

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 23RD MARCH, 2020

REFERENCE FROM ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE: 25TH FEBRUARY, 2020

“696 CAR PARKING – GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND CHARGES (REF) –

The Cabinet Member for Education and Regenerations presented the report which was a joint report with the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services and Transport. This had been referred from Cabinet at its meeting on 24th February, 2020, for the Scrutiny Committee’s consideration.

The report outlined that there was a requirement to ensure the best possible access to the Vale’s commercial and tourist areas. One way of doing this was by having appropriate public transport and active travel networks in place and ensuring that car parking spaces were available for those who need them most.

It was noted in the report, that when managed properly car parking could benefit the economic activity of areas that it served. It facilitated good access to towns and amenities for residents, workers, shoppers and visitors. There was a need to invest in adequate car parking for those who wanted to visit the Vale of Glamorgan and those who worked within resorts and town centres. It was not simply about maximising car parking space, it was more about ensuring that car parks were well maintained and were accessible as well as ensuring that there was a range of options available to meet short and long stay visitors, businesses and employees in a way that did not detract from the economic viability and vitality of an area.

The report outlined the guiding principles and charging regimes for car parks and charges following consideration of the comments received to the consultation undertaken on Capita's Draft Parking Strategy in Summer of 2018 and reviews of a previous Draft Parking Policy undertaken by the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on 4th April, 2019 and Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 11th April, 2019.

The guiding principles and charging regimes proposed are summarised as follows:

Town Centre Car Parks

- ALL FREE except at the proposed Shoppers’ Car parks at Wyndham Street, Barry and Town Hall Cowbridge. Charges proposed for Shoppers’ Car Parks up to 2 hours FREE, up to 4 hours £2.00, and all day £6.00. Tariffs applicable 6 days per week Monday-Saturday from 8am to 6pm with blue badge holders free.

- NO CHARGES were proposed for on street car parking within any of the town centres.
- The Llantwit Major car parks were subject to separate consideration and discussions with Llantwit Major Town Council and were not covered by the report.

Resort and Coastal Car Parks

- NO CHARGES were proposed for on street car parking at any of the resorts.
- Resort car park charges (Barry Island – Southerndown – Ogmores by Sea) would remain as they were for the summer months but would apply all year round (Resort car parks would not be subject to any seasonal variation in tariff reflecting their all year-round use). Late afternoon and early evening tariffs would continue to apply.
- Annual Permits would be available for coastal resort car parks for the first time at a cost of £50 for 6 months and £100 for 12 months. Disabled persons with blue badges would park for free.
- Bus and coach parking at resorts would be set at £30.00 all day.
- Other coastal (non-resort) car parks at Barry (Cold Knap and Bron y Mor), Llantwit Major Cwm Colhuw, Penarth Cliff Walk, Ogmores by Sea (Portabello), West Farm Southerndown and Llwyn Passat Penarth were used by a mix of residents and visitors to the area and were largely seasonal in demand. Therefore, NO CHARGES were proposed at these car parks.

Country Parks Car Parks

- NO CHARGES were proposed until after 10am in Cosmeston Lakes and Porthkerry Country Park. After 10am until 8pm from 1st March to 30th September and until 5pm from 1st October to end of February charges were proposed with up to 2 hours parking for £1.00, up to 4 hours, £2.00 and £4.00 all day. Bus and coach parking at £30.00 all day. Parking permits would be available for 6 months at £30 or £50 per annum which could be used at either Country Park. Disabled persons with blue badges would park for free.

Waiting Restrictions and Traffic Regulations

- No charges or changes to the current Residents Parking permit Policy were proposed for 2020/21 which would remain FREE to eligible residents.
- All existing Traffic Regulations would remain in force unless subject to separate consideration and consultation.
- It was not proposed to introduce any additional traffic regulations to prevent displacement parking in the town centres or the areas surrounding the Country Parks. The need or otherwise for additional measures would be assessed as necessary in due course. In the interim, appropriate signing would be installed in residential areas in the immediate vicinity of Cosmeston Country Park and Barry Island to deter displacement parking.

