



## MINUTES OF BEXHILL PARKING FORUM 6th May 2014

### 1. Apologies for absence.

- Tony Leonard, Executive Director of Business Operations
- Cllr Kevin Dixon (working in Devon)
- Cllr Martin Kenwood (at a meeting in Worthing)
- Cllr Bridget George

### 2. Welcome.

Paul Courtel ('The Chair') welcomed those in attendance and introduced the panel:

- Katy Bourne – Sussex Police Commissioner
- Chief Inspector Warren Franklin - Rother Police Commander
- Hillary Randall – Chair Bexhill Town Team
- County Cllr Carl Maynard – ESCC (Cabinet Member & Lead Member for Transport & Environment)
- Cllr Simon Elford – Rother District Council (Cabinet Member for Bexhill)

*[Lord Brett McLean of Hastings – Chair of 1066 Country Branch, Federation of Small Businesses, although introduced and said to be running late did not attend the meeting.]*

It was announced that each speaker would have up to three minutes and then questions would be opened to the floor. Later in the meeting there would be an opportunity for proposals followed by discussion and voting. This would give the panel an idea of public feeling in Bexhill.

The Chair outlined the reason for the Forum noting that Bexhill used to have Traffic Wardens but that these have been made redundant due to cuts in the Police budget. This means that anyone can park anywhere including on double yellow lines, disabled spaces, unloading bays and limited parking areas. The Chair advised that the Police go round once per month to issue fines but don't have enough resources to do this more regularly. The Chair invited the speakers to put forward possible solutions.

### 3. Rother Police Commander, Chief Inspector Warren Franklin

WF stated that the police deal with double yellow lines, disabled bays and dangerous parking as part of their remit. He added that the Chair's statement on this issue was factually wrong.

WF showed a visual presentation which included:

Slide 1

During financial year 2013/14 there were approximately 7304 parking offences in

Sussex, of which Wealden and Rother issued 1069. WF advised that the problem with this is that neither Wealden nor Rother have civil enforcement, meaning that the Police need to fill the gap. The local force also has to take into account Rye and Battle. Unlike Wealden who have a no parking fee policy both off and on-street, Rother have off street parking from which they make money.

Slide 2

340 tickets issued in Rother @ cost of £8 per ticket for Officers' time processing the ticket

£12 per ticket to process by the Central Ticket Unit

Total cost to Sussex Police = £6,800.

290 Double yellows / Prohibited parking @ cost of £40 per ticket = £11,600

WF advised that a significant number of tickets have been given, particularly for parking on double yellow lines. He also said that people parking in disabled bays without a badge or with a forged badge are a particular target as these are criminal activities. Those parking on double yellow lines and those parking dangerously are also priorities.

WF advised that the Police have to handle a lot of 'no waiting' times and there are issues with prioritising and assessing work based on risk. It doesn't make financial sense or operational sense to have PCSOs waiting around to give tickets and research has shown that in retail areas it's often a case of those parking in loading bays or no waiting areas are the shopkeepers themselves. He stressed that those parking dangerously are dealt with immediately.

Slide 3

This slide showed a map of the UK which indicated where Civil Enforcement exists. Rother and Wealden are the only two locations in the South East that don't have Civil Enforcement in place and this has an impact as there are a finite number of resources available.

WF advised that he has already spoken to the Leads at Rother District Council and they are keen to work together in a multi agency approach. Responsibility doesn't fall solely on the police and is a multi-partnership issue.

WF advised that it was significant that so many people had turned out to look at parking issues. He stressed that the Police want to continue to deal with issues such as disabled parking bays, double yellow lines and dangerous parking but need a partnership approach to free up resources so that PCSOs can also deal with other issues and resources can be allocated around risk.

#### **4. Chair of Town Team and Shop Owner, Hillary Randall**

HR advised that approximately 18 months ago the Bexhill Town Team made a response to the consultation that came from RDC (Rother District Council). In their response they proposed decriminalisation of parking enforcement in Bexhill Town Centre so that the income stream from it could be used for enforcement of town restrictions. They did not propose the introduction of parking meters nor an end to free roadside parking.

