

# **BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **REPORT TO CABINET**

**3 OCTOBER 2017**

### **REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR COMMUNITIES**

#### **BRIDGEND TOWN CENTRE ACCESS INFORMAL CONSULTATION**

##### **1 Purpose of Report**

1.1 The purpose of the report is to:

- Update Cabinet on the findings of the informal consultation with vulnerable groups and stakeholders regarding Bridgend Town Centre Access.
- Seek approval to undertake statutory consultation on the proposal, and commission detailed design work as a result of that consultation.

##### **2 Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan**

2.1 This report is linked to the Corporate Plan priority of Supporting a Successful Economy.

##### **3 Background**

- 3.1 The initial context for this project was set out in a report to Cabinet on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2016, which acknowledged changes in the function and purpose of town centres throughout the UK, and the specific impact locally on Bridgend Town Centre. The town centre has seen a decrease in footfall, sales performance and car parking income, and increases in vacancy rates. It further acknowledged that whilst there are many factors responsible for these that are outside the Council's control, it is important that the Council assesses those that are within its control which could bring about positive change to the success and viability of the town centre. The lack of vehicular access to Queen Street, Dunraven Place and Market St has been cited by town centre traders, property agents and developers as a key issue impacting on trade and lettings.
- 3.2 It was recognised that in order to change access arrangements in these streets there would first need to be a thorough understanding of the equalities implications, risks, costs and physical constraints. These were assessed in an independent feasibility report and presented to Cabinet dated 7<sup>th</sup> June 2016. The report identified a series of options, the preferred of which (option 3) included bollards and/or street furniture to demarcate the interface between carriageway and footway. This was considered to be the most balanced option in terms of road safety, implementation cost, impact on existing infrastructure, protecting footways from vehicular damage and providing some protection to pedestrians from vehicles mounting the footways.
- 3.3 Cabinet authorised officers to undertake a full consultation in order to complete the Equality Impact assessment (EIA) on the various options, setting out reasons why option 3 was preferred. The findings of this consultation were reported back to Cabinet on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2016. It concluded that the majority of respondents supported the proposal to re-introduce vehicles in to Queen Street, Market Street and Dunraven Place, with the inclusion of parking spaces to improve accessibility during the day and evening.

However, prior to a Traffic Order being implemented, further consultation and design would be required. This included informal consultation on the preliminary design with a number of specified groups and organisations, and others considered likely to be affected by the proposals. One of the key aims of the design is to manage the risks of pedestrian / vehicle conflict through physical design and traffic management measures.

#### **4 Current Situation/Proposal**

- 4.1 As a result of the Cabinet report dated 29<sup>th</sup> November 2016, an additional consultation was required in order to consider comments on the revised changes in that report to reintroduce traffic to Queen Street, Dunraven Place and Market St, inclusive of a 20 mph speed limit, two pedestrian crossings, approximately 18 parking/loading bays and a series of street bollards designed to improve safety by delineating the space between pedestrians and vehicles and prevent parking on the footways.
- 4.2 A preliminary scheme detailing the extent of the proposal was produced and sent informally to the consultees detailed in the Cabinet report of 29 November 2016.
- 4.3 In addition, a verbal presentation, including detailed discussions and Q&As was carried out with the following vulnerable groups representing vulnerable people or people with protected characteristics:
  - SHOUT
  - BridgendVIS
  - Bridgend Equalities Forum
  - People's 1<sup>st</sup> Bridgend
  - The Stroke Association
  - Bridgend Youth Cabinet

Individual comments arising from the informal consultation and responses from the Director of Communities are attached in **Appendix 1**.

#### **Key Findings**

- 4.4 Four out of the six groups consulted did not support the scheme in the format that was presented to them and suggested further changes.

We have also received a formal response from South Wales Police Operational Support Division indicating the following:

*It is the view of the Police that road safety has to be a paramount consideration under this proposal, specifically as the proposal will considerably alter pedestrian perception of traffic movement and therefore the need for greater awareness when crossing the carriageway, which has been pedestrianised for a significant period of time. It is submitted that the initial requirement for the introduction of the pedestrian order needs careful consideration before the current scheme is reviewed and altered.*

*The proposal will need to include appropriate measures to ensure that vulnerable road users are protected when using the roads subject to the proposed scheme. In addition, that vehicular traffic is regulated and any proposed scheme is engineered to avoid collisions on the carriageways subject to the proposal.*

