

MEETING OF THE RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

FRIDAY, 2 NOVEMBER 2012 2.30 PM



GROUP MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor Mark Ashberry
Councillor Jean Bevan
Councillor Michael Cook

Councillor Nick Craft (Chairman)
Councillor Bob Sandall
Councillor Trevor Scott (Vice-Chairman)

PORTFOLIO HOLDER

Portfolio Holder: Strategic Resources – Well Run Council (Councillor Mike Taylor)

OFFICERS

Strategic Director – Corporate Focus (Daren Turner)
Property Development Manager (Neil Cucksey)
Head of Community Assets (Paul Stokes)
Head of Environmental Services (Mark Taylor)
Waste and Recycling Service Manager (Pat Swinton)
Development Management Service Manager (Pat Reid)
Community Engagement and Policy Development Officer (Carol Drury)
Principal Democracy Officer (Jo Toomey)
Accountant (Gillian Goddard)

30. MEMBERSHIP

The PDG was notified that Councillor Ashberry was substituting for Councillor Dilks for this meeting only.

31. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Smith

32. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

No interests were disclosed.

33. ACTION NOTES FROM 4 OCTOBER 2012

The action notes from the meeting held on 4 October 2012 were agreed as a correct record and noted.

34. UPDATES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

Cycle Centre

At its meeting on 4 October 2012, the PDG recommended that the cycle centre should be subject to additional advertisement. The facility would be promoted in conjunction with the developing Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Further engagement with the wider community was also required.

Grounds maintenance issues

The grounds maintenance issues raised on 4 October 2012 in relation to overgrown planting and grass verges was referred to the Scrutiny Committee and would form part of its considerations on the grounds maintenance contract at its next meeting on 27 November 2012.

35. FEES AND CHARGES

The Strategic Director introduced report number HOF210 and explained that it provided a high level look at fees and charges. The PDG would continue the work it began on 4 October 2012 in respect of fees and charges and receive updates on proposed fees and charges for 2013/14.

Car parking

The Property Development Manager summarised the outcome of the Communities Policy Development Group's strategic car parking review. He summarised the scope of the review, the arrangements for the introduction and management of civil parking enforcement and possible new methods for payment (payment via mobile phone). He also explained that the PDG's work was informing a new car parking strategy, which would manage demand, support the vitality and vibrancy of local economies and seek to promote more sustainable transport choices.

One outcome of the Communities PDG's review was that they did not feel there was sufficient differential between all day parking in long-stay and short-stay car parks. It was suggested that the cost for parking all day in long-stay car parks should be reduced from £3.00 to £2.90 and the charge for parking all day in a short stay car park should be increased from £4.00 to £4.20 in an attempt to influence behaviour. Councillors discussed the proposal. Some members suggested that there should not be any increase in charges while others suggested that the price differential would need to be greater to influence parking behaviour. Instead councillors considered the introduction of a

maximum stay period of three hours for short-stay car parks.

Councillors also discussed car parking in Bourne. To manage the turnover of parking spaces it had been suggested that parking orders imposing a maximum stay of 30 to 60 minutes should be applied at the Bourne Corn Exchange. This would ensure facilities were available at the Corn Exchange when the Bourne Community Access Point was opened. Orders on other car parks could be for four or eight hours. This would be managed through the introduction ticketing machines against which no charge would be made.

Recommendation

That Parking Orders should be applied to Bourne car parks from April 2013 which would impose a maximum stay period.

PDG members briefly considered the potential impact of CPE. Trends in other areas following the introduction of CPE had shown increased occupancy of car parks as a consequence of on-street parking enforcement.

Recommendation

Car parking charges should remain static and be reviewed 6-months after the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement.

Bus stations

The Property Development Manager proposed that there should be no change in fees and charges for bus stations. Prices had been increased in 2012/13; further increases could deter bus companies from picking up or dropping off at the bus station and potentially the cancellation of some services. PDG members also expressed concern that any increase in charges could lead to increases in fares for passengers. Councillors were keen that bus services should be affordable.

Recommendation

That there should be no increase in respect of fees and charges for bus stations within the district.

Cycle Centre

It was proposed that fees and charges for the cycle centre should not change and that there should be increased publicity about the facility's availability.

Recommendation

There should be no increase in respect of fees and charges for the cycle centre in Grantham together with running increased publicity about the

facility's availability.

Cemetery

The Property Development Manager circulated a document which details several proposed new charges in respect of Grantham cemetery. Following recent enquiries, it was proposed that the Council look at providing plots for mausoleums. It was also proposed that following numerous requests provision should be made for kerbed memorials for which a charge should be introduced. The proposed charges would be for the provision of a plot only, memorials would be commissioned by and the responsibility of the bereaved family. The calculation for proposed charges was based on the ratio between the sizes required for a mausoleum plot compared to a standard burial plot. The PDG was further advised of charges made by other Councils, which Members felt compared favourably.