HR advised that the Town Team want to decriminalise parking enforcement because without that step being taken there is nothing that can be done to change what the traders and residents describe as 'no parking at all' in Bexhill town centre after 8.30am.

HR advised that the Town Team have been told by the Police that decriminalisation could

take up to four years. Based on this the Town Team would suggest starting the process quickly. Enforcement would pass to RDC and they would use penalty fees to pay for the enforcement, which could be Traffic Wardens. RDC haven't welcomed this and have said it will inevitably mean parking meters throughout the town centre. HR advised that the Town Team don't believe that would necessarily be the case but also feel fear of parking meters is irrational. In places where parking meters are used people still continue to go there in the way they did before.

HR continued that recently Yorkshire Forward did research and found the introduction of parking charges and enforcement doesn't make people change their destination or mode of transport

HR made a personal suggestion that when people visit Bexhill seafront they have the benefit of free parking, toilets, litter collection, dog bins, seating, hand washing facilities, drinking water, planting of euphorbia and exhibits in the De La Warr Pavilion. Many bring picnics with them so don't add to the local economy through the purchase of food and drink. HR suggested that if meters were put on the East and West parades then there would be money to start paying for parking enforcement in the town centre. She suggested that visitors would still come to the seafront and visitors and businesses would still have the benefit of investment that's taken place over the last few years, as well as the attractions, including the sea. Rother would have the benefit of the parking revenue which would pay for enforcement of restricted parking throughout the town centre and this would benefit residents and hundreds of businesses.

##### **5. Statement by Bexhill Chamber of Commerce and Tourism (BCCT)**

The Chair read out a statement by BCCT which had been unable to send a speaker. The statement read:

*Regarding your invitation to join the panel at your meeting on 6th May, as I thought our Officers are either on Holiday or have business out of town on this date. Thank you for inviting us*

*At our February Executive Committee Meeting I did add your request for the Bexhill Chamber view on parking in the town centre to our agenda and this is the statement that was included in our minutes of that meeting.*

*Decriminalisation of Parking in Bexhill Town Centre - Sue Spice – Communications Officer] said she had been contacted by Cllr Tony Mansi and a representative from the Bexhill Town Forum for the Chamber view on the decriminalisation of parking in Bexhill Town Centre. It was agreed by majority vote that we are against the decriminalisation of town centre parking as this will mean parking meters and would be detrimental to our town traders, our visitor industry, and would deter residents from visiting the town centre.*

*This was our view in 1998 when we had first had discussions with local police regarding the subject of decriminalisation of town centre parking, we have continued these discussions over the years, this has been successful and we can, for now, still use our longstanding statement in our publicity of the town – Bexhill on Sea where you can park for free.*

*Regarding your mention, today, of traffic wardens, they were always a good deterrent and we would welcome their return, however in the real world of budget restrictions and cost cutting by Police Forces, local Councils, Organisations and Businesses we do not see the employment of traffic wardens as being a realistic option in these stringent times.*

The Chair advised that according to local PCSOs, the traffic wardens were collecting three times as much in fines as they were being paid in salary. The Chair continued that the

salaries of the Traffic Wardens had to be paid by local police whereas fines go to the Ministry of Justice. **The Chair suggested that the Sussex Police Commissioner could raise this issue of 'red tape' with the relevant Minister.**

#### **6. East Sussex Lead Member for Transport & Environment, County Cllr Carl Maynard**

CM advised that he was not in attendance to give personal opinions but to give facts in terms of the options on the table, as well as to dispel some of the hearsay, so that those in attendance can pass an opinion as to whether they want to see decriminalisation of parking in Bexhill.

He added that much of what had already been said during the meeting was entirely accurate but some was not.

CM advised that decriminalisation could not take place in Bexhill only, but would need to be taken up across Rother, including Rye, Battle and the villages across the district.

