

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Special Meeting of **Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Committee Room 1B, County Hall, Durham on **Thursday 1 October 2015 at 10.00 am**

Present:

Councillor B Graham (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors E Adam, J Armstrong, J Clare, J Clark, J Gray, I Jewell, P May, S Morrison, P Stradling, L Taylor and A Hopgood

Co-opted Members:

Mrs P Spurrell

Also Present:

Councillor Hopgood

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors D Bell and D Hall.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declaration of interest.

4 Any items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

There were no items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties.

5 Briefing Note: Parking on Council Land - Summary of Issues Raised

Members were provided with a briefing note to provide a summary of the issues raised at the last special meeting of Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 14 September 2015 to discuss the topic of parking on council land (for copy of briefing note see file of minutes). The Chair advised that the findings and conclusions were based on the evidence presented at the last meeting.

6 Light Touch Review of Parking on Council Land - Key Findings, Conclusions and Formulation of Recommendations by Members

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer presented the key findings and conclusions of the Light Touch Review on Parking on Council Owned Land to help Members formulate the recommendations (for copy of slides, see file of minutes).

The aim of the review was to raise awareness to members of the council of the options available to address challenges and issues in relation to parking on Council land. The review would specifically address:

- What powers the Council had to prevent obstruction to footways from inconsiderate parking on highway verges and any challenges/issues.
- What options were available for dealing with parking on open space amenity land and any challenges/issues.

The findings of the review were as follows:-

- Very few complaints were received in relation to parking on grassed areas and highway verge which would suggest this was not an issue for the majority of people.
- Car ownership was high with an estimated 450,000 cars in County Durham.
- Issues with parking would not disappear, just move from one area to another where the issue may be more serious.
- Parking on highway verges and grassed areas was an issue in many areas but each had its own set of problems.
- There were cost implications to all options which could lead to service implications.
- Educate drivers to park more considerately especially when parking on highway verge.
- Durham County Council had no parking policy for parking on grassed areas and highway verge.

The conclusions were as follows:-

- Parking issues were Countywide but there was no single solution.
- Options available to the Council all had a cost implication.
- Educate the public about considerate parking.
- Members had been briefed of powers available and that these were limited. Awareness of challenges/issues and options available and that all actions required resources.
- First point of contact for members was the CRM system this ensured that the right team received the request.
- Parking on grassed areas and highway verges was low priority to the public in comparison to other environmental issues.
- Tackling issues could lead to greater issues when cars parked elsewhere.

The suggested recommendations to members were as follows:-

- Education awareness to highlight the need to park considerately for the safety of pedestrians and other road users using Durham County News and Durham County Council website.
- Members used CRM system as first point of contact to ensure the enquiry was dealt with by the right team.
- That each case was looked at on an individual basis.
- That the service investigate, monitor and review new legislation in the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

Members were asked to comment on the possible recommendations.

The Chairman indicated that she would like social media included in the first recommendation.

Councillor Clark referred to page 7 of the briefing note in relation to cars for sale on council land and sought clarification on the procedure if the car did not belong to a trader. The Chairman responded that this was not in the remit of the committee.

Councillor May asked what the cost implications would be to provide a policy for parking on grassed areas and highway verges. Councillor Armstrong responded that the recommendations of the committee would be given to the Portfolio Holder and they could ask the question but this would result in prioritising and something else would have to be removed.

Councillor Hopgood commented that the recommendations suggested that there was not an issue with parking on council land but people did not complain because the council did not have a policy. Dog fouling they knew the council had a policy so this was reported as they knew something would be done. If the highway was blocked she would telephone the police not the council, so would not expect to see high figures of complaints.

Councillor Armstrong commented that the police would not get involved unless there was a blatant obstruction. Ian Hoult, Neighbourhood Protection Manager, confirmed that the Police had fed back to him and their priority fell in line with what Councillor Armstrong stated, that they would only take action if there was a direct obstruction as they also had to prioritise.

Ian Hoult also referred to the costs which would include signage, orders, advertising, consultation, monitoring, evidence gathering and legal resources to take action.

Councillor Adam referred to customers not reporting parking on council land as it was a police matter as the council could not take action, but the council did have powers to take action and in his own ward he used the neighbourhood wardens.

Councillor Morrison commented that she was aware of the costs associated with reinstating land but the recommendations looked reactive not proactive.

Brian Buckley, Strategic Highways Manager, referred to the hotspots map which was shown at the last meeting and indicated that the majority of problems were in urban areas. There was a parking policy in terms of standards which was yellow lines etc. but this was talking about parking on footpaths on estates. There was currently a back log with the

condition of roads and footpaths and there were funds for the maintenance of existing roads and footpaths. He could work with members who were happy to use some of their budget.

Councillor Hopgood responded that she had invested some of her budget and she found that the parking bays were left empty as people drove over them so that they could park outside their door. This had caused ruts in the grass which resulted in problems with grass cutting. This was a hazard and someone could potentially fall and break a leg. She had worked with the neighbourhood wardens who had knocked on doors and sent letters but people knew that the council could not do anything as there was no policy in place. You could educate but it would not change and there was nothing in the recommendations to look at producing a policy. Nothing was being done so as not to create work.

The Chairman responded that it was about the medium term financial plan.

Mary Readman, Customer Relations, Policy and Performance Manager, referred to the final recommendation and indicated that Ian Houlton and Clare Pattinson were both keen to look at legislation and explore but there was a concern of the resources required to carry this out and it needed to be weighed up in terms of what else was going on.

Councillor Clare indicated that he had supported Councillor Hopgood and he did sympathise but he did not think a policy was the answer. If signs were erected it would not change the behaviour and change the problem. He referred to recommendations two and three which gave him reassurances that when he received a phone call about parking on council land he could get in touch with the neighbourhood wardens who would deal with the issues on an individual basis. He was aware of the money constraints and the legal issues which were going to be dealt with. He also commented that he could use his budget and advised the committee that he was happy with all the draft recommendations.

Pam Spurrell indicated that where she lived one of the tenants parked fully on the pavement which meant she had to do a three point turn to get to her property. The properties were built when people did not have cars and they did not have garages and the housing association were unable to provide drives so parking on the pavements would have to continue.

Councillor Stradling indicated that there were different criteria for different parts of the county. In his area they encouraged parking on council land so that buses could get past. It was unfair to say in some areas that you could park on council land. He appreciated the problems that Councillor Hopgood had in her area but he commented that the recommendations were the best with the information provided and he moved the recommendations.

Councillor Clark asked that the publicity campaign on inconsiderate parking also include details of who to contact and what to do if not carried out.

Councillor Armstrong indicated that Councillor Stradling had moved the recommendation and he seconded the recommendations.

Resolved: That the draft recommendations be agreed subject to social media been included in recommendation 1.

7 Next Steps

The Scrutiny Officer advised members that the key findings and recommendations of the Light Touch Review would be presented to the Portfolio Holder.