*The Police consider that there are a number of issues that need clarification and considerably more detail is required before an informed view could be expressed with regard to this issue.*

*We would ask that should the council intend to implement this scheme that a detailed design is provided to the Police in accordance with the formal consultation process.*

- 4.5 There was a wide range of responses arising from the informal consultation with the groups representing vulnerable people, with the following primary themes mentioned by the groups:
- the time limit and type of parking bays
  - the use of bollards to segregate pedestrians from cars
  - the location of pedestrian crossings
  - increased pollution as a result of vehicles in the town
  - no difference in level between the footway and carriageway.
- 4.6 All bar one of the groups commented that half an hour limited parking bays did not allow enough time for visitors including the blue badge holders to access the town centre in a meaningful way. It was strongly felt that a minimum of an hour would be considered more appropriate. The proposed 30 minute limited waiting was originally suggested due to the limited number of parking bays, the need to maximise their usage by encouraging regular turnover, and the preference for consistency with other limited waiting in the town centre. Increasing this to one hour limited waiting for the users of the parking bays in order to accommodate the concerns of the vulnerable groups could be acceptable, albeit with a reduced turnover in spaces.
- 4.7 In terms of the use of bollards to segregate the footway there was no consistent view expressed by the groups. The incorporation of bollards came out of the feasibility stage report for reasons of public safety, more specifically the risk of cars encroaching on to the footway. The current proposal is to place them at approximately 2 metre intervals subject to site conditions. In addition to these physical barriers, it is proposed that a prohibition of waiting at any time be introduced along the highway including the painting of double yellow lines on the highway. Bridgend VIS expressed concern over the bollards and their frequency, advising that they could be a trip hazard. It was suggested by Bridgend VIS that if they were to remain part of the scheme they should have a contrasting colour at the top of the column. If Cabinet is minded to proceed to detailed design, the design team would consider this proposal as well as the option of increasing the distance between bollards, provided that this would not compromise public safety for the reasons stated above.
- 4.8 The informal consultation with the groups representing vulnerable people confirmed the need for the installation of two formal crossing points which would be located in the vicinity of the job centre and the Wyndham Arms.
- 4.9 As a result of the introduction of vehicles into the town centre, the possibility of increased air pollution in the town centre was commented on by three of the groups. Contact has been made with the Councils Environmental Protection Section who have indicated that with the increasing need to promote sustainable transport and improve local air quality levels, that in line with this proposal, consideration would need to be given on how air quality levels can be improved via the implementation of mitigation measures and strategies. To mitigate the increase in vehicle air pollution, a 20 mph zone would be introduced and freight deliver companies encouraged to use only their

cleaner vehicles in the town centre. Encouragement will also be used to prevent idling vehicles in the town centre.

4.10 Thus in summary the further consultation identified the following key points:

- Suggested increase the available limited waiting from 30 min to 1 hr
- Spacing and colour contrast of bollards to be reviewed
- Concur with the introduction of formal crossings
- Exploration of mitigation of pollutants

### **Next steps**

4.11 If the Council are minded to move forward with the proposal traffic orders associated with the proposal will need to comply with the requirements of the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedures)(England and Wales) Regulations 1996 and the Cabinet report dated 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 which stated there will be a need to undertake a statutory consultation and public notice to implement the changed Traffic Order.

4.12 The consultation proposals will be as follows

- Removal of the Pedestrian Order along Queen Street, Dunraven Place and part of Market Street
- Provide 1 hour limited waiting bays 10am to 6pm (No return within 1 hour) along Dunraven Place and Market Street
- Provide 1 hour limited waiting bay 10am to 6pm (No return within 1 hour) and a loading and unloading bay between 6pm and 10am in the layby in Queen Street
- Provide a loading / unloading bay at all times in the layby in Market Street
- Provide pedestrian controlled crossing point at the junction of Market Street and Quarella Road and a pedestrian controlled crossing point in Dunraven Street near the Wyndham Arms
- New Traffic Order to allow access to all vehicles along the northern end of Market Street
- Reversal of traffic flow along Wyndham Street, Cross Street and Caroline Street
- To introduce no waiting at any time along the parts of the road not covered by the parking bays

4.13 It will be necessary to issue a letter and plan explaining the proposal and consult formally on proposals in accordance with Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedures)(England and Wales) Regulations 1996 and send out to the following:

- Appropriate Local Ward members
- Chief Constable of Police
- Freight Transport Association
- Road Haulage Association
- Appropriate Ambulance / NHS bodies
- Fire Service
- Appropriate Bus Operators if affected by the scheme
- Other organisations considered likely to be affected by the proposals.
- any additional individuals deemed appropriate who may be affected by the proposal (all the shops / residents that are affected by the proposal within the town centre)

4.14 The responses will then be considered and this may result in the proposals being amended if deemed appropriate.

- 4.15 During this time some initial detailed design can be undertaken although some alterations may be needed after the consultation process has been undertaken
- 4.16 The previous Cabinet report suggested that an experimental traffic order would be an appropriate way to introduce the proposal in order to monitor and review the changes. It is now considered that, it may be more prudent to wait until all the replies have been received from the initial consultation required under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 before deciding whether to introduce the order experimentally or as a permanent change.
- 4.17 It may be that after a statutory consultation process with Emergency Services, Police, Local Councillors and the shops / residents will allow the Council to determine if there is sufficient support for the proposed changes and that the proposed solutions will bring the desirable results.
- 4.18 In the previous Cabinet Report it was considered that an Experimental Traffic Order would be the way forward. The main difference between an ordinary Traffic Regulation Order and an experimental Traffic Regulation Order is that unlike an ordinary Traffic Regulation Order, there is no requirement to give public notice prior to make an experimental Traffic Regulation Order. Instead, public consultation is carried out over a minimum six month period, starting from when the experimental Traffic Regulation Order comes into force on site. However, the proposed 20mph limit and the installation of formal crossings cannot be implemented as part of the experimental order as they are not covered by the appropriate legislation to implement an Experimental Order
- 4.19 For information, an experimental order must mimic in a temporary way what the proposed permanent order will look like. This could mean that temporary barriers, signs and crossing points would be in place for up to 18 months before the order could be made permanent. This would not be aesthetically pleasing to the town environment and may indeed bring negative effects to the town centre, which would be detrimental to the aim of the proposal as well as the significant costs associated with erecting and maintaining the temporary works. Additional costs would also be incurred to remove any temporary physical measures installed as part of any experimental order, should the scheme not be made permanent.
- 4.20 The scheme will now be progressed by as a permanent traffic order, however following completion of the initial stage of the statutory consultation required by the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 a further report will be presented to Cabinet which will consider whether the scheme will be progressed by means of a permanent traffic order or an experimental traffic order.

## **5. Effect Upon Policy Framework and Procedure**

- 5.1 None

## **6. Equalities Impact Assessment**

- 6.1 It is the duty of the Council to carry out an Equalities Impact Assessment on any proposal. A full EIA report has been undertaken. The EIA recommends the following mitigation measures, which will be addressed through the design and if agreed, the implementation stages of the project:

- consultation with town centre users, in particular those with protected characteristics, on the design and layout of the road system reduce the risks of pedestrian / vehicle conflict through physical design and traffic management measures;
- site visits for disability groups at design stage to ensure the proposed changes made to the road layout are fully understood;
- a robust marketing campaign advising of the changes to the road layout with particular focus on those protected characteristic groups likely to be impacted, including leaflets outlining the changes sent to all nursery, primary and special schools;

## 7. Financial Implications

7.1 Subject to Cabinet approval, officers have allocated £60,000 from corporate feasibility funding to carry out detailed design in 17/18. Cabinet should understand that external grant funding for scheme implementation is not guaranteed and therefore any design costs incurred would be 'at risk', albeit the design work would not be wasted as the scheme would be ready should any future funding become available.

## 8. Recommendations:

8.1 Cabinet is recommended to:

- 8.1.1 Consider the key findings of the consultation authorised by the Cabinet report of 29 November 2016;
- 8.1.2 Authorise officers to make the suggested changes to the proposal detailed in 4.6 and 4.7 being to:
- increase the limited waiting bays from 30 minutes to 1 hour
  - Introduce a no waiting at any time provision along the highway where there are no parking bays along Queen Street, Dunraven Place and Market Street
  - At detailed design stage, the type of bollard and their spaces will be considered
- 8.1.3 Authorise the next steps outlined in in section 4.12, 4.13 and 4.14 to progress statutory consultation to finalise detailed design as detailed in 4.12.
- 8.1.4 Receive a further report upon completion of the initial phase of the statutory consultation to consider and approve a way forward.

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### Background documents:

Cabinet Report 7<sup>th</sup> June 2016 - Bridgend Town Centre Access  
Cabinet Report 29<sup>th</sup> November 2016 - Bridgend Town Centre Access