CM confirmed that Rother and Wealden don't have decriminalised parking and this has historically been the case. A few years ago Lewes, Eastbourne and Hastings all elected to decriminalise parking. If this happened in Rother then there would need to be an agency agreement with RDC, otherwise responsibility would fall with ESCC.

CM has statistics that show how much it costs to run a scheme like this and any surplus that can be made. He pointed out that there are significant differences between the different areas currently running parking schemes, with some showing a small surplus and some a large surplus. He confirmed that the setting up of decriminalised parking is long-winded and costly and administration on an ongoing basis costs money.

According to the figures that CM has at his disposal it would cost around £200k to set up decriminalised parking in Rother with around £250k per annum for ongoing administration. CM stated that if decriminalisation and enforcement takes place then there would have to be parking meters to recoup the money.

CM continued that there are other things that can be done to help the situation but all would take some time. These include changing double yellow lines or the structure of roads. Such changes would require a Traffic Regulation Order. CM felt that any changes need to happen in a way that residents and visitors approve of and feel support for.

CM stressed that decriminalisation cannot happen in Bexhill only. He also said that should decriminalisation take place in Rother it would be expedient for it to also happen in Wealden and that there is currently no appetite for decriminalisation in Wealden.

CM continued to outline other options: a permit scheme is in place for several roads in Bexhill and where there are places that there is a known parking problem this could be extended to residents. This may, however, displace the problem to another part of the town.

CM encouraged a measured response to the problem and stressed there is no easy fix and no pot of money available to sort the problem as the revenue grant from government has been cut enormously since 2010.

#### **7. Rother District Council, Cllr Simon Elford**

SE opened by acknowledging that the turnout for the Parking Forum shows that parking is an issue that interests the people of Bexhill.

SE outlined that RDCs view is that the majority of people in Bexhill are against paid parking.

He advised that if those at the Parking Forum show there is an appetite for looking into other measures then these could certainly be explored, as consensus is important.

SE stressed that care should be taken when making decisions about parking as free parking is a big attraction for those visiting the town.

SE advised that RDC are represented so that they can listen to the views of the town.

## **8. Sussex Police Commissioner, Katy Bourne**

KB opened by saying that she had nothing 'magic' to say and no solutions.

KB advised that the budget for policing in Sussex is £250m per year which sounds like a lot until put into context. There seven clinical commissioning groups set up under changes to the NHS and each bar one in Sussex has a bigger budget than Sussex Police. This shows the size of the health budget compared to that allocated to policing.

The comprehensive saving review of 2010 saw Sussex Police having to find £52m savings by next year. This has been followed by a further spending review reduction of 4% which means another cut of £11m on top of the £52m. KB advised that she has been out to the public in Sussex to say extra funding is needed to resource some serious issues. These issues are serious sexual offences, which Sussex Police are under resourced to deal with, as well as cyber crime. Nearly 70% of those responding were happy for taxes to be raised slightly to increase the resources available.

KB asked those in attendance to raise their hands if they had been a victim of identity fraud ie someone had tried to set up a credit card or account in their name, they had received scam emails or had received an email asking them to click on something suspicious. Around 70% of those in attendance raised their hand, but only 3% had reported this to the Police.

KB advised that she is concerned when she hears the Police are being asked to find resources to enforce parking restrictions. She acknowledged that parking is a big issue but asked that it be kept in context with the serious crimes that the Police are dealing with and the restricted funding they are having to operate within.

KB advised that Rother residents in Council Tax band D pay £138.42 per year for policing which is the fourth smallest amount in the UK. This represents incredibly good value for money. All money raised from fines goes straight to central government and this led to the hard decision of having to cut Traffic Wardens.

## **9. Questions from floor**

### **Cllr Stuart Earl**

SE advised he wants to persuade everyone to join in the consultation for what's best for the town. SE advised he was a Councillor at the time of changes to Devonshire Square and admitted that this was a mistake in hindsight. He added that if ideas raised at the Parking Forum can be turned into something positive then a start can be made in persuading the County Council and other funders to come on board with something that will benefit all.