- A further report would be presented to Cabinet providing an update on enforcement and to consider if any further residential parking requirements were required.

Ways to Pay and Exemptions

- The report proposed to use modern solar powered 'Pay and Display' Machines with coins and chip / pin / contactless options. Digital payment methods including a Parking App would also be improved through investment in new technology. Consideration was also to be given to installing electric charging points within car parks and on street.

Leisure Centres

- Leisure Centre Car Parks at Barry, Cowbridge and Penarth were subject to separate discussions with Legacy Leisure as part of the ongoing contract negotiations. Legacy Leisure had requested the introduction of controls in these car parks to favour Leisure Centre users and this would be the subject of a further report to Cabinet in the near future.

The report stated that the current proposals better reflected the views of the public and Elected Members. They departed considerably from the initial Car Parking Policy proposals put forward in March 2019 and demonstrated the importance of involving and listening to the views of local people.

It was outlined that the implementation of car parking charges allowed better management and control of parking which would encourage the free movement of vehicles and assist in keeping roads free from congestion and, in so doing, assist in addressing climate change implications in the longer term. The additional income obtained would better secure the long term sustainability of off street parking and also allow for increased investment in these facilities over time.

The optimisation of car parking through the introduction of parking charges could ensure adequate provision of safe affordable parking facilities that would provide infrastructure to support local businesses and attract the public thereby increasing economic activity and growth as well as encouraging future investment within local communities. There was a shortage of short-term parking in Cowbridge in particular and the increased turn-over of parking spaces resulting from parking charges would help to prevent the problem of this becoming worse over time as car ownership and parking demand increased.

Parking charging could increase parking availability for shoppers and visitors which could in turn improve highway safety and the management of the highway network and would reduce the potential for incidents of disorder.

The tables below provided a summary of the estimated net income achievable if the Car Parking – Guiding Principles and Charges (February 2020) was fully implemented for the car parks highlighted in the report. Costs that were already being incurred within the car parks have not been taken into account in the table below as these would still be incurred if the proposals were not implemented. The

Year 1 additional net income figure if the proposals were implemented was estimated at £117k assuming the upfront costs of machine purchase and installation were funded via the Capital Programme and paid back over seven years.

Car Park Charging – Year 1 – Capital funded with payback over seven years

	Town Centre	Coastal Car Parks (additional income by charging same tariff all year round)	Country Parks	Total
Additional Year 1 Costs	£18,555	£0	£22,266	£40,821
Additional Year 1 NNDR	£0	£0	£64,500	£64,500
Additional Year 1 Gross Income	-£63,093	-£27,476	-£131,453	-£222,022
Additional Year 1 Net Income	-£44,538	-£27,476	-£44,687	-£116,701

The tables at Appendix 3 to the report provided a breakdown of the estimated costs and income for each proposed chargeable car park. The table provided an analysis over seven years of the costs and income for each car park. It was estimated that over the seven year period the net income provided by all car parks was £916k.

Members were advised that Appendix 3 contained two pages with page 2 being included in error so Members were asked to discount the information on page 2.

The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services and Transport added that enforcement was the key part of how car parking would be managed, which would be assisted by the introduction of a camera car that would create turnover of spaces.

The Leader, with permission to speaker, stated that this report had been a long time coming, and the proposals closely reflected current arrangements. For Barry, there was still free time available with all day parking accessible at areas such as the multi-storey car park. In relation to Cowbridge, the main car park would be designated a shopper's car park, but again free parking would be available at the Butts. Llantwit Major would be considered at a later date, while free car parking would be available at the Cliff Tops in Penarth. Charges for Nells Point and Ogmored-by-Sea would become all year round. The Leader emphasised that the current proposals reflected discussions with traders held back in 2015, which focussed on increasing turn over.

