

Notice of 'Call-In'

Committee: Overview & Scrutiny Committee

1. Decision Subject To Call-In:

Title: Details inc date Bridgend Town Centre Access – Tuesday 23 rd September 2025

2. Member(s) of the Committee Wishing to Call the Decision In

Name

Cllr Steven Bletsoe

Cllr Steven Easterbrook

Cllr Freya Bletsoe – Chair Scrutiny Committee Social Services, Health and Wellbeing

Cllr Ian Spiller

Cllr Tim Wood

3. Reasons for the Call-In

Decision made:-

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| 1. Delegated authority to the Corporate Director Communities to:- (i) pursue an 18-month ETRO for the extension of loading and unloading hours to 11:00 and recommence it after 16:00, with additional flexibility allowed for emergency situations and events; (ii) pursue an 18-month ETRO to permit cycling within the pedestrianised area, subject to the satisfactory completion of the safety risk assessments; (iii) pursue an 18-month ETRO for the conversion of under-utilised taxi bays on Derwen Road to Blue-badge parking bays. |
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Various reasons including but not exclusive to those listed below:
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a general lack of professional curiosity throughout the questions from Cabinet in relation to the correlation of the details in the report from the consultants and recommendations from Officers, which they subsequently approved. For example:- • Recommendation 9.1 (i) states “pursue an 18-month ETRO for the extension of loading and unloading hours to 11:00 and recommence it after 16:00, with additional flexibility allowed for emergency situations and events” and the Corporate Director states at 04:30 of the recording that “The Bridgend town centre pedestrianisation was first completed back in November 2004 and since that time traders have subsequently indicated that the associated access restrictions are affecting footfall and also economic performance of the town centre. Now the Bridgend town centre Plan assessed the findings from previous access studies and it concluded that we should look at options for improving town centre access and but these must take account of changes in national policy and guidance” However, this proposal of an 18 month ETRO from the extension of loading and unloading hours does not |
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increase access for those seeking to use Bridgend Town Centre shops, it simply increases the amount of time that people can load and unload vehicles. The definition of loading/unloading vehicles under UK legislation is "Loading and unloading vehicles involves the continuous process of moving goods to and from a vehicle, requiring the vehicle to be stopped for the time necessary to complete the task, including any necessary checks of the goods or paperwork. The activity must be continuous, and the vehicle must be moved as soon as loading or unloading is finished. Non-commercial activities like shopping or having a chat do not count as loading or unloading, and for commercial deliveries, the goods must be ready for collection or delivery" This ability to load and unload a vehicle in Bridgend Town Centre does **not** allow shoppers to shop in Bridgend Town Centre. The proposal to extend the hours that the barrier is "down" does not improve access for those who the traders are seeking to improve access. There is a 24 hour "no parking" and a "loading/unloading only" traffic order that covers Bridgend Town Centre and the fact that people park in the town is purely down to the decision of the authority not to enforce the traffic order in place, when the barrier is lowered. Currently during the hours of 6pm to 10am vehicles are parked in Bridgend Town Centre in contravention of that traffic order and the extension of the times of the barrier being lowered does nothing to address that. For this proposal to work, it requires a change to that order at the same time, not just the extension of time that the barrier is lowered. There was no questioning of the Officers over this point and there should have been.

- At 05:50 of the recording of the meeting the Corporate Directors states "Now the study concluded that options two and three, as set out in paragraph 2.2 of your report, would reintroduce significant traffic volumes into Bridgend, and it would also impact the street typology from pedestrian priority. And it would necessitate kerb up stands, and both of those things conflict, I'm afraid, with both national and local policy. So, option one was what they felt that we should go forward with, which was supported by complementary multimodal package." Firstly, there is no reference at all to the "National or Local Policies", at no point does the report detail how proposal 2 and 3 conflict with them. In the absence of this detail in the report, there were no questions from any Cabinet member as to the details of the policies and how the proposals conflict with them. Most importantly there were no questions from the Cabinet to why options 2 and 3 were included in the public consultation if they conflicted with national and local policies.
- The kerb height of the route along Queen Street, Dunraven Place and Market Street is low in places, but it is not unique in Bridgend Town Centre. This kerb height is identical to the area of road/pavement on Nolton Street between Derwen Road and Rhiw Hill, in fact the kerbs on the proposed route are higher than that of the kerbs on Nolton Street, which was recently resurfaced and deemed to be a lawful and safe layout. From records, there have been no accidents between pedestrians and vehicles on this stretch of road and it remains open at present. There were no questions from cabinet on this matter and no scrutiny as to why options two and three were discounted on the basis that a road in the Town Centre, barely 100m away from the proposed scheme are of identical kerb height and are safe and lawful for vehicles and pedestrians to access 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Current Cabinet members are aware of this fact as it was pointed out to them in a previous "walk around" Bridgend Town Centre with local members who cover the area. Cabinet, knowing this, should therefore have questioned this statement and received satisfactory answers before making their decision.
- Page 41 of the report shows that under the question "Should Queen Street, Dunraven Place and Market Street be more accessible to all traffic?" 56% of respondents stated "Yes, at all times", 22% stated "No" and 19% "Yes, but only outside of the busiest pedestrian times." Therefore, the Officer's recommendations are based on the lowest supported option (other than "Not Sure"). There was no

questioning from Cabinet as to why the recommendation was for the lowest supported option and the public would rightly expect scrutiny of that decision. They were asked to voice their opinion and those who voted “Yes at all times” or “No” deserve an answer as to why their voice (which was the majority and second highest response) has been bypassed for the third highest answer. Failure of the Cabinet to ask this question and receive an adequate answer fails the public and undermines the findings of the entire survey. If, as the Corporate Director stated in the meeting, that options 2 and 3 were not possible to progress due conflicting with national and local policies then Cabinet should have questioned why two of the three options made available in the public consultation were not possible and that the public were in fact being given “Hobson’s Choice” and only one of the three options was possible. Cabinet failed to ask this question when the public would rightly question this fact. An answer is needed on this important matter.