SE suggested that Devonshire Square could be made into a transport hub for buses and taxis and then people would know where they are and where to get them from. This would release bus stops and taxi ranks on Devonshire Road and may allow echelon parking to be put in place in roads like Endwell Road.

SE felt that politicians need to work towards a solution whereby profit from revenue on

parking is reinvested into the town to improve Bexhill's offer and make it more attractive.

County Cllr Carl Maynard responded to explain parking surpluses. He advised that in Eastbourne and Hastings surpluses generated by their parking schemes are ring-fenced for reinvestment in transport schemes. He pointed out that these towns are busier than Bexhill and advised that any surpluses generated by a scheme in Rother would be from Bexhill, Rye and Battle. He added that in Lewes there is currently no surplus and the scheme just breaks even. Two of the three parking schemes are still paying back set up costs and profits are not guaranteed. CM predicted that the surplus across Rother as a whole could be in the region of £100,000.

### **Dennis Cronin**

DC described himself as a resident of Birkdale and wanted to highlight issues with parking in the car park at the bottom of the hill where he reported there is a charge from early morning until late at night. He advised that parents don't park there to deliver children to school as the cost would be £1 for the morning and £1 for the afternoon. This leads to more traffic on the road. DC gave this as an example of parking charges not being positive and asked if there would be any possibility of the Council looking at parking charges in Little Common.

Cllr Stuart Earl responded that he had Chaired the Parking Review Working Group. This group had looked at parking across Rother. SE advised that on more than one occasion he had to state case for Little Common strongly which was difficult in his role as the Chair.

SE added that after the charges were considered he was surprised at the level of income generated. One of the biggest problems faced has been that, with the cuts made elsewhere on budgets, it is difficult to meet certain standards (eg street cleaning, maintenance, insurance etc). A charge has had to be put in place to make covering these costs viable. SE also pointed out that the Council is in competition in some Rother towns with private car park providers. SE reported he had argued the case for Little Common due to the shops, doctor's surgery and chemist; however he lost the argument.

SE advised that when parking is looked at across Rother there are many costs incurred, some seasonally, and every place and car park varies. One of the problems in Little Common is enforcement, with abuse of two hour bays. There are also problems with the school which was designed for 250-300 children and now has 700. This means there are extra teachers who drive to work. As a result, residents in surrounding streets have more cars parked on the roads all day.

SE reported that the evidence has shown that the car park takes money but is half empty most of day. SE finished by saying there are lots of ideas but these are not necessarily easy to bring to fruition and revenues have to be raised to bring in the services.

### **John Hawes**

JH of Sutherland Avenue advised that he recently got involved with the Collington Residents Action Group, started by residents inconvenienced by Hastings Direct parking. JH advised that streets have been so choked up that refuse collection, ambulances and **'anything bigger than a police patrol car'** can't get through. JH asked Warren Franklin what 'dangerous obstruction' and 'obstruction of a footpath' means, as this does not seem clear to residents.

JH continued that Hastings Direct has been helpful in welcoming a committee of residents to go through some of the issues. He acknowledged that Hastings Direct are working hard and have put forward plans to reduce street parking.

JH felt that the views of Councillors are negative and timescales quoted are longer than people want to wait. He also raised the issue of **'permit parking'** and suggested that many residents don't understand permit parking but that he would imagine many people would be willing to pay a reasonable amount for a permit to control parking in their street.

JH advised that residents are frustrated but trust that Hastings Direct will do their utmost to resolve issues. He suggested that work needs to be done to modify the behaviour of Hastings Direct employees outside the workplace as the surrounding streets are often busy on a Sunday when the car park is empty.

JH reported that residents are frustrated by schemes that look at small car parks, feeling that these are trivial compared to the growth in traffic and changes that might be expected with the link road, congestion in Terminus Avenue, lack of parking space across Bexhill and non-development of multi-storey spaces.

The Chair advised that JH has collected a petition that has 800 signatures. He then asked Simon Elford to respond, as well as Mr Walker (Director of Hastings Direct) and Jay Wootten (Community Relations Manager, Hastings Direct).

