

# MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

## Minutes of the Special Economy and Development Select Committee held at County Hall, Usk on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> July 2014 at 1.30 pm

Agenda Item 3ii

**PRESENT:** County Councillor S. Jones (Chairman)

County Councillors: D. Dovey, D.L. Edwards, R.J.C. Hayward, J.L. Prosser, S. White and A. Wintle.

County Councillors D. Blakebrough, R. Harris and B. Strong, V.E. Smith.

### OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr P. Matthews	- Chief Executive
Mrs K. Beirne	- Chief Officer, Enterprise
Mr R. Hoggins	- Head of Operations
Mrs A. Perrin	- Car Park Manager
Mr R. Webb	- Communications Manager
Mrs T. Harry	- Head of Improvement and Democracy
Miss H. Ilett	- Scrutiny Manager
Mrs S. King	- Democratic Services Officer

### ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr P. Munjame	- Chair, Chamber of Commerce Usk
Mrs J. Barnes	- Secretary CAIR
Mr R. Galletley	- Mayor, Usk Town Council
Mr G. Whitcombe	- Monmouthshire Disability Champion
Mr D. Cummings	- Monmouth District Chamber of Trade and Commerce

### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

County Councillor D. Edwards declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest, pursuant to the members' code of conduct as a blue badge holder.

County Councillor P. Hobson declared a prejudicial interest, pursuant to the members' code of conduct, as the relative of blue badge holders. Councillor Hobson remained in the meeting and took part in discussion, as he had a dispensation in relation to the interest.

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County Councillor D. Dovey, R. Harris, J. Prosser and S. White declared personal and non-prejudicial interests, pursuant to the members' code of conduct as Town Council members.

County Councillor S. White declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest, pursuant to the members' code of conduct as the relative of a blue badge holder.

### 3. CAR PARK REVIEW

The Chairman welcomed the committee, officers and members of the public. The Special meeting had been convened to consider the Car Park Review report from the Head of Operations.

The Chairman welcomed contributions from members of the public and these were received as follows:

a) Mr Philip Munjame - Chair of Chamber Commerce of Usk

*'Emotive subject for all in Usk, not just traders, but also residents who use car park and live in high street and Maryport Street, need to use car park for overnight stay and family visits etc. For fellow traders, really annoyed and upset that this had reared its head, it shouldn't have after what's happened before.*

*Disappointed that we have had spent a lot of tax payers money on the report, when communication between Monmouthshire County Council and Usk Town Council and Community Councils could have sorted at less expense.*

*Do not want or do not need the issue of parking charges. Have written objections from traders and residents alike, which will be forwarded by email to Roger Hoggins.*

*As far as we can see, it is a money making exercise for the Council, which, understand from previous efforts to introduce parking charges is illegal. Previous time tried to introduce charges in Usk there was a judicial review, which the Council pulled out of, would like to know why. As a Chamber, two months ago requested, as part of a Freedom of Information request, all information relating to decision but have not had reply. Can this information be readily available so that I can present it to members?*

*Regarding adoption of car park and negotiations with Town Council, we do not want it to cloud the issue that Monmouthshire County Council wants to charge for parking. Two issues, parking charge is still there and we do not want it, please do not let it happen and look at it from our point of view. Report says that Monmouth Chamber of Commerce want Usk to take on board parking charges, we cannot be compared to Monmouth, we are*

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*completely different, they have supermarkets, they have larger shopper precinct. Traders are working very hard to maintain businesses work and if we have parking charges, those businesses will suffer and people will not come to the town. I have spoken to the town council and people from the community want to use car park, they will go elsewhere, community council and chamber are against it.'*

The Chair thanked Mr Munjame for the contribution and advised that it was helpful to have a local perspective, particularly around distinct challenges faced in Usk.

