

CABINET 13 FEBRUARY 2019

MEMBER QUESTION TIME

Question submitted by Councillor Andy Boddington

Question:

“Unexpected problems have occurred with parking permit regimes. On 6 February, the Shropshire Star reported problems in Bridgnorth under the headline “‘Outrageous’ £373 rise for Bridgnorth parking permits under fire”. The newspaper reported Shropshire Council as promising an immediate review.

We need to keep the economy of small and distant market towns like Ludlow thriving.

Two reviews of the parking strategy are due. The main review will be in November when data on the impact of the new regime will be available for the full annual cycle. The first is in May. Given the problems identified in Bridgnorth and Ludlow could the Cabinet bring the May review forward to March with a specific remit to look at the permit regime?”

Response:

All Members will be aware of the work undertaken to deliver the countywide car parking strategy, and Permit regime. This includes work to prepare, attend and address public meetings, consult, respond to the consultation issues raised and subsequent implementation via Scrutiny reviews and then a final determination by Cabinet.

The Strategy implementation is being delivered in accordance with its approved project plan, the final phase of the off-street parking strategy began on Monday 11th February 2019 in the north of the county, and Permits are also being rolled out. It is true to say that, due to the size and magnitude of this work, issues will manifest themselves and local dynamics will undoubtedly apply.

A project review occurs on a regular basis; this consists of key Parking and Highways staff, Public Protection, Customer Service, Web and social media and Communication colleagues’, whose role it is to identify issues with the roll out of the programme, ensure that data and operational issues are identified and reacted to as appropriate, this process is ongoing throughout the strategy roll out period and post implementation review.

Riverside West elevated carpark, in Bridgnorth, is unique in that it is currently the only off-street car park that is not a pay and display but charges apply for residents parking permits. Riverside West elevated sits alongside the Riverside car park which is a pay and display carpark only. Given that both carparks are limited in capacity and car parking space in the Riverside area is in high demand due to the constraints

of the cliff side and the river, both car parks score as a band 4. Consistency has been applied across the county, hence the large increase.

We have been aware of the problems with residents parking, not just in Riverside but in Bridgnorth as a whole, now for a number of years. Part 2 of the new strategy covers residents parking and given the severity of the residents parking issues in Bridgnorth priority has been afforded to review. As such, initial proposals for residents parking was presented to local Members and resident group representatives last November, these proposals have now been re-engineered based on the feedback received at this meeting. Officers recently met with local Members and the revised proposals well received. Further meetings with local Members and resident groups are planned in the forthcoming weeks, the revised proposals include the introduction of new residents parking schemes and amendment to existing schemes. With regards the existing Friar Street, Cartway, Riverside scheme; given the very limited on street provision the revised proposals include the integration of the on and off-street provision meaning that resident permits tariffs for Riverside West could be aligned with on-street tariffs. In the interim, permit charges for resident permit holders on record prior to the introduction of Part1 of the strategy have been waived.

Question continued:

“In Ludlow, the withdrawal of scratchcards has deterred visitors booking self-catering or B&B accommodation in the town. Visitors must park outside the town centre in Galdeford leaving them with a walk of up to a 1km to their residence. We have extensive feedback from accommodation owners that this is leading to a cancellation of bookings.”

Response:

There are a number of options available for visitors to park other than the concessions on offer to park in off street carparks. Restrictions only apply between 8am and 6pm and outside of these hours visitors may park unrestricted and for free. Visitors may load and unload their vehicles and blue badge holders may utilise the parking bays free of charge without restriction and the pop and shop facility may be utilised. In addition, should visitors wish to lie in or return to their properties after a day out early they may use the mobile payment system to purchase a short stay ticket, to bridge their return time up until 6pm.

The new scheme has been received well by residents permit holders who are now able to return home and find a space within a reasonable distance of their properties. However, we do consider that some capacity could be made available for holiday lettings, although this would utilise the new digital permit system rather than scratch cards.

Continued

Question continued:

“In a separate issue, the new TRO for residents parking in the Red Zone and Blue Zone is causing problems. It has not yet been implemented but will exclude many town centre residents from having a residents’ permit for parking in the zone in which they live. This is because permits are only available to residents in specifically identified properties drawn from a database of residences that seems to be decades out of date. The simplest approach of ensuring that the applicant household pays council tax at a Red or Blue Zone address has been ignored.”

Response:

The new TRO for residents parking has been implemented, we are not aware of any problems with residents in the Red zone and Blue area. Entitlement for permits is now determined utilising the current council tax register and does not include properties of dual use that only pay business rates.

There is however a revised TRO proposal intended to bring into line the specified list of properties within the TRO with properties as determined by the street gazetteer. Formal consultation on this TRO amendment was carried out in December, one objection was received from Cllr Boddington. Cllr Boddington wishes his objection to stand meaning that a decision report is therefore required before amendment can be implemented.

Summary:

As stated an initial, review of the implementation was agreed for May 2019, as a previous result of a Scrutiny review of the entire strategy, and then a full review in November 2019 following an entire annual cycle of implementation. The May 2019 strategy review is still considered to be appropriate, as we are still in the implementation process and a countywide implementation of a strategy to manage car parking on and off street was required. Where there have been successes, such as the initial evidence in changing parking behaviour, this is also a factor, plus the ability to utilise real time data from the installation of the latest pay and display machines, use of chip and pin, and pay by phone app (MI permit), to further influence decisions and support our partners. This element of the parking strategy outcome should also be taken into consideration.

A balance allowing such a complex piece of work to be implemented and undoubted issues that arise and be addressed is key when a full countywide picture is in place. This does not minimise the issues that have been raised, meetings with business owners have taken place to work through the issues and will continue to be held - dialogue will continue to take place.

It is proposed that a review across the entire project, with detailed evidence, would result in a richer Scrutiny process, ultimately enhancing the car parking strategy offer.