JW took the floor and thanked JH for his feedback. He advised that Hastings Direct are aware of parking issues and concerns. This has led representatives to meet with the Collington Residents' Action Group to go through a recent staff survey and explore possible solutions.

**JW advised that Hastings Direct would be looking at putting a number of measures in place over the next few months: these would focus around 1. How to reduce the amount of people attending Conquest House on a daily basis. 2. How to reduce the amount of vehicles brought to Conquest House on a daily basis. & 3. How to increase the existing car park. Options 1 & 2 are being considered by looking at homeworking, cycle to work & lift-sharing schemes.**

JW reported that as a big employer and success for Bexhill, Hastings Direct want to work on solutions and believe they can make a difference. JW advised that relevant action would be taken against any staff member parked illegally. He admitted that some people park inconsiderately but 'inconsiderate parking' is a grey area and therefore harder to solve. Again, he stressed that Hastings Direct want to be a force of good for Bexhill rather than a problem.

The Chair asked if Hastings Direct would be willing to build **a second tier to their car park**. JW advised that this was put forward as an option at the Collington Residents meeting. He reported that options are still being explored and whilst this could be considered moving forward there are procedures that would need to be worked through in terms of planning. This would therefore not be a quick fix.

### **Pete Morgan**

PM of Harewood Close asked whether Hastings Direct would be willing to convert their putting green into parking space.

JW advised that work is being done to see whether the car park and peripheral spaces (including the putting green) can be reconfigured to provide more parking space.

### **Steve Davis**

SD advised that he is part of the Collington Residents Action Group and thanked John Hawes and Jay Wootten for their comments.

He reported that there have been good meetings with Hastings Direct and good proposals to move forward. SD asked the Council to look favourably on Hastings Direct proposals and help them to move things forward in timely manner.

SD also advised that **he didn't feel the Police have been helpful in dealing with obstructions**. He suggested that clarification is needed on what the obstruction rules are as antisocial parking and parking on the pavements is becoming normalised in places.

He continued by saying that he doesn't feel anyone is listening to opinions on town parking. He suggested that people just want Traffic Wardens back, funded by the money they bring in, rather than parking meters or parking permits.

Simon Elford responded that Hastings Direct are a big employer within Bexhill and are a responsible employer. SE advised that future plans will be looked at and discussed but no comments can be made at this stage as proposals have not been submitted.

The Chair invited Katy Bourne to respond on the points about Traffic Wardens.

KB advised that Traffic Wardens come under the control of local authorities rather than the Police. She read from a letter dated 26<sup>th</sup> March 2014 from the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Robert Goodwill MP. The letter followed up a letter from August 2011, which invited the County Council to apply to take over responsibility for parking in the area. The letter suggested decriminalisation of parking and said the government would work with the Council to expedite this. KB suggested that this letter indicated that the government would be behind decriminalisation and it therefore may not take four years to complete.

KB confirmed that money from fines goes to central government and she didn't know who would fund a Traffic Warden. KB suggested a conversation with Councillors and said she would be willing to look at the issue with the Chief Inspector. KB stressed that there is no money in Police funds to pay for Traffic Wardens.

**KB was asked to write to the Minister and ask for funds to be allocated to pay for a Traffic Warden.** KB agreed to do this but stated that she wouldn't expect a positive response. **She also suggested that the local MP be asked to raise the issue with the Minister.**

### **Ian Hollidge**

IH raised the issue of road safety. He suggested that the allocation of space between taxis, disabled parking and residents parking should be managed by the Council but felt that there are also issues with the safety of cyclists. He stated that the Highway Code is clear but not followed by many and not enforced by the Police. He commended the good work the Police do in lots of areas, for example follow up of sexual crimes, burglaries and cyber crime but felt that they don't follow up well on road issues.

He continued that the Highway Code says drivers must not park against the flow of traffic but that many people continue to do this. Cyclists then have to travel in the middle of road because of the danger of cars pulling out. IH suggested that those that abuse the Highway Code potentially have no respect for the law and asked for an old fashioned, polite approach from the Police.