#### b) Mrs Jenny Barnes – Secretary CAIR

*Been involved in CAIR and disablement for 30 years, not disabled and have no blue badge, neither do most of the equality group who have discussed the issue and did not come to an agreement on it. CAIR have discussed it and although some people happy to pay, the disabled people and carers at CAIR are against submission that we should pay for disabled parking:*

- Monmouthshire County Council passed resolution that the most vulnerable section of community should not fall further behind the rest of community. Disabled people are on average, one of the poorest sections of community, and to charge for parking in their town is against the spirit of Monmouthshire County Councils stated beliefs.*
- The amount of disabled people who are in poverty, Welsh Office statistics show there is a considerable amount. Considerable proportion of people with disability fall into the lowest income groups, so to charge them will be charging the poorest people, which is against the authority principles.*
- Disabled people have been consulted through CAIR, who were against the charging and through equalities group, most of whom are able bodied and the group were not in agreement.*
- Although charging may reduce abuse of disabled parking spaces, which we would welcome, if everybody had to pay then it would increase parking on double yellow lines, which disabled people are allowed to do if they are not causing an obstruction. They can not afford to pay fines if they cause an obstruction.*
- The extra parking on main roads could cause chaos in towns, which are already restricted.*
- The car parks need to be improved to be accessible, this is very costly, and the distances for people to walk to pay machines and back to car is further than someone with a blue badge is supposed to walk.*
- CAIR would welcome a clamp down on people using blue badges illegally, in some car parks one third have blue badges, these could be visitors from outside or considerable misuse. Would like prosecution for improper use.*
- It does not mean to say that we agree with charging.*

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- *Not everyone at CAIR agrees, some are happy to pay, they need tickets to be transferable to other car parks but the system sounds complicated. Important that it is not too complicated.*
- *Most disabled people do not agree with increased charges that Monmouthshire County Council will charge.*
- *One pound does not seem a lot, but going from nothing to one pound is quite a lot and this is the most vulnerable section of the community.*

The Chair thanked Mrs Barnes for addressing the committee and in particular in relation to recommendation two and very useful to have perspective of disabled people.

#### c) Roger G Galletley – Mayor, Usk Town Council

*Mr Munjame put objections forward of chamber of commerce and the town council agree 100% with the chamber position on car park charging in Usk. Usk is unique in the geography of the town and the lack of off street parking for residents. No other town in county has the problem. The vast majority of residential properties in the middle of the town have no off street parking and are upset that they may have to pay for parking in their own town.*

*The issue of ownership and management has been discussed recently and it is an opportunity which town council would be delighted to come to an agreement with County Council about. Town Council would love to take on the responsibility for car park issue in town, as long as commencement of negotiations begins on fairly sensible basis. The issue that would come about if we were unable to reach an agreement, is that any introduction of charges in the future would be significantly opposed and there is a solid basis for arguments.*

*One particularly issue keeps coming up, which we have found virtually no evidence of, is the lack of parking space, difficulty in parking and car sharing. Personally spent many hours watching car park, particularly first thing in the morning and only once have witnessed car sharing once in 12 months. Aware that the Chamber of Commerce conducted survey and found that it did not exist in Maryport Street North Car park. No information has been provided to the town council.*

*Every issue with proposals has been aired fully previously and we will continue to oppose any change regarding parking issue, but delighted that we will have the opportunity to bring about a situation where we can manage and own car parks in the future.*

The Chair thanked Mr Galletley for addressing the committee.

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- d) Mr Gary Whitcombe – Party Leader, Britannia Party, representing blue badge holders of Monmouthshire

*Think it is really disgusting that blue badge holders have to pay at Monmouthshire car parks. There are different disabilities, the disability living allowance is an automatic blue badge, the other is from the doctor where you are allocated a blue badge due to medical issues. People receiving the disability living allowance have trouble to walk. There are some people who shouldn't receive blue badges, but only a few. However, the main people who receive disability living allowance, the party will fight to not pay.*

*Our party is against the parking charge, parking on double yellow lines will increase and people will park where they want to.*

The Chair thanked Mr Whitcombe for the contribution.