The Committee welcomed a public speaker, Mr. Fraser, who referred to issues associated with the River Mouth Car Park at Ogmored by Sea. Mr. Fraser outlined the following points:

- He, along with many visitors, benefitted from the coastal path and walks which improved people's mental health and wellbeing;
- There was a requirement to maintain and upgrade the parking for the paths for this to be a first class facility for visitors;

- Displacement car parking occurred on several roads around the river mouth area which led to residents' drivers being blocked and also impinged on the vision of drivers;
- Displacement parking also caused a number of antisocial behaviour including swearing and verbal threats;
- Displacement car parking also represented a loss of income to the Council and this was also affected by there not being enough enforcement;
- The need for more enforcement was evidenced by Mr. Fraser who recorded that on one day 20 cars had been parked illegally, only three had received tickets;
- The River Mouth Car Park would close overnight, but as there was insufficient enforcement, parking and camping would regularly occur long after the car park should have been closed;
- Proper signage was needed to redirect visitors to appropriate camp sites; and
- More enforcement was required and more signs were needed in order to advise visitors of rules and regulations.

A Committee Member asked Mr. Fraser what could be done to resolve the issues he had raised. Mr. Fraser stated that current regulations were not enforced and traffic wardens did not attend the car park on a regular basis because of the abuse they had received. The current signs were ineffective as displacement parking was a regular occurrence and this also created a health hazard. In reply to these comments, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport stated that she was aware of the issues and she had met with the Community Council. As a result, a Charter was being devised which would outline how the Council would work with the Community and the Police in order to eliminate antisocial behaviour. The car park would currently shut at 23:00 but this would change to 22:00 and so be easier to enforce. In addition, some of the issues would be taken forward as the Enforcement Service would be brought back inhouse from 1st April, with coastal car parks being a priority. In regard to better signage, she stated that as part of the Charter new interpretation boards would be installed which would outline the rules and provide greater information to visitors.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration Neighbourhood Services also added that any money that could be generated would potentially lead to extra investment at the car park in order to tackle issues. The Leader further added that the key consideration was enforcement and the issues could be alleviated by the introduction of the camera car which could lead to increased investment.

The Committee then welcomed Councillor N.P. Hodges, a Vale of Glamorgan Councillor but not a Member of the Committee, who had requested to speak on the matter.

Councillor Hodges began by echoing the sentiments made by the public speaker, Mr. Fraser, and that enforcement was the main issue. In relation to Barry Island he stated that the charging for all year round was a big change and that this would result in an issue of overspill and displacement parking which could block up residential areas and also potentially have an impact on the Asda Supermarket. The biggest challenge for Barry Island was the number of visitors, particularly during the summer, and the impact this could have on local residents. Councillor Hodges

stated that more Council staff were required on the Island in order to direct visitors and also to collect payments. In addition, better signage further away from the Island needed to be introduced to inform visitors of the location of the car parks, the prices and the number of spaces available. Furthermore, Councillor Hodges stated that it should be recognised that the car park over on the Island needed to be improved, particularly the surfaces which had deteriorated, and also new ticket machines should be installed.

The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services and Transport stated that the issues raised by the Member were already known and most of these were addressed in the report.

A Committee Member, following on from the comments made by Councillor Hodges, stated that he was encouraged by the proposals and he felt that the Council was heading in the right direction. He recognised that the proposals would increase footfall and turnover at town centre car parks, but the report did not provide enough detail around displacement parking. The Member then referred specifically to displacement parking on Barry Island which he felt would impact on residents. The Member then queried how the proposals were future proofed and he asked why the charging over at the Island could not be staggered as he considered that £1 for one hour was not long enough.