- Section 2.3 of the cover report on page 26 of the Cabinet Papers states “external funding for their implementation is unlikely to be available” in relation to options 2 and 3 available for reintroduction of traffic. No Cabinet member asked what work had been done in relation to coming to this conclusion, there is no reference to this matter in the consultation report. No Cabinet Member asked about the use of the word “unlikely” as it is not a definitive response. It is not a Yes or No, it is “unlikely” and needs full clarification before the Cabinet comes to their decision to approve the recommendation.
- It is stated in the report and reaffirmed by the Corporate Director that this proposal is to “introduce an 18-month Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO)” although there is no reference in the report or during the presentation as to why a period of 18 months has been selected. During the meeting it is referenced that it is a “flexible order” that could see changes to the hours of the barriers status of being either “open or closed” but no reference at all to any other additional measures that could be implemented if the survey of effectiveness is not achieved. Cabinet should have questioned why a period of 18 months had been recommended as the timescales and what other options could be available to support the recommendations. They did not do this and therefore additional scrutiny of this is required through the call in process.
- During the scrutiny of the paper, Cabinet asked what the success of the proposals would be and how they would be measured. The answer was given that the lack of any accidents or incidents would be used to measure the success, however the view of those who have signed this “call in” is that there needs to be a view of residents as to whether they have seen improved access and the views of traders to whether they have seen improved trading should have been added as performance indicator. Whilst safety of pedestrians is paramount, the commercial impact of the ETRO should be considered as a measurement. It should have been requested by the Cabinet to be included into the recommendations and it wasn’t. We ask that this matter is scrutinised properly and considered by the committee and that more detailed KPIs are attached to the period of review so that a greater understanding of the effectiveness of the experiment can be understood and acted on.
- Recommendation 9.1 (ii) states “pursue an 18-month ETRO to permit cycling within the pedestrianised area, subject to the satisfactory completion of the safety risk assessments” yet 3.4.1 of the consultant’s report (page 42 of the papers shows that 37% of people stated “Yes” to the question “Should cycling be allowed in the town centre during pedestrianised hours?” an exactly similar amount of 37% stated “No” to that question and 19% stated “Yes, but with some restrictions e.g. certain times and areas”.

On this basis, as many residents who took part in the survey stated that No, they would not like to see cycling allowed in the town centre as they stated Yes. Yet, the Cabinet did not challenge the Officers to justify why the recommendation was put forward on the basis that 37% of people (an equal amount) said No.

In relation to those who stated Yes, with restrictions, there were no questions from the Cabinet around the details of those restrictions would be and on the basis that the Yes was caveated with the need to control either the times or the locations, the Cabinet approved the decision without any clear detail on what those controls would be. There were general questions around the point, but nothing of any detail for those who voted in this way to understand what would be in place. That Yes would easily be a No if the respondents were not happy with the controls in place and the Cabinet should have sought details on the controls before accepting the recommendations. Failure to know what the restrictions are and whether they would be acceptable to that 19% could in fact lead to 56% of respondents saying No to this question, if they are unhappy with the restrictions in place. Cabinet should have sought answers to this and been happy with the responses on behalf of this 19% of respondents.

- There was a report on Bridgend Town Centre Access on 7th June 2016 which can be found at [160607 5 Bridgend Town Centre Access Report.pdf](#) In that report the Cabinet of BCBC of the day approved the following recommendations:-

8.1.1 Consider the key findings of the Queen Street, Dunraven Place Market Street Access Study;

8.1.2 Note the recommendations contained therein; and if the recommendations are accepted, to:

8.1.3 Authorise officers to undertake the necessary consultation outlined in the report;

8.1.4 Authorise officers to consider external funding options to meet the implementation costs, in the event that the consultation process indicates a positive response to the proposal to change the pedestrianisation order;

8.1.5 Receive a further report upon completion of the consultation exercise together with the findings of the full EIA and any potential external funding options.

Despite reference being made to the recent motion of Full Council from Councillor Ian Williams, there is no reference in the report to the above resolution of Cabinet or acknowledgement of this public consultation that led to the report which also showed overwhelming support for the full re-introduction of controlled vehicles into the area proposed. Failure of the Cabinet to question this and make reference to the findings of that report and subsequent resolution is a failing of the public and their stated wishes

- Therefore, we believe that the decision has not been properly scrutinised or considered, the necessary questions have not been asked or answered and that the Cabinet have not shown proper scrutiny of a report to them that is not supported by the results of the public consultation included in it. On that basis we believe that it requires further scrutiny before a decision to approve the recommendations is reached.