- e) Letter from Mr David Cummings – Monmouth District Chamber of Trade and Commerce

*There was extensive consultation with stakeholders prior to preparation of the full report back in February in contrast to the last one compiled by Capita Symonds.*

*Each town covered by the report has its own challenges in relation to parking, but it has been widely acknowledge for many years that the major problem Monmouth faces is a lack of off street parking and we welcome the consultants proposals for new car parks behind the Queens Head and in Drybridge Park, which have now been costed.*

*We are aware of the county council's need to find savings in the budget but believe that any increased income generated here will continue to be spent on improving the experience for those using car parks and to cover projects such as the Queens Head car park. As MP Eric Pickles said earlier this year "car parks should not be a revenue stream for councils "*

*Whilst welcoming the opportunity to put the Monmouth Chamber's point of view it has been necessary to reduce comment to important issues and to make comments as far as possible. Our proposals are divided into those recommendations with which we concur, those we are against, options not considered. Due to the confines of a short letter. we have not covered these.*

*Options proposed with which we do agree*

*Section 8. We welcome the fact that car park machines are to be upgrade to include multiple means of paying for parking.*

*Section 22. We welcome improvements to the signage to car parks and corrections where car parks are shown as short stay, but are in fact long stay.*

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*Section 30. We welcome the free parking Saturdays offer in the run up to Christmas from MCC, but would like to have the option to choose, which Saturdays to take account of shoppers spending patterns*

*Options proposed with which the Chamber does not agree*

*Section 1. We oppose the fact that it will still be possible to feed the meter in Short Stay Glendower Street car park by paying for all day. It is important for businesses at this end of town that there is turnover each day in parking spaces. Short stay should mean short stay.*

*Section 3. We oppose the imposition of a flat charge for Sunday parking.*

*We see it as inequitable that it is proposed that it is free all week in Usk, but other towns now have to give up their free parking on Sundays. How much would the raising of parking charges in Usk raise? Presumably, a lot more than £25,000 pa for Sunday parking. It has taken a number of years to develop Sunday as a day for relaxed shopping by families with possibly 40% of shops and cafes now open in Monmouth. By imposing parking charges this relaxed atmosphere will be threatened.*

*Section 10. We oppose the loss of all our free parking. This will be a great disadvantage to 1000 + shop workers on the minimum wage most of whom travel into work by car due to poor public transport in the area and also having to work unsociable hours. If you start a 12 hour supermarket shift at 0530hrs how do you get to work other than by car?*

*Section 13. See our comments to Section 1 above*

*Sections 14 and 16. These sections ram home the message that MCC want to penalise Monmouth by taking away all our free parking yet giving more free parking to Chepstow and Abergavenny.*

*Section 20. See our comments on Usk under Section 3 above. Why is Usk a special case to continue with free parking when MCC are taking away all free parking in Monmouth Monmouth residents and shoppers are in effect subsidising Usk. Why? Businesses in different towns need a level playing field to compete.*

*Options not considered by the consultants*

*There is no assessment of the impact that the soon to be imposed pay and display car parking at Waitrose will have on car parks at that end of town (£5 charge refunded in store) . In our view this will increase usage on the other car parks dramatically at peak times and might change the consultants opinion, in the original report, that Chippenham car park is usually empty.*

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*The option to abolish the market in the small Cattle Market car park on Fridays and Saturdays has not been considered. From an MCC standpoint this would increase car park revenues from zero to £11,000 p.a. From a business point of view we would get back 30 prime parking spaces back at times of peak demand. Several Chamber members feel that this market does nothing to enhance the image of the town.*

*The development of the Dixton Road clinic (January 2015) for residential development, with only one parking space per dwelling, we oppose this, we feel that the consultants have not considered the increased demands on car parking and street parking will increase demand close to, and probably in, Glendower Street car park. Currently we have a number of shops that will soon be let as well as the development of 20-24 Monnow Street development. This is likely to increase parking demand from additional shoppers and increase use of Monnow Street car park.*

#### *Apparent discrepancies*

*. Section 9. Error in report. There is no car park (yet) in Granville Street, Monmouth.*

*Section 12. We have recently been asked by MCC officers to include a question in our August Business Survey as to whether business owners felt their staff would park in the proposed Rockfield Road car park, if the charge was £1 per day. This report suggests it would be free. If it is to be free, we will remove the question, as of course employees will park there if it is free. It is our understanding that the probability of this car park ever being built is very low.*

*There is no mention in the main body of the report of the construction of the car park behind the Queens Head. Funding for this project has been agreed by MCC after 13 years of lobbying by the Chamber of Commerce. Currently progress is stifled by air quality management reports on this site. Expert opinion given to the Chamber suggests that a car park located in this location will not have any measurable impact on air quality, We therefore oppose this delay.*

