

Notes of the Reduction in Car Parking Income Task and Finish Group meeting held on Thursday 16 November 2017 at 4.00 pm

Present: Councillors Bald (EB), R Bradburn (RB), McPake (VM), Wallis (PW) and K Wilson (Chair) (KW)

Officers: E Richardson (Overview and Scrutiny Officer)(ER)

Witnesses: T Blackburne-Maze (Service Director: Public Realm) (TBM), S Bailey (Strategic Lead Parking and Taxis) (SB), A Rulton (Strategic Finance Partner) (AR)

Also Present: A Francis (Chair of the MK Public Transport Group) (AF)

Apologies: Councillor Bint

Disclosure of Interest: **None**

Notes

- KW explained why the TFG had been established and set out the aims of the review.
- He thanked officers for their input and provision of data. He also advised the Group that it needed to be examined carefully and not jump to conclusions as research into causation always raised more questions than it answered.
- VM commented that there appeared to be a 7% reduction in people coming into CMK. She wondered whether out of town developments such as MK1 had a significant impact and was there any data on footfall at MK1?
- SB advised that the Council had asked for such data before and management at MK1 were reluctant to share this.
- TFG queried whether a reduction in parking charges increase usage of parking in CMK?
- SB reported that historically there was no evidence that price increases significantly affected parking usage.
- SB explained that the survey of parking space occupancy was not particularly scientific – it was just a person counting the numbers of occupied / unoccupied spaces at a certain point in time. Survey used to be done twice a year in June and December, but now only done in June as December figures were skewed by the Christmas factor.
- RB referred the TFG to a document *Re-Think! Parking on the High Street*. Although it was now several years old, there was some interesting information in it. He would send the link to ER for circulation to the group.
- VM commented that parking charges elsewhere in the country were often much higher than in Milton Keynes. KW asked if there was any comparative data available as that could be useful.

- SB reported that there was some benchmarking data on parking in Milton Keynes' geographical / statistical neighbours which she was happy to share with the Group.
- Data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) indicated a significant increase year on year in on-line shopping, particularly by younger members of the population.
- The TFG had already received a large amount of data from which it was difficult to draw any firm conclusions.
- AR advised that cashless parking, eg via mobile 'phone apps, made it harder to assess where people were parking. TFG also wondered whether this meant people were less likely to over-pay as alerts to 'phones and top-up facilities meant it was easier to just pay for time used?
- TFG noted that up to 2012/13 income from parking was doing better than the budget forecast which meant the surplus had been put into the relevant reserve.
- In 2013/14 and 2014/15 the rate of increase was much smaller but still better than the budget forecast and contributions to the reserve were also made.
- In 2015/16 the forecast increase in parking income was based on the actuals reported in 2014/15. If the income had followed previous trends then the income would have been on target. However, real issues with the fall in parking income were not manifest until 2016/17.
- There had been big changes to the way employee permits were charged for and managed. What the Council gained on permit payments and scratch-cards it had lost on Pay and Display income. Employees had to come into CMK and pay to park; casual shoppers could make a choice not to come into the centre.
- SB reported that during this period the Council also increased the number of standard tariff spaces. There were now a 1000 less Premium Rate bays than 5 years ago following conversion to either Standard Tariff or employee parking bays.
- It was thought that the reduction of footfall in CMK since 2010 was as much as 20%.
- VM reported that the No 1 and No 6 bus services were adding extra runs to the MK1 development.
- TFG discussed whether coin denominations made difference ie when the standard charge was 40p an hour people would pay with a 50p piece and 'donate' the extra 10p, but now the charge was 50p per hour they were more likely to pay the exact amount.
- TBM reported that that the Council was aware that footfall through CMK railway station was up but it was trying to get more data on the direction ie was the increase in people coming into Milton Keynes or leaving Milton Keynes to work / shop elsewhere? Were people who had previously driven into Milton Keynes now using the train?
- TFG then raised a number of questions for consideration at future meetings:

- ? What effect was the free parking offer for electric vehicles (EVs) having on parking income? The reliability of EVs was improving and their use was likely to grow.
 - ? Has footfall at CMK library fallen? It used to be one of the busiest in the country but has the trend for e-books caused a fall?
 - ? Has the decline in the number of 'big name' shops in the Food Centre made a difference ie Waitrose moving to Oakgrove, Sainsbury's to the Hub and Morrison's opening near the station?
 - ? Has there been a reduction in footfall at the Theatre and restaurants in the Theatre District? Unlikely to be significant factor as activity there was likely to after the 6.00 pm cut-off.
 - ? Does time of day make a difference? Are people coming into CMK to shop after the 6.00 pm cut-off?
 - ? What proportion of parking income comes in over the Christmas / New Year sales period?
- AF reported that during 2016/17 bus operators reported a 6% fall in passengers coming into CMK, which matched the fall in parking usage.
 - TFG considered the possibility of people parking in the 'doughnut' estates round the centre of MK. SB reported that they only had data for those areas where resident's permit schemes were in place.
 - There were several MKDP car parks near Campbell Park, primarily for the use of those accessing Campbell Park. However, as these were currently free, they tended to be used as long stay parking by people working in CMK. The possibility of making these time-limited eg 2 hours free parking, to facilitate those wanting to use the Park was being discussed.

Follow-Up Work

- Time-line of events which could have affected a fall in parking income;
- Data on changes in shopping habits;
- Footfall data for CMK, the station etc;
- Data on national trends;
- Parking benchmarking data;
- Income Data and Trends Analysis.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 6.00 PM