



# MEETING OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

WEDNESDAY, 2 NOVEMBER 2005 2.30  
PM

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## PANEL MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor David Brailsford  
Councillor Ken Joynson  
Councillor John Nicholson (Chairman)  
Councillor Ian Selby

Councillor Jeff Thompson (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillor Mrs Azar Woods

## OFFICERS

Management Accountant  
Public Relations Manager  
Scrutiny Officer  
Scrutiny Support Officer

## OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor Wheat  
Councillor Mrs. Wheat  
1 Member of the Local Press

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## 38. COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None received.

## 39. MEMBERSHIP

The Panel were notified that Councillor Brailsford would be substituting for Councillor Mrs. Smith for this meeting only.

## 40. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Stokes.

## 41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

## 42. CAR PARKING CHARGES

The Scrutiny Officer explained that the special meeting had been called because the date designated for a decision within the forward plan was the 7<sup>th</sup> November 2005. The Chairman had felt that it would be most appropriate for the DSP to consider this item before the Cabinet made their decision.

The Management Accountant briefly précised his report to Cabinet, number DOS294,

which had been circulated to Panel members prior to the meeting. A policy had been adopted whereby there would be a biennial review of car parking charges, with a minimum increase of the rate of inflation. The policy that was adopted also included the alignment of charges between Grantham and Stamford for shorter periods (long-term parking was already in-line). Three alternatives had been prepared for consideration, with the intention of encouraging people to use the car park appropriate to their stay: punitive charges would be introduced for long-term parking in short term car parks, while long-term parking in long-term car parks would be competitively priced. Other considerations had been presented, including the possibility of charging for parking at evenings, Sundays and Bank Holidays and charging for disabled parking. Different payment methodologies had also been presented for consideration.

The report identified turnover of parking spaces, income generated per space and comparisons between principal car parks in Grantham and Stamford. This information had been compiled to predict behavioural patterns of motorists and how to most appropriately amend parking charges. Significant reviews of the parking structure were underway in Bourne, Stamford and Grantham. Comparators of neighbouring authorities were included; Newark and Sherwood District Council, members of SKDC's audit family, were priced marginally higher. A Value for Money study showed that South Kesteven had the third highest subsidy against Council Tax.

Option one had the lowest possible increases for short stay car parking, while long stay car parking increased in hourly increments. Option two had the highest increase for short stay parking while long-stay parking was divided into three bands. Option three replicated the short-stay charges of option one and included the banded system for long-stay parking of option two.

Panel members were given the opportunity to discuss the report of the Management Accountant and to ask questions. DSP Member considerations had to manage demand while ensuring that Council Tax increases were kept to a minimum, as car parking was the only revenue generating service that the Council retained.

Most members felt that bringing the Stamford and Grantham charges in-line in one step would be too big a jump. Points considered included:

- Concern that an increase of 40% in Stamford may give the impression that they were persecuting motorists;
- To prevent an even bigger increase in Stamford next time, some Grantham charges would have to be pegged if charges were to be completely in-line;
- The need for commonality between the two major towns;
- Given the disparity with Bourne, who have no charges, discrepancies between Grantham and Stamford should also be permissible in the short-term.

The majority of members agreed with the principle of punitive charges for people using short-stay car parks for long periods and welcomed the banded charges of option two and three. Only a very small number of people would be eligible to pay the punitive rate for 4-hour parking. Members supported the option with the smallest general increase in charges, therefore supporting option three. To address such steep increases in charges to Stamford they suggested modifying the figures for Stamford.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

***To recommend that the Cabinet approve Option 3 with the following amendments to short stay charges in Stamford:***

- a) ***0-1 hour should increase to 60p***

- b) 0-2 hours should increase to £1.10**
- c) 0-3 hours should increase to £1.50**

Discussion ensued as to whether charges should be instigated for Bourne. Given the development of the core area, Panel members felt that it would be appropriate to begin to consider charging for car parking facilities in Bourne. Car parks in Bourne were being used for commuters on their way to Peterborough. Members were concerned that while they were using the facilities within the area, no money was being put back into the Bourne local economy. On completion of the development of the core area, Members felt that a car parking review of Bourne would be necessary. Suggestions were also made that a moderate car parking charge for the Deepings should be considered. Charges in Bourne and the Deepings could either relieve pressure on Grantham and Stamford or provide an enhanced income stream for the District Council.