*We also feel that calling the car park "Granville Street" in Appendix 3iii is likely to inflame the situation with residents of that road. The Chamber proposed In January 2014 a new access to the proposed car park, but has not yet received any formal comment from MCC on our proposals.*

*Our proposal would mean the car park would have no negative impact on the residents of Granville Street.*

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The Cabinet Member for Community Development outlined the following points:

- The report had identified different users, long term, short term, occasional users and blue badge holders. It had not been possible to come to one situation which suited all towns within the county, as each town had different needs.
- Facilities had been bespoke to the town as much as possible, which would reflect the long/short term use. New factors have to be considered, such as iCounty parking app, which will enable payment via phone. Current machines had become redundant and problems would occur as the machines will not be repaired. The new networked machines will have live data, the new machines and refurbishment of car park will have cost implications.
- The issue of charging for blue badge, had been repeatedly discussed and there had been significant consultation. The parking available required improvement and spaces have to be within the closest proximity, the level of provision offered at present is sub-standard and changes would be required.
- Work had been undertaken to understand the criteria for how blue badges were issued and it was noted that the situation can be permanent or temporary. There was an expectation to exceed desired standards and propose that charges should be introduced.

The Head of Operations presented the report and we noted the following points:

- Parsons Brinkerhoff consultant report had been presented to the committee in February and recommendations relating to area based matters had been referred for consideration by the appropriate area committee.
- Some recommendations remained the same and some had been revised. As an introduction, the report has endeavoured to take a holistic approach.
- Members were content to look at towns differently, due to varied requirements.
- Costs were associated with investment in machines and improved layout and signage. There was a deficit on the budget at this point in time and no revisions had been made to the service since 2007.

We considered each recommendation individually:

#### 1. That the current charges be increased as follows:

<u>Category</u>	<u>current</u>	<u>proposed</u>
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		Short stay	Agenda Item 3ii Long stay
Upto 2 hours	80p	1.00	1.00
Upto 3 hours	1.30	1.50	1.50
Upto 4 hours	1.80	2.00	2.00
Upto 5 hours	2.80	8.00	3.00
Upto 6 hours	3.80	8.00	4.00
Upto 7 hours	4.80	8.00	4.00
Upto 8 hours	5.80	8.00	4.00
All day	3.50	8.00	4.00

During discussion we noted the following points:

- A member suggested that it would have been beneficial for two reports to have been received, one which dealt with charging issues and the other which tackled difficult problems and principles of parking.
- Members were reminded that funding streams from new proposals would go into the existing service, therefore, there would be financial benefit for the revised service. This would help to manage deficit, improve signage, machines, disabled bays, parent/child bays
- Investment benefits proposed within the report would be funded from charges at car parks. It would be unlikely that funding would be found within MCC's current capital strategy.
- We were advised that the report would be presented to Cabinet in a similar format, to how it had been received by the Select committee.
- **We agreed that the committee would put forward a recommendation that the two issues were separated.**
- Members had mixed views in relation to the maximum time for short stay parking, some felt that it should be reduced to 3 hours, however, some felt that 4 hours was appropriate.
- A member suggested that a half hour parking time should be introduced.
- Officers highlighted that permeations could be created, however, time required for a typical shopper had to be considered. Information would be conveyed to Cabinet.

***Recommendation agreed.***

2. That Blue badge holders pay to park but receive a concession of an extra hour parking over and above the period paid for.  
(For example a blue badge holder paying for up to 2 hours parking will be entitled to three hours for the same rate).

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#### **A valid ticket purchased by a blue badge holder will be transferrable between car parks.**

During discussion the following points were noted:

- The issue surrounding charging for blue badge holders had been debated extensively, consultation had been undertaken and feedback had been received. Proposed introduction of charging would result in the blue badge holder receiving a free hour rate. The scheme was used in other authorities, to give due reference to mobility issues.
- In addition, proposals included layout for blue badge holders to be improved and access to machines be improved, to help those with mobility issues.
- Introduction of charges to coincide with at least one pay machine being made DDA compliant in the car park when the charge commence.
- Members thanked Mrs Barnes for her representation on behalf of CAIR.
- One member could not comprehend the fact that disabled people would be charged for parking and a question was raised whether views from organisations had been fully considered. Significant concerns were expressed that disabled people would be charged.
- It was recognised that some blue badge holders were receiving low income and some members felt that they shouldn't be charged.
- The committee were of mixed opinion with regard to charging for blue badge holders parking. It was agreed that it was a very emotive and difficult situation.
- The purpose of the blue badge was to ensure people were closer to facilities and this would be provided, through refurbished car parks.
- The issue of income was discussed and members considered that some blue badge holders were on low incomes, however, some received a reasonable income. It was suggested that the provision could be means tested.
- Some members of the committee questioned the appropriateness of providing some free places (blue badge) and other places that would be charged for parking.
- We were informed that there would be a requirement to ensure that spaces were as close as practically possible and that any charges would potentially be an income.
- The committee discussed provision for the first hour free, for blue badge holders.
- We recognised that there could be impact elsewhere, and that blue badge holders may park on streets.

***Recommendation agreed, with the proviso that members comments are included in the Cabinet report and that the position relating to applicants being means tested can be investigated.***

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- 3. Where a charge already exists, that a flat rate charge of £1 be introduced for parking in MCC car parks on Sundays.**

*Recommendation refused.*

- 4. That car parks be designated as short or long stay and that the maximum parking period in a short stay car park be 4 hours with no return within 2 hours.**

<b>Abergavenny</b>	<b>Fairfield</b>	<b>Long stay</b>
	<b>Trinity Terrace</b>	<b>short stay</b>
	<b>Tiverton Place</b>	<b>short stay</b>
	<b>Brewery Yard</b>	<b>short stay</b>
	<b>Byefield lane</b>	<b>£1 all day</b>
	<b>Tudor St</b>	<b>long stay</b>
	<b>Castle st</b>	<b>long stay</b>
	<b>Bus station</b>	<b>long stay</b>
<b>Monmouth</b>	<b>Glendower st</b>	<b>short stay</b>
	<b>Cattle market</b>	<b>long stay</b>
	<b>Chippenham</b>	<b>short stay</b>
	<b>Cornwall House</b>	<b>long stay</b>
	<b>Monnow st</b>	<b>long stay</b>
	<b>Granville st</b>	<b>long stay</b>
	<b>Cinderhill</b>	<b>£1 all day</b>
	<b>Sports ground</b>	<b>permit only</b>
<b>Rowing club</b>	<b>£1 all day</b>	
<b>Chepstow</b>	<b>Nelson st</b>	<b>short stay</b>
	<b>Welsh st</b>	<b>long stay</b>
	<b>Station rd</b>	<b>long stay</b>
	<b>The station</b>	<b>£1 all day</b>
	<b>Castle Dell</b>	<b>long stay</b>
	<b>Drill Hall</b>	<b>long stay</b>

*Recommendation Agreed.*

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5. That the overstay payment facility be increased from £2 to £5 (long stay only).

*Recommendation Agreed.*

6. That a new season ticket regime be introduced as follows:

	5 day	weekly	3 months	6 months	Annual
Long stay	£15	£18	£100	£200	£390

**Further work would be undertaken to look into direct debit options.**

*Recommendation Agreed*

7. That residential parking permits be increased from £30 to £40 per year.

*Recommendation Agreed.*

8. That new car park pay machines be installed that allow motorists to pay by cash, card or in some instances by phone and that the new charge rates listed in section 1 above be introduced as and when new machines are installed.(That the development of a parking app for information and payment be commenced).

*Recommendation Agreed.*

9. That charges (long stay) be introduced at Granville St, Monmouth.

*Recommendation Agreed.*

10. That an all day charge of £1 be introduced for the Cinderhill st car park and Rowing club car park.

*Recommendation agreed with the amendment that Cinderhill and the Rowing club remain free until the provision of a free car park at Rockfield Road has been developed.*

11. That car parking at the entrance to the sports ground Monmouth be by season ticket only.

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***Recommendation Agreed.***

- 12. That income from the car park service be used to fund the development costs of a new (free) car park off Rockfield Road, Monmouth.**

***Recommendation Agreed.***

- 13. That 8 car parking spaces are designated free for 30 minutes in Glendower St Car Park, Monmouth**

***Recommendation Agreed.***

- 14. That MCC car park charges in Abergavenny cease after 4.00pm**

***Recommendation Agreed.***

- 15. That Byefield Lane car park charge be set at £1 per day.**

During discussion members suggested that the £1 charge be removed, on all days except Tuesday where it would be increased.

