

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Economic and Environmental Wellbeing Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee

Meeting held 28 August 2014

PRESENT: Councillors Cate McDonald (Chair), Ian Auckland (Deputy Chair), Steve Jones, Alf Meade, Helen Mirfin-Boukouris, Robert Murphy, Joe Otten, Martin Smith, Steve Wilson, Paul Wood and Pat Midgley (Substitute Member)

.....

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Neale Gibson (with Councillor Pat Midgley attending as his duly appointed substitute) and Ibrar Hussain.

2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

- 2.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

- 4.1 There were no questions raised or petitions submitted by members of the public.

5. CALL-IN OF HIGHWAY CABINET MEMBER DECISION SESSION ON PARKING PERMIT PRICES

- 5.1 The Committee considered a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer (Matthew Borland) relating to the call-in of the Individual Cabinet Member Decision on Parking Permit Prices. The report attached a report of the Executive Director, Place, addressing the receipt of two petitions, one requesting that parking permit prices be returned to pre-2011 levels (£10 for the first permit, compared to the current £36) and the other requesting that permit prices be reduced for people on low incomes. The decision had been made by the Cabinet Member for Business, Skills and Development on 12th June, 2014 and the report also appended the call-in form, to which Councillor Robert Murphy was the lead signatory.
- 5.2 The Cabinet Member for Business, Skills and Development, on 12th June, 2014, agreed that:-

- (a) the requests contained in the two petitions be noted;
- (b) the permit prices already agreed for 2014/15 be endorsed without further change; and
- (c) officers be instructed to advise the petitioners of the decision.

5.3 In attendance for this item were Councillor Leigh Bramall, Cabinet Member for Business, Skills and Development, Paul Fell, Transport, Traffic and Parking Services Business Manager, and David Whitley, Principal Engineer, Business Management, Regeneration and Development Services.

5.4 Paul Fell made reference to the two petitions which had been received, stating that, although there had been price variations in between, the permit prices were now at the same level that they had been in 2008. The cost of the permits contributed to the Parking Permit Schemes' enforcement, maintenance and administration, and at current levels, the permit fees alone did not cover these costs fully. With this in mind, together with the fact that a parking permit allowed the holder a genuine advantage over other motorists, it had been recommended that the current rate of £36 for the first permit and £72 for a second permit be maintained.

5.5 Councillor Leigh Bramall stated that he believed that permit holders should have to pay a reasonable amount of the costs of enforcing and administering, for the benefit of parking within a permit parking zone and that the cost of the permits compared favourably with those in many other local authorities. He referred to inflation costs of around 5-6% since 2006 and reported on the benefits for permit holders, including the ability to purchase visitor permits. He concluded by stating that permit fees had not been increased for this financial year and, subject to the Council's budgetary position, there were no current plans for any further price increases.

5.6 Members of the Committee raised questions and the following responses were provided:-

- The reason for not including the cost of City Centre permits in the table of comparisons with other local authorities was because the petitions related to the cost of permits within the Peripheral Parking Zones. City Centre permits represented a separate scheme. There were only around 20 permits in existence, which had been distributed historically to pub landlords, chaplains and vicars.
- It was considered that permits provided benefits for residents, particularly providing them with a priority to park within their parking zone, at a time when there was an increasing demand

for parking on the City's highways.

- It was believed that £36 represented a reasonable charge for parking permits, and considered that this was a fair price to pay in the light of the average annual cost of running a vehicle.
- Income from parking permits was part of the Council's "parking account". Any surplus in this account could be used for a variety of transport purposes, as set out in legislation. If the cost of the permits was not retained at £36, the lower contribution from lower permit fees would make new future schemes less viable.
- In terms of feedback regarding customer satisfaction, headlines in a report drafted in 2010/11 had indicated that parking for the majority of residents living within parking zones had improved and that the residents were reasonably happy with enforcement levels in the zones. Responses from visitors to areas such as Ecclesall Road showed that motorists were finding it much easier to finding parking spaces.
- The cost of parking permits for owners of low emission vehicles (Band A and B) were halved in 2009. Officers would look into the possibility of extending the criteria further so that the permit charges would be based on a sliding scale relating to emission levels.
- Details of the income and expenditure within the peripheral parking zone from 2010/11 to 2013/14 was made available at the meeting.
- In terms of the Equality Impact of the permit parking price increase, relative to the cost of running a car, it was not considered that individual groups of people were either advantaged or disadvantaged by the implementation of such a charge.

5.7 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the report now submitted, together with the comments now made and the responses to the questions raised; and
- (b) agrees to take no action in relation to the called-in decision, but consider whether issues arising from the call-in need to be added to its Work Programme 2014/15.

(NOTE: Prior to the passing of the above resolution, an alternative resolution was moved by Councillor Robert Murphy and seconded by Councillor Joe Otten, as follows:-

“That this Committee requests that the decision be deferred until the Committee has considered relevant issues and made recommendations to the Executive.”

