

## **Report of the Town Clerk**

### **NCC Consultation on Car Parking in Berwick upon Tweed**

#### **Background**

1. Northumberland County Council (NCC) commissioned a report on parking capacity in Berwick upon Tweed from AECOM. The report has now been supplied to the Town Council as part of a consultation with the Town Council being invited to respond by January 29th.
2. Council has discussed this topic twice, at formal and informal sessions, and NCC have now indicated they need a consultation response.
3. The history briefly, is that, up until 2013 parking was managed, in Berwick, by charges for on and off street parking. In 2013 the then administration at NCC decided to remove car parking charges county wide, and provided an information pack in support of this change, which is a background document to this report.
4. As officers, we have no opinion on the wider debates about car parking, but would respectfully suggest that in future car parking policy might provide a good case study of the difficulties and risks involved in trying to apply county-wide policies to a county as diverse and large as Northumberland. In that respect, NCC's offer to consult widely with parish and town councils is to be welcomed.
5. As officers we have set out previously our issues with the AECOM study; it is only a study of demand and capacity, and does not set out either a business case for the costs of changes to the provision of parking, or a roadmap of the process. The AECOM study does not provide any evidence (e.g. High Street footfall or numbers of tourist visitors or retail sector growth) as to whether the previous policy change (in 2013) was a success, or about the impact of a change to the pricing of one mode of transport (private car use) to other modes of transport (such as bus use) and their viability.
6. The result is, as we have stated previously, a certain difficulty for any parish council preparing a response. Nevertheless it is clear that NCC would prefer that their consultation is responded to on its own terms which precludes any examination of wider policy concerns.
7. In the absence of any business case from NCC we will start from the assumption that any net revenues from car parking will be applied to parking facilities in Berwick only, and would strongly advise that any proposal to reintroduce charging without such an assumption should be rejected.
8. A decision needs to be made about whether the issue of lack of car park capacity identified in the report should be addressed by supplying more spaces, by managing demand or by a mixture of the two.
9. A summary of the key questions is presented in the attached table, and we would recommend that council state its answers to them as a response to this consultation.