***Recommendation amended and agreed, that Byefield Lane car park charge increase to £3 on a Tuesday and free on every other day.***

- 16. That MCC car parks in Chepstow offer one free hour parking for all motorists.**

***Recommendation Agreed.***

- 17. That Station Road car park, Chepstow be designated a long stay car park.**

***Recommendation Agreed.***

- 18. That the Drill Hall car park, Chepstow, be designated a Long Stay car park, with a flat rate charge of £1.**

***Recommendation Agreed.***

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**19. That a flat rate charge of £1 be introduced to the station car park, Chepstow.**

*Recommendation Agreed.*

**20. That negotiations commence with Usk Town Council to investigate the option that ownership and management of the car parks within the town be transferred to Usk Town Council.. However if an agreement cannot be reached by January 2016 then consideration will be given to the introduction of a flat rate £1 charge after two hours at some future date, to coincide refurbishment of the town's car parks and the introduction of lighting at Maryport Street East car park.**

During discussion we noted the following:

- Members considered the timeline for negotiations and suggestion that it should be sooner than January 2016.
- The committee were reminded that sensitive and time consuming discussions were required.

*Recommendation amended and agreed, that negotiations commence with Usk Town Council to investigate the option that ownership and management of the car parks within the town be transferred to Usk Town Council.. However if an agreement cannot be reached within 9 months (June 2015) then consideration will be given to the introduction of a flat rate £1 charge after two hours at some future date, to coincide refurbishment of the town's car parks and the introduction of lighting at Maryport Street East car park.*

**21. That in the absence of any other decision that the charges within this report be adjusted bi-annually and in accordance with the retail price index as a compounded calculation on a two year period, rounded up or down to the nearest 10p (base RPI taken as of April 2014).**

*Recommendation Agreed.*

**22. That improved directional signage on street and within car parks be improved and increased maintenance in the absence of major**

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**refurbishment funding and in accordance with the current provisions of the Welsh Language Act.**

***Recommendation Agreed.***

**23. Develop advertising options and opportunities within car parking Estate.**

***Recommendation Agreed.***

**24. Undertake a further review of parking options within the county for HGV's, coaches, motorbikes and cyclists.**

***Recommendation Agreed.***

**25. Feasibility of the introduction of electric car charging bays be developed for one short stay car park in each town and a discounted or free parking scheme for electric cars in long stay car parks be introduced.**

***Recommendation Agreed.***

**26. That the MCC car parking estate be rebranded in accordance with current corporate identity guidelines and branded "MON Parking" (in line with other Council services such as "MON Leisure").**

***Recommendation Agreed.***

**27. Develop a new MON Parking Mobile 'App' in line with the Council's "iCounty" policy to enable motorist to pay via smart/mobile phone technology.**

***Recommendation Agreed.***

**28. Intention to introduce new "Parent & Child" parking spaces with both Short Stay and Long Stay car parks across the County.**

During discussion, members highlighted the need to for a feasibility study to be undertaken for the intention to introduce new "Parent & Child" parking spaces.

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***Recommendation amended and agreed, that a feasibility study was required in relation to the intention to introduce new "Parent & Child" parking spaces.***

- 29. Develop options to introduce a discount voucher parking charge for specific groups of people, such as 'back to work' initiatives to be reviewed regularly and introduced as and when deemed appropriate (single member decision).**

***Recommendation Agreed.***

- 30. Continuation of free all-day car parking in all MCC maintained car parks on the three Saturdays preceding Christmas Day.**

***Recommendation Agreed.***

Following consideration of the recommendations, members discussed whether it would be possible for a viability study to be undertaken to consider the market were justified in taking up spaces.

In addition, members discussed the issue of on and off street parking and requested that officers look into the issue, in conjunction with police colleagues.

The Head of Operations thanked the committee for contributions and advised that certain aspects would have to go back out for consultation, as they would be changes to the car park order.

**The meeting ended at 4.30pm.**