IH proceeded to talk about the allocation of space and said that there are many yellow lines on the road that are no longer needed and people park there without causing obstruction. He suggested a **comprehensive parking review** and that this shouldn't just include restricting parking to one particular group eg disabled or unloading.

Warren Franklin took the floor and responded that it comes down to risk and threat. Resources have to be deployed to areas of highest threat. WF said he is very supportive of what Hastings Direct are doing but reported that the PCSO in Collington spends 80-90% of his time dealing with parking issues.

WF stated that the other significant issue is with emergency vehicles. He reported that he is in regular contact with other emergency services and would know immediately if there was an issue with them not getting through because of parked cars. If this happened it would be dealt with straight away.

WF advised that there has not been an accident involving a cyclist in Bexhill in the last three months. He continued that it is not the Police's responsibility to deal with all parking issues as there is no statutory requirement for them to deal with no waiting times and prohibited zones. WF said that the Police want to work with partners to bring about longer term solutions.

### **Diane Weller**

DW asked whether anyone has thought about going to the Job Centre, getting intelligent people to work with the Police to check cars with the Police.

The Chief Inspector responded that a Traffic Wardens costs £25-30k per year and he doesn't have this funding. He advised that previously Traffic Wardens had been sucked into town centres rather than covering all areas. Coverage of all areas would require 10-15 Traffic Wardens. WF advised that a scheme along the lines of DW's idea doesn't exist at the moment so cannot be implemented.

### **Bob Brown**

BB supported all that has been said about Collington parking. He reported that ESCC have put double yellow lines around junctions and that this has improved sight lines. Police are not dealing with parking issues properly and that he felt qualified to give this opinion given his 22 years as a Traffic Officer.

BB reported on a trip to the railway station where in a 50 yard stretch seven cars were parked on the pavement.

The Rother Commander responded that parking in the Collington area has been a long standing problem and that things are now being addressed with Hastings Direct. WF suggested that whilst it's key that problems are recognised there also needs to be a recognition of the contribution of Hastings Direct to the Town. WF suggested that things have significantly changed since BB was a Traffic Officer and at that time the Police had around five times as many resources available.

The Police Commissioner advised that a PCSO spends a lot of time around Collington but clearly not enough. **She agreed to raise this with the Chief Constable at her next regular Friday meeting.** KB again asked the Forum to reconsider decriminalisation.

### **Brenda Morgan**

BM advised that she is on the committee for the Collington Residents Action Group. She thanked Hastings Direct for their recent presentation to residents.

BM raised the Highway Code rule regarding no parking on pavements and advised that this is happening in some places. BM has been told by a PCSO that the ruling is a guideline rather than a law and asked for clarification.

**WF advised that he would speak to Roy Collins and check the advice that he has been giving in relation to this issue.** He will then feed back into the Forum.

### **Alan Pearce**

AP raised issues of engineering, enforcement and education.

He suggested that all Officers should get together and work as a group as this would resolve issues faster than if they continue focussing on their own areas.

County Cllr Carl Maynard responded to say that there cannot be a quick move to civil parking enforcement. In order for decriminalisation to take place there would have to be an application to the Department for Transport and then areas would need to be zoned. Once the system had been in operation for a period of time there would need to be a review to make sure the scheme is working correctly.

CM continued that the County Council has been through the process of implementing a parking scheme in Eastbourne, Lewes and Hastings. He gave an assurance that all parties are talking together and not being obstructive, but are being as open and transparent as possible whilst recognising that things have to be done properly and legally.

### **Cllr Paul Lendon**

PL asked whether Cllr Maynard thinks Devonshire Square is working and whether he would be willing to put new initiatives in that area? PL suggested a bus hub, disabled parking and short term parking as alternative suggestions for use.