**CONCLUSION:**

- 1. That no immediate charges should be imposed for car parking in Bourne but that consideration should be given to this on completion of the development of the core area;**
- 2. Car parking charges in the Deepings should be considered as an option for the future;**
- 3. That the Bourne and Deepings TCMPs should be encouraged to undertake a study of parking.**

When discussing Sunday and Bank Holiday parking, the following points were made:

- Charging on these occasions would displace traffic onto the streets;
- Using increased opening hours of shops, including Sundays as justification to charge for car parking would be unviable because people go into town for non-commercial reasons on a Sunday and bank holidays;
- Any charges on Sundays and bank holidays would need to be enforced, outlay could exceed monies collected.

**CONCLUSION:**

**As per the current policy, the DSP recommend that no charge should be made for parking on Sundays and Bank Holidays.**

The Management Accountant reminded the Panel about the construction of a multi-storey car park on Welham Street, Grantham. Recommendations would shortly need to be made as to what to do with it at night: whether to impose charges, permit free parking after 6.00pm until a designated time or whether to lock it at 6:00p.m. The Panel would need to consider whether there would be sufficient night time economy to justify leaving it open, whether leaving it open for free parking between 6:00p.m. and some other designated time would promote instances of anti-social behaviour or whether leaving it open and charging for parking would displace people to other car parks and whether the Council would need to consider charging for these facilities to prevent disparity.

**CONCLUSIONS:**

- 1. As per the current policy, parking in the evening should remain free of charge;**
- 2. Evening parking should be reconsidered with the development of Welham Street Multi-Storey Car Park, Grantham.**

The efficacy of charging for parking spaces for the disabled was debated. The majority of members felt that there should be no charge at all because of physical limitations. Another member felt that everyone should pay exactly the same; the concession should be that disabled parking spaces should be fully accessible for those with relevant permissions to use them, properly policed and that high quality disabled facilities should be ensured, including suitably placed, easy access parking spaces.

**CONCLUSION:**

***As per the current policy, the DSP recommend that no charges should be made for parking for disabled persons.***

Reducing the charges recommended in option 3 for Stamford would mean that the projected income would be lower than stated. To compensate for the lower income, it was suggested that fines for not displaying a ticket should be increased to £60.00, with a discounted rate of £40.00 for payment within 7 days. Increasing charges for those who stay for periods longer than that which they had paid was also suggested provided there was a discretionary period of approximately ten minutes. Members did not support increasing these charges, because the majority of these incidents were genuine mistakes.

**CONCLUSION:**

- 1. That failure to display a ticket should result in a fine of £60.00 with a discounted rate of £40.00 for payment within 7 days;***
- 2. That parking for periods longer than paid for should continue to result in a fine of £30.00 with a discounted rate of £15.00 for payment within 7 days.***

It was suggested that, to permit an increase in tariff by multiples of 10p, that would be closer to the rate of inflation, the review of car parking charges should be on a triennial basis. The Management Accountant explained the rationale behind the twice-yearly review.

Members agreed with the principle of Smartcards that would provide a discounted rate as an incentive. Using a centrally located machine, credit of any value could be added to a smart card. Charges would be debited accordingly. With this method any charge increases could accurately mirror inflation. It was suggested that to increase charges inline with inflation for Smartcard holders could constitute the discounted rate. The Scrutiny Officer informed the Panel that the E-Government Working Group attached to the Engagement DSP was examining cashless payment.

**CONCLUSION:**

***That the Cabinet should consider the introduction of a Smartcard scheme.***

Members briefly discussed the likelihood of the introduction of a Corporation car parking charge and the affect this may have.

To promote most appropriate use of car parks, it was suggested that car parks should be signposted more clearly, denoting whether they were short stay or long stay.

**CONCLUSION:**

***That the Cabinet should urge the Highways Department of Lincolnshire County Council that car parks should be properly signposted denoting whether car parks are short stay or long stay.***

**43. CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting was closed at 16:08.