraph of Page 17 should be amended to read "We will generally not consider implementing a parking scheme unless there is evidence that at least 85% of available kerbside parking is occupied for most of the working day."

Resolved:-

That Cabinet be recommended that further consultation be undertaken with clearer worded questions, and greater publicity where the questionnaire can be accessed, and that a further report be submitted to the Working Party before the Parking Strategy and Parking Implementation Plan is finalised.

Note: This is an Executive function
Eligible for call-in to the Place Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet Member: Councillor Wakefield

Chair: _____