County Cllr Carl Maynard responded that the usage of Devonshire Square has always had a mixed opinion and that there are no changes planned. He stated that some people have positive opinions about the square whilst others don't like it. He added that with a large public outcry there might be a chance of change but there would be a cost and it is not clear where the funds would come from to pay for the work.

### **Cathy Harmer, Chair Little Common and Cooden Business Association**

CH advised that residents had been aware that there would be a charge for parking at Little Common as some people were abusing the free parking. She continued that some sort of concession had been asked for and 750 signatures were collected on a petition to ask for one or two hours free parking so that local shops didn't suffer.

The response was that this isn't possible with the technology used.

Cllr Simon Elford responded to say that a parking review panel had been in place some years ago when charges were put in place. Since then there has been another parking panel Chaired by Councillor Earl and this has reviewed parking changes that have been put in across the District.

SE acknowledged there is an issue with the machines. There are few machines on the market that would allow for an hours free parking and the cost would be around £8,500 to replace the current machines. He advised that the parking committee hasn't been disbanded and would be looking again to review all parking in the next term of office.

SE confirmed that the last review reported back around 2 months ago and the decision had been to retain the parking charges in Little Common. He advised that there is already a considerable return from parking fees in Little Common and there would need to be a significant increase in the number of cars parking to repay the £8,000.

### **Guy Laing**

GL described Albany Road as 'the town's free car park'. GL described living on Albany Road as 'hell' and said that even though he pays his Council Tax and **pays for a Parking Permit he can't park near his home**. He reported that he has lived there for 29 years and it has got much worse in the last six months.

Carl Maynard responded that issues of Residents' Permits and the length of parking would be considered under the 'zoning' exercise that would take place with decriminalisation.

### **Lorna Extence**

LE said she feels that the De La Warr car park charges are too high for the local area and if they were reduced to be more in line with charges in Hastings car parks then more people would use it therefore reducing congestion elsewhere. Also free parking only begins at 8pm. If this was changed to 6pm, it would encourage more people to use the car park.

LE noted poor bus links between Hastings and Bexhill and suggested that if Bexhill wants visitors in the evenings then parking needs to be released and prices reduced.

In terms of Hastings Direct, LE suggested that car sharing schemes should be put in place with those with fuller cars being allowed to park closer to work than those with fewer people in the car.

Jay Wootten (Hastings Direct) responded that car sharing was included in the staff survey. It was noted that a number of staff had stopped using rail in January when tickets went up and discounts went down. The survey asked where people travel from to see whether Hastings Direct can look at solutions for those living close by, eg use of a bike for the duration of their employment. JW advised that Hastings Direct are hoping to make a massive indent in the 2-300 car problem.

### **Peter Talbot**

PT suggested a 'quick fix' for Hastings Direct by building pedestrian access to Cranston Avenue. This would allow the wide road to be used for extra parking capacity.

Jay Wootten (Hastings Direct) responded that a planning application was submitted in late 2007/8 including these types of options. The plan allowed for a gate to be put in place for a fire exit muster station, but permission was not granted for an exit point. JW confirmed that the gate was a fire muster exit only.

### **Pauline Young**

PY advised that she is owner of "Fancy That" in Town Hall Square.

She reported problems in Town Hall Square with restricted parking mainly taken by taxis and residents parking. Vehicles are sometimes parked for days on end.

PY said that the taxi rank across the road is often busy, but the taxi company next door to her premises is registered in Wealden and therefore not allowed to use the taxi rank. **These taxis are often disruptive and obstruct pavements**, which is particularly an issue for those with disabilities who can't use disabled bays.

**PY asked whether letting agents that let out the properties make it clear to tenants that there's a two hour parking restriction** and whether official notices can be sent out to businesses and residents to remind them that it's two hour parking in this area?

PY also raised problems in Windsor Road (where she is resident) where businesses park cars whilst waiting for parts.

## **Unnamed attendee**

This individual raised the issue of 1000 new homes being built with the new link road, all of which will have at least one car. The person suggested that consideration needs to be given to this now as this will become a problem over the next 2-3 years.

