

WILTSHIRE COUNCIL

CHIPPENHAM AREA BOARD

Date 11TH JANUARY 2010

Community Issues Bath Road Car Park

Purpose of the Report

1. To update the Area Board on the actions agreed at the meeting of September 14th 2009.
2. To present the Area Board findings of the Task and Finish Group.

Recommendations

For Officers to look into purchasing a mobile CCTV camera system to monitor the car park to gather evidence of perpetrators.

For the Anti Social Behaviour Officer and the Police to continue to follow the patterns of disturbances and if a pattern can be established action needs to be taken under section 59 against the individuals concerned.

Background

Complaints of incidents occurring in the car park have been received over a considerable period of time. The complaints refer to excessive noise, intimidation and alleged incidents of dangerous driving in the car park itself. The majority of complaints have come from the residents of Foghamshire, which is the residential area adjoining the car park. However complaints have also been received from non-residents, using the car parking facility.

Often this is caused by young people who customize their cars and gather as a group of individuals with similar interests. This happens in many towns and cities in the Country, and in many in Wiltshire.

Gating off of car parks has caused the problem in the past to be displaced to the next available meeting point for these predominately young drivers. The current favoured meeting point now appears to be Bath Road car park.

In the past interventions carried out by both the Council and the Police to deter perpetrators from using the car park have included:-

- Using both overt and covert CCTV, which also had microphones installed to indicate the level of noise that was generated.
- The Police have carried out undercover operations and regular checks of the car park.
- To gather more evidence a questionnaire was circulated to all residents of Foghamshire of which we received a 63% response rate.
- Monitoring sheets were sent to all residents who responded with a name and address. On checking Council records no completed monitoring sheets, showing actual times and dates of incidents have been returned recently.
- Environmental Health Officers have been out to monitor noise levels, but they have not found a statutory nuisance.

The Council last reported in November 2008 that following a thorough investigation, by the Council and the Police no evidence was found that suggested a clear pattern or trend to these reported incidents. The evidence does however suggest that there may be an intermittent problem. At that time therefore the Council did not take any further action, the neighbourhood policing team continue to regularly patrol Bath Road Car Park.

Background Documents used

Previous North Wiltshire District Council files

Report to North Wiltshire Executive

Letter written to Residents 28 November 2008

Main Considerations

Further to the last Area Board on September 14th 2009 a multi agency Task and Finish Group was set up to look at what had happened since November 2008, and consider options for addressing the issue.

In addition a small group of residents are still monitoring the situation and providing logs to the Police.

Residents will be invited to a meeting to discuss this report in early January 2010.

At a meeting on the 14th December 2009 the Task and Finish Group discussed three options to address the Anti-Social Behaviour in the car park:

1. Installation of collapsible Bollards
Approx £15,000 (Ongoing revenue cost of £7,000 pa to lock and unlock)
2. Removal of the existing canopy and wall
Approx £22,000
3. Installation of an electronic barrier /riser with swipe card
Estimated at £25,000 (with ongoing maintenance cost)

Bearing in mind the ongoing plans for redevelopment of this Car park, it is expected to be considerably altered in the future, the Task & Finish Group concluded that none of the 3 options are viable. **Sgt George proposed an alternative course of action – to install a mobile CCTV Camera in the car park to monitor the anti social behaviour.**

The use of a mobile CCTV camera would act as deterrent, provide evidence of the problems occurring that the Police could then enforce and provide public reassurance in the car park.

It has been estimated this will cost in the region of £11,500 to provide Camera and necessary software, some engineering cost will be incurred to attach it to a street light etc. The Safer Communities Team have a capital budget to purchase the equipment but not a revenue budget to set up and pay for ongoing maintenance and regular on costs, such as air time and broadband connection.

Recognising that this purchase could set a precedent, we would recommend that the purchase of any such equipment, after deployment in Chippenham should be for use across the County in any Community Area where an anti social behaviour hotspot is occurring.

CCTV is not a panacea to solve all anti social behaviour issues, especially as it will not record sound and due to mobile phone technology is not as reactive as a fixed camera, but images captured can be used by the Police to retrospectively issue Section 59 notices. (See appendix 2)

The Anti Social Behaviour Officer and the Police can continue to follow the patterns of disturbances and if a pattern can be established for environmental health to monitor the noise level.

Environmental Impact of the Proposals

There are no specific environmental implications to this proposal although successfully addressing some of the issues such as the detritus left behind by drivers could have a positive benefit on the local environment, as will addressing any noise nuisance.

Financial Implications

- 1 Each option has a capital and revenue commitment attached to it as explained in Appendix 1.
- 2 Councillors are reminded that this area is due for redevelopment and this should be taken into consideration before any capital expenditure is recommended.

Legal Implications

- 1 It will be necessary to consult with the public on any plans which involve alteration to opening times of a public car park.
- 2 Some of the neighbours have legal rights to enter their properties via the car park, and closure would require a re negotiation of these rights.

HR Implications

There are no HR implications in the proposals.

Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no equality and diversity implications in the proposals.

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

The Chippenham Area Board receives and endorses the findings and recommendations of the Task and Finish Group and that updates are brought to the Area Board meeting at intervals to be agreed by the Board.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 Cost implications of each option.
Appendix 2 Explanation of section 59