



## **ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY PANEL**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – TOWN CENTRE PARKING**

#### **THE REVIEW**

The overall aim of the scrutiny investigation was to investigate car parking provision in the town centre. The review considered if the provision was enough to cope with demand now and in the future, including provision for late night shopping and the town's night time economy. The panel also considered disabled parking provision, safety in car parks, the role of developers and short stay provision.

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

At the time of the review there was a reported capacity within the town's long stay and short stay parking facilities. With the main demands on short stay spaces being around the Christmas period and around the southern end of the town, especially around the University and the shops on Linthorpe Road. There was potential for demand for parking space in Middlehaven once the regeneration schemes are completed. However the Council have been working with consultants to ensure parking provision in the area.

It was more difficult for the panel to assess if the current provision would be enough to provide for any future demand based on the information submitted to the panel. Demand could be difficult to predict especially with the development of green travel plans and alternative policies encouraging people to use public transport. The provision of additional parking has to be balanced with the need to encourage more people away from their cars and on to public transport whilst ensuring that economic growth and prosperity is not compromised. It was hoped that the Council's parking strategy would ensure the correct level of parking provision to fit with the aspirations of the town.

The Council has worked with short stay car park providers to ensure that parking facilities are available for late night shopping on Thursdays. More publicity and signage needed to be developed to encourage visitors to the town's evening economy and to direct them to car parking that they knew would be safe, secure and accessible.

The town has accessible disabled parking and developments were taking place to ensure that parking spaces in on-street disabled parking bays were provided in order to discourage parking on double yellow lines in 'hot-spot' areas where deliveries were being hindered and traffic was being obstructed.

The panel was encouraged to hear that the Council's car parks had achieved Park Mark Status and that crime levels in the car parks were at an all time low.

The panel was pleased to hear that the installation of on-street pay and display parking had been a success in the town and that the Council were working closely with businesses to ensure that the parking schemes located near businesses were appropriate.

The panel found that the private operation of the short-stay car parks was operating very well. The Mall Car Park has benefited from development including new surfacing and signage and the car park has seen a rise in usage and income.

The panel noted the comments regarding the proposed developments in Cannon Park and the impact that this may have on town centre shops and car parks.

The panel were however keen to see the use of technology to improve visitors experiences of parking in the town, such as variable messaging systems which give accurate information about available spaces and the introduction of payment by mobile phone schemes.

The panel visited the town centre's main car parks and spoke to car park providers. There were a number of issues that the panel considered important which were

- the impact that the Cannon Park development could have on town centre car parks due to the provision of additional parking
- the toilet facilities within the Captain Cook Car Park.

The Council worked closely with the businesses located in the town and with developers in order to provide for their parking needs and that developers were being asked to make a contribution to wards improving car parking. Regular meetings are held with the University to address the parking issues in the area. It was recognised that a balance must be made between developing new car parks and developing alternative solutions to parking, such as green travel plans and the use of a shuttle bus between the rail station and the university.

The panel was disappointed to learn that the previous panel's recommendations regarding the implementation of a residents parking scheme in the University Ward had not been completed.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the parking strategy is reviewed by the panel in a year's time and the service area should report on whether or not the car park capacity is meeting the need from commuters/shoppers.

That the Council ensures that there is sufficient safe and secure evening car parking provision which is well publicised in order to attract evening visitors to the town's developing night time economy.

To ensure that adequate publicity is given to the mobile phone payment scheme for public awareness.

That the Council maintains a dialogue with the private sector parking providers regarding the developments and parking provision in Cannon Park to ensure town centre car parking is not compromised by out of town schemes.

That the Council discusses the condition of the toilets at the Captain Cook Car Park with the Management of the Captain Cook Centre with the view to each organisation making a contribution to funding for improvements to the toilets.

That the Council install variable messaging systems at appropriate locations which direct visitors/commuters to available parking spaces within the town.

That the residents parking is given a priority within the capital programme to enable the previous panel's recommendation regarding the introduction of the scheme in the University Ward to be implemented