Cllr Carl Maynard responded that this is an important point and as part of the planning permission for the link road there were conditions that mitigation measures were put in place. He advised that part of the planning permission was for a bus lane on Bexhill Road to terminate at Glynde Gap. This should see more people travelling from Hastings via public transport. CM advised that traffic modelling shows that Bexhill Road will see a 40% drop in traffic.

## **10. Vote**

The Chair put forward 3 options for a vote:

1. To keep parking as it is with no enforcement: two hands were raised
2. Decriminalisation of parking in Bexhill with major investment and the likelihood of parking meters across Bexhill: 21 hands were raised
3. Traffic Wardens restored, with pursuit of a change of primary legislation to allow for funds collected from parking fines to be used to pay for traffic wardens: 69 hands were raised

A large number of people had already departed before the vote was taken. (A count of chairs after the meeting, deducting the approximate number of empty chairs, indicated that some 250 people had attended.)

## **11. Any other business**

### **11.1 Action points for Katy Bourne**

- To write to the Transport Minister to see if legislation can be changed so that funds received from fines can be returned and used to pay for Traffic Wardens
- To ask the Chief Constable to release an extra PCSO for Collington Road until the Hastings Direct issues are resolved
- To ask the Chief Constable to release an extra PCSO for the Town Centre
- To ensure that PCSO Roy Collins understands obstructions and that this is being interpreted properly
- To obtain the number of parking tickets issued and in which roads so that this can be circulated through the Collington Residents' Action Group and the Bexhill Town Forum

KB asked the Forum to consider decriminalising parking as this has worked well in other towns.

KB thanked all for inviting her and asked for further questions to be written or sent via facebook or Twitter.

A person from floor said that KBs action points were the same as those given a few months ago. KB advised that this is not correct and suggested they talk after the meeting.

### **11.2 Role of Police Commissioner**

Person from floor enquired as to the role of the Police Commissioner which KB outlined.

### **11.3 Further statements by members of the public**

#### **Anne Wheeler**

AW questioned an earlier statement from Cllr Carl Maynard, which stated that there are 8 roads paying for residential parking permits. AW stated that this number is actually 18 and questioned why some of this money could not be used to pay for Traffic Wardens. AW reported that those paying for permits can't use them as others are using the roads.

#### **Dave Dicken Smith, Chair of Rother District Taxi Association**

DDS informed the meeting that parking in taxi bays is forbidden by all but taxis under the Town Police Clauses in the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act. DDS reported that when these are being reported by calling 101 the response is that they are not doing any harm. He also felt they are being ignored by the police who see them parked in these bays.

The Chief Inspector responded that anyone with an issue can contact the Police and if there's someone available they will send someone, but availability can't always be guaranteed. He pointed out that there are CCTV cameras on taxi ranks. He added that it's not a criminal offence to park in a taxi rank (unlike double yellow lines and disabled bays) and often when people are asked to move on they will do so.

#### **Hillary Randall**

HR advised that the camera, mentioned by the Chief Inspector above, was provided by Bexhill Town Team.

#### **Member of public**

The person advised that he pays for a parking permit but most don't and they still drive into town centre and park all day. **He pointed out that there is no enforcement so people don't pay for permits.**

### **11.4 Final Statements**

All members of the panel were offered the chance to make a closing statement. Katy Bourne, Warren Franklin and Carl Maynard declined.

#### **Hillary Randall**

HR reiterated that the only way to reinstate a parking attendant is to decriminalise parking so the funding can be used to pay for the positions

#### **Simon Elford**

SE clarified that funding for the CCTV camera was supported by Marks & Spencer and Rother District Council, as well as the Town Team. He advised that, subject to the next election, a car park working group will be brought in to look at all parking in the Rother area.

The Chair gave thanks to everyone who attended and to those responsible for the organisation of the Forum:

Roger Gillett for handling the roving microphones  
John Black for the sound  
Russell Meredith for IT support  
Margaret Jones for the outstanding Press coverage  
Jackie Bialeska for posters

The Chair closed the meeting at 20:50.