

Councillor Will Thomas
Covenener
Car Park Charges Scrutiny Working Group

Please ask for: Councillor Mark Thomas
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Our Ref: MT/CM
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Date: 9th January 2018

Dear Councillor Thomas

CAR PARK CHARGES SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP 28 NOVEMBER 2017

Further to the scrutiny meeting on the 28 November 2017 date and the letter dated 18 December 2017, I respond to the questions raised as follows:

1. That you use Bracelet Bay, Caswell and Langland foreshore car parks to carry out a pilot study that will preferably reduce car park charges in Winter to £1 for 2 hours with the aim of increasing footfall and also tourist footfall/usage of these car parks.

The income for foreshore car parks has increased following the withdrawal of winter charging, however it does appear that there has been a small reduction in visitor numbers.

I will be looking at options as to how winter charges in foreshore car parks could be reviewed. However it would be necessary to ensure that any reduction in income could be mitigated. One of the options is to look at increasing summer charges to compensate for a reduction in the winter charges and this was positively received when it was suggested at the scrutiny meeting. I will work with officers to develop potential options for a decision.

2. That car parking capacity in Mumbles is specifically reviewed as part of the commissioning review. Also that you ensure that the state of the foreshore car parks as exemplified at Bracelet Bay are addressed including particularly the entrance in and out markings, the lineage, the fencing.

It is acknowledged that the popularity of Mumbles combined with the relatively limited parking does cause frustrations and challenges. However there is no simple solution to this issue as the availability of potential parking sites as well as the funding to develop and new parking areas is extremely limited. Officers are aware of the challenges and will pursue opportunities to improve parking capacity as they arise.

As reported at the scrutiny meeting, the revenue budgets for car park maintenance are extremely limited, however, some small scale improvements are undertaken, including

lining and surface repairs. Bracelet Bay was scheduled for relining in this financial year; this has now been completed together with lining on the entrance and exit to the car park.

3. That you look into the possibility of asset transfer for foreshore toilets.

Asset transfer for foreshore toilets is already under consideration, a successful example being Southgate. This initiative is being led by Waste Management & Parks team as part of an overall strategy for public conveniences.

4. Install an entrance gate at Bracelet Bay car park that can be used to close the car park at night when issues arise.

We are aware that some anti-social behaviour does occur in the car park especially during the summer months and have discussed the issue with PCSO's covering the Mumbles area. We will continue to work with them to see if it is possible to deal with the issue without having to install lockable barriers. Installing two barriers would cost approximately £8k to £11k depending on the size and any additional civil works required. Hence if it is not possible to resolve the issues by working with the Police then we would have to look at how barriers could be funded. This may require support from Members Community Budgets. Consideration would also have to be given on how the use of barriers are managed and whether the access to a public car park could be operated by a neighbouring business.

5. Look into the possibility of having lights above ticket machines in foreshore car parks.

The charging period for foreshore car parks ends at 7pm. During the winter months additional lighting would be beneficial for that very limited window from dusk to 7pm. Consideration would need to be given on the cost of providing the lighting and income generated during that period. I will ask officers to review this to see whether it is cost effective to install lighting and whether it could be funded.

6. Follow up on progress with finding a solution to the issues being experienced with ticket machines across Swansea as a matter of urgency.

Car parking ticket machines can break down from time to time, especially when located in an exposed and aggressive marine environment, we have a dedicated group of car park cashiers that will undertake first line maintenance to get the machinery back up and running, with more complex faults necessitating the manufacturer to visit to undertake repairs. It is acknowledged that there has been an unacceptable level of reliability with regard to the communications within some of the machines, which has led to an inability to accept card payments, this has proven even more difficult in some of our coastal car parks where communication signal reception is poor. This issue is not limited to Swansea but is an industry issue.

However, officers have been working with neighbouring authorities, through the British Parking Association, to develop a joint procurement opportunity, which will provide a number of benefits including greater purchasing power, better technical support from the chosen manufacturer (as they will have a greater concentration of clients within South and West Wales regions), greater emphasis for any contractor to perform, as failure will affect future contracts from the regions.

In the interim, the council has achieved recent success with resolving non-performance with a different contractor and intends to repeat this process with the current provider of car park ticket machines. As part of this process it is important to be able to demonstrate, to any future court, that Swansea Council has given the contractor every opportunity to rectify any problems and to document this process. It is a lengthy, time consuming and frustrating process, but necessary if the council is to be successful in any possible litigation. Progress hasn't been as quick as we would like, due to a changes in key personnel within the car parking section, and when dealing with contractual matters consistency of approach is key. However, I am confident that good progress is being made and that Swansea Council and it's neighbouring authorities will be able to provide good quality, reliable parking equipment with effective technical support in the near future. It is most unfortunate that the parking industry is currently plagued by such problems, however, it is expected that such combined procurement and bargaining power, brought about by regional collaboration, will bring about an improvement in service.

7. That you look at the viability and legality of leasing out some car parks as part of the Councils asset disposal programme and consider as part of the commissioning review.

This is a significant element of work and will be incorporated into considerations over the future of car parking provision and how the service is delivered. This will be an ongoing activity and I will work with officers to ensure that our approaches provide the best outcomes for Swansea.

8. Consider the inclusion of a city centre drop off and collection point for self-drive vehicles in any city centre regeneration plans.

Whilst this technology is still in the early development stages, such facilities will be considered for inclusion as part of the wider city centre regeneration plans. Officers are monitoring the developments associated with autonomous vehicles and will ensure that we make the necessary provision as greater clarity is provided.

Yours sincerely



COUNCILLOR MARK THOMAS
CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT SERVICES