

Notes of the Reduction Car Parking Income Task and Finish Group meeting held on Wednesday 22 November 2017 at 2.00 pm

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

Officers: E Richardson (Overview and Scrutiny Officer))

Witnesses: Councillor Gifford (Cabinet Member – Place) (LG)

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

Apologies: Councillor Bint

Disclosure of Interest: None

Notes

- KW thanked Sara Bailey for the parking benchmarking data from other local authorities and the finance team for the parking income data and analysis. A lot of additional information had been circulated and needed to be considered.
- He then welcomed Councillor Gifford and gave a short resumé of the purpose of the TFG.
- The decline in anticipated parking income during 2016/17 had been significant which is what had raised the alarm with the Budget Scrutiny Committee.
- The TFG was not looking at a single factor; there was likely to be a mixture of reasons for the decline in parking income as both footfall into the Centre:MK / Intu and bus usage had also fallen.
- LG agreed that it was important to compare local trends with what was happening nationally.
- During 2015 the Council had been involved in discussions with businesses about the lack of employee parking spaces in CMK. 2016 had seen a peak in demand for employee spaces. As the Council announced its plans for a new car park the usage declined. Demand for parking of all types started to fall, but there was a marked decline in the use of the Premium spaces.
- Daily employee permits, bought via the RingGo Parking 'phone app, across the year, worked out at exactly the same amount as an annual permit therefore there was no incentive to buy an annual permit outright. With more and more organisations across Milton Keynes adopting flexible working practices and more people working from home 1-2 days a week, buying a permit on a daily basis was seen as a more economic option.
- It was noted that the recent experience of members of the TFG was that it was now much easier to find somewhere to park during the day, possibly due to the flexible working approach.
- LG confirmed that visitor numbers were definitely down and this was a key issue of current budget planning.

- Predicted income was not being realised and therefore more sophisticated methods of predicting future usage, with more accurate data and better planning were required. Parking sensors were being installed in the car parks in CMK and the provision of more accurate data would be one of the conditions of the new parking management contract when it was let in 2018.
- LG did advise that collecting data was one thing, having the time and staff resources to analyse it properly and then make decisions as to what to do with it was another.
- LG confirmed that there were no changes to parking charges in the 2018/19 budget, although the second stage of the phased increases, mainly to employee permits, which had been agreed in 2016/17, would come into force.
- VM asked whether it was possible to look at the separate sections individually, ie commuter area near the station, the central business section and then the area round the shopping centre but was advised the Council did not hold sufficient data at the moment to make this worthwhile.
- LG also advised that the basis on which parking was managed was likely to change in the future, with 'smart' cars being able to interact with parking facilities to facilitate charging, advice on where spaces were available etc.
- AF said being able to pay daily may eventually alter people's behaviour. If one has prepaid for parking then one is more inclined to use the car, whereas if paying daily, they may well start to explore alternative means of transport.
- VM commented that the redways were still a very underused amenity in Milton Keynes.
- EB commented that for many visitors, wherever they happened to be, having parking available in the right place was more important than cost. She would be interested to see the statistics from the Coachway Park and Ride as she felt that it was probably underused as it was in the wrong place.
- The free parking for electric vehicles, provided they were plugged into a charging point, was a 3 year government scheme to encourage a more concerted move to electric vehicles and the policy would need to be reviewed once the current scheme ended.
- EB expressed concern that many of the long stay bays were further away from the shopping centre; older people did not want to, or could not, walk that far and were choosing to shop elsewhere.
- LG said she thought the planned shopping centre car park near John Lewis might make a difference to the retail footfall in CMK, although that would not necessarily make a difference to the Council's income from parking charges.
- Most of the parking in CMK was classified as on-street parking. Converting it to off-street parking was quite difficult, although income from off-street parking charges was not ring-fenced in the same way as on-street parking income.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 3.55 PM