In reply, the Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration stated that residential permits and displacement parking were a known concern, and these had been taken on board. It was important to recognise, particularly on weekends and Bank Holidays, that the Council's parking policy needed to be upheld and if evidence suggested that an area could be subject to Traffic Restriction Orders then the Council would have the evidence to back this up. With regard to the one hour stay for £1, the key here was around keeping the proposals simple and not bringing in too much change. The Cabinet Member stated that if a visitor wanted to spend longer than an hour on the Island, then free on street parking was available and an annual or six-monthly permit could be purchased. It was felt that the Council needed to look at how the current proposals worked and then the Council's policy could be "tweaked" at a later stage. Therefore, the proposal would be reviewed in due course. The Cabinet Member also highlighted that the two hour free parking on street would be enforced and this would help to create turnover.

Further to these comments, the Leader stated that there had not been any new parking permits since the old South Glamorgan Council days. If these were required, then the Council would have the evidence to back this up. In terms of future plans and proofing, the Leader stated that the redevelopment at Nell's Point would be looked at in the future and this could possibly include the development of a multi-storey car park. At this stage no option was off the table.

The Committee queried plans around displacement parking and how visitors would be differentiated with residents. The Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport advised that in relation to residential parking if there were areas of concern then proper schemes to tackle issues could be considered at a later date. It would not be possible to differentiate, but if an area had problems, then schemes such as

double yellow lines or other forms of parking restrictions could be considered. It was however important to gather the data first through parking surveys.

A Committee Member commented that the current proposals were much improved from the previous set presented back in April 2019, but he felt that there was still a concern around seasonal variations as summer months would be when the resorts and country parks would be at their busiest. In response, the Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration advised that displacement parking occurred because of lack of spaces and capacity. The overflow car parks at the country parks required development as these were unsuitable during the winter or rainy periods, so there needed to be further investment to increase capacity. Traders on Barry Island had recently told her that their busiest day ever was during the third week of January of this year. Therefore, the Council had to recognise that the Island was an all year-round resort which required extra staff and Council resource. Additional staff came with additional costs and if these were not funded then the key question was what services should be cut in order to meet the extra costs. It was also important to recognise that most visitors expected to pay for parking. The report reflected an opinion and so there was a need to wait and see how the proposals worked.

In reply to a query regarding the capacity of the Enforcement Service to carry out parking and environmental enforcement, the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services and Transport advised that the camera car would subsidise the Enforcement Officers who would cover both elements of enforcement. In addition, the Council would also be carrying out better education and awareness raising. In relation to the proposed new staff structure for the Enforcement Service, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport stated that initially this would be 4.5 full time equivalent officers. The new service would begin operating on 1st April. The staff structure included an Enforcement Manager and a Process Manager plus 3 Enforcement Officers. The long-term aims were for all Enforcement Officers to have undertaken training on both enforcement functions, and for the camera car to be operational which would help educate road users and improve the parking situations. The Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport added that it had been recognised that the Council needed to priorities where enforcement was carried out which would be wider than town centres, so there would be a greater focus on resort and coastal car parks. The key here was about programming where officers were located, and if more offices were required then this would require a business case.

A Member referred to the scrutiny of the previous proposals and he stated that the current policy was reasonable. The Member queried whether there was a facility for the payment of permits to be spread over a number of months. The Leader stated that this could be reviewed at a later stage.

In summary, the Chairman outlined that the current proposals were welcomed with a greater focus on education and awareness raising. The Committee was in agreement to endorse the Cabinet proposals.

Having considered the report, it was

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T Proposed Car Parking Principles and Charges be endorsed.
- (2) T H A T the Scrutiny Committee's views be referred back to Cabinet in order that the proposed Car Parking – Guiding Principles and Charges 2020/21 and Equality Impact Assessment at Appendices 1 and 2 can be further considered by Cabinet.

Reason for recommendation

- (1) Following consideration of the Cabinet reference from 24th February, 2020
- (2) To ensure that the views of the Scrutiny Committee are considered prior to a decision being taken by Cabinet on the final Car Parking – Guiding Principles and Charges for 2020/21.”