The votes on the alternative resolution were ordered to be recorded and were as follows:-

For the Resolution (4) - Councillors Ian Auckland, Robert Murphy, Joe Otten and Martin Smith

Against the Resolution (5) - Councillors Steve Jones, Pat Midgley, Helen Mirfin-Boukouris, Steve Wilson and Paul Wood

Abstained (1) - Councillor Cate McDonald.)

6. CALL-IN OF INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBER DECISION ON THE STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- 6.1 The Committee considered a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer, relating to the call-in of the Individual Cabinet Member Decision on the Statement of Community Involvement. The report attached a report of the Executive Director, Place, containing details of the proposed changes to the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), referring specifically to how the Council consulted on planning applications and planning policy. The decision had been made by the Leader of the Council on 28th July 2014, and the report also attached the call-in form, to which Councillor Ian Auckland was the lead signatory.
- 6.2 In attendance for this item were Councillor Leigh Bramall, Cabinet Member for Business, Skills and Development, Graham Withers, Business Manager, Development Management, and Laurie Platt, Planning Officer, Regeneration and Development Services.
- 6.3 Councillor Leigh Bramall introduced the report, indicating that the proposals comprised a package of measures to ensure that the Planning Service was self-sustainable and less susceptible to further budget cuts.
- 6.4 Graham Withers referred to the proposed changes to the SCI, indicating that the last review of the Statement had been undertaken in 2006 and it had been identified that there was a need to improve a number of the Planning Service's working practices, particularly with regard to how the Service engaged on planning applications. Mr Withers referred specifically to the lack of responses received to the numerous letters sent to residents and businesses, inviting comments

on planning applications. He referred to some of the proposed changes, which included reducing the number of letters sent to residential properties, redesigning site notices in order to make the key content easier to read and ceasing to issue voluntary site notices. He concluded by stating that he believed that the quality of engagement with the public would not be adversely affected.

6.5 Councillor Ian Auckland stated that whilst he welcomed some of the improvements, and believed that Sheffield already went beyond the statutory requirements in terms of how it engaged with the public in connection with planning applications, he raised some concerns, specifically with regard to the plans to promote online services on the basis that a number of people did not have internet access. He also considered that pre-application consultation should be encouraged at every opportunity on the basis that it could resolve a number of issues prior to applications being submitted, therefore saving time and money.

6.6 Graham Withers responded by stating that he agreed with the principle of pre-application consultation, indicating that, although it was not a statutory process, albeit one that the Government encouraged, there would still be the necessary resources available to enable the Planning Service to provide such a service. Councillor Bramall added that whilst he accepted that the forecasted savings were not significant, if similar savings were replicated across the Council, they would add up.

6.7 Members of the Committee raised questions and the following responses were provided:-

- Whilst officers encouraged the practice of residents speaking to their neighbours prior to submitting an application in order to address any concerns, there would still be a requirement on the Council to notify the neighbours, and invite any comments from them.
- Information on pre-application consultation was not included in the SCI as it was a separate service provided for applicants, and not covered by the SCI. Councillor Bramall agreed to give consideration to the possibility of publishing pre-application advice given as part of any subsequent planning application, but was mindful that this might deter investment in the City, as developers need space to discuss options before finalising their proposals.
- The Planning Service sent information by email, where possible, and when they obtained email addresses, all future correspondence would be sent using this method, rather than by post.

- Officers would decide on which applications they deemed to be more controversial, which would result in more letters being sent out to residents and businesses, and notices posted, in the surrounding area. Appropriate development types were listed in the Code of Practice. This list has been extended following consultation responses and would be refreshed if necessary.
- It would not be possible to transfer the costs of distributing notification letters to residents and businesses to the applicants as there was no legal way of doing this. Also, the fees in terms of applications for planning permission were set nationally, therefore could not be changed by the Council.
- It would not be possible for officers to personally deliver notification letters when they visited areas to put up statutory notices as this would be inefficient and the Service had to follow its Code of Practice consistently in terms of notifications.
- Councillor Bramall agreed to consider where there was any justification for posting larger site notices, but noted that officers had adopted the suggestion of using coloured notices for amended schemes and had received favourable feedback on the improved design proposal.

6.8 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the report now submitted, together with the comments now made and the responses to the questions raised; and
- (b) agrees to take no action in relation to the called-in decision, but consider whether issues arising from the call-in need to be added to its Work Programme 2014/15.

(NOTE: Prior to the passing of the above resolved, an alternative resolution was moved by Councillor Ian Auckland and seconded by Councillor Martin Smith, as follows:-

“That this Committee requests that the decision be deferred until the Committee has considered relevant issues and made recommendations to the Executive.”

The votes on the alternative resolution were ordered to be recorded and were as follows:-

For the Resolution (4) - Councillors Ian Auckland, Robert Murphy, Joe Otten and Martin Smith

- Against the Resolution (5) - Councillors Steve Jones, Pat Midgley,
Helen Mirfin-Boukouris, Steve Wilson
and Paul Wood
- Abstained (1) - Councillor Cate McDonald.)