Recommendation

- 1. That the Council should introduce an exclusive right of burial charge for construction of a single vault mausoleum on grave spaces outside of the designated area for lawn cemetery at a charge of £600 for 2013/14 with a £300 pre-purchase deposit***
- 2. That the Council should allow kerbed memorials in the lawn cemetery area with a charge of the standards grave space plus £125.***

Building Control

Extensive work had been done on a service review of the Council's Building Control team, together with benchmarking against other Lincolnshire and neighbouring authorities. Over the past 6 years there had been a decrease in monthly income of approximately £20,000; this level had stabilised. Councillors noted that the Building Control department worked in direct competition with the private sector. Officers recommended that there should be no change in the standard fees and charges for the service however it was proposed that the hourly rate should increase from £40 to £45. The hourly rate could be applied when major development fell outside of the scale of charges. Fees for building control used to be prescribed nationally but since 2010 local authorities could set their own fees but were required to breakeven.

Recommendation

- 1. That the standard fees and charges for Building Control should not change.***
- 2. That the hourly rate for Building Control services should increase from £40 an hour to £45 an hour.***

Markets

A fundamental review of the markets service was carried out in 2010 which involved members of the Communities and Resources PDGs. The charging structure for markets was borne of this review. The charging in Stamford reflected the desirability of the market for traders and occupancy levels. Officers proposed increasing the charges in line with the retail price index.

Councillors proposed no change to the cost of the markets. They compared the charges for South Kesteven's markets with markets in nearby local authorities and noted the loyalty of traders in Grantham who had turned up regularly during the improvement works in Westgate and the Market Place; consequently members felt it would be unfair to alter any other charges. Councillors noted the popularity of Stamford market and some members stated that they felt that charges would be consistent across all the towns. To optimise income from Stamford market Councillors asked whether there were opportunities to increase the footprint of the market and the consequently the number of available pitches. Officers stated this could be reviewed and a report presented back at a future meeting of the PDG.

Recommendation

- 1. That there should be no change in charges in respect of markets***
- 2. That a review of markets (looking to increase the number of available pitches without increasing cost) should be added to the PDG's work programme to begin in 2013.***

Arts centres

A review of fees and charges in respect of the arts centres was carried out in 2013. When comparing fees and charges to similar facilities available in the public and private sector, South Kesteven's were higher. It was proposed that there should be an inflationary increase in charges only. Members noted that footfall has increased at both venues and there were some very regular bookers. The box offices were also being used to sell tickets for events that were not being presented at the Arts Centres, for example Shakespeare at Toilethorpe and events at Belton House. Income was also raised through the Guildhall promoted shows; instead of paying a lump sum for productions, the fees structure was based on an 80:20 split.

Recommendation

That charges in respect of Grantham and Stamford Arts Centres should increase in line with the retail price index.

Bourne Corn Exchange

Significant development was planned for Bourne Corn Exchange in 2012/13

with the development of the Bourne Community Access Point. This would alter the hire offer. It was proposed that the existing fees and charges be increased in line with RPI. Five new considerations were also proposed: kitchen hire excluding the use of equipment, kitchen hire including full use of the equipment including crockery and cutlery, use of the bar for functions when the hirer is providing a bar for the sale of alcohol and peak time and off-peak charges for regular users.

Recommendation

That the Council should adopt the proposed fees and charges for Bourne Corn Exchange.

Green waste

It was proposed that the green waste charge should remain at £25.

Recommendation

That the charge for green waste collection should remain at £25.

Bulky waste

Officers proposed leaving the bulky waste collection as the service was achieving a small operational surplus. The service would consider looking at a pricing structure that incorporated allotted collection times for 2014/15.

Recommendation

That the charging structure for the collection of bulky waste should not change.

MOT testing

The charge for MOT testing was set at the maximum level allowed by the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA). Discussion ensued on whether the district council could require the Council MOT all taxis licensed under its authority. Councillors suggested increased advertising at the depot. It was also suggested that if the Council did MOT taxis, they could be required to display a sticker stating that SKDC completed their MOT; Councillors felt that this could help increase trust and confidence in the standard of taxis operating in the district. If competition rules prevented mandating the servicing of taxis by the district council, members suggested offering a discount to taxi drivers as an incentive.

Recommendation

- 1. That the charge for MOT servicing should not change.***

- 2. That officers should investigate whether taxis can be required to come to the district council for servicing and whether discounts could be applied as an incentive.***

Development management – pre-application advice

At the meeting of the Resources PDG held on 4 October 2012 the Development Management Service Manager was tasked to model the amount that would have been made from charging for pre-application advice based on planning history and potential incentives to householders seeking pre-application advice. This information was presented in a paper which was circulated to members of the PDG. Following this modelling and benchmarking against other authorities, the Development Management Service Manager recommended an accredited agent scheme rather than rebates for householders who follow the advice they were given. This scheme had recently been launched by Cornwall Council.

Recommendation

- 1. That a charge should be introduced for pre-application advice based on a sliding scale dependent upon the size of the development (from £150 for a small scale development) and £50 for householders.***
- 2. That officers should review the accredited agent scheme run by Cornwall Council for consideration by the PDG at a future date.***

Helpline service

The Strategic Director, Corporate Focus advised members of the proposal to increase charges for the helpline service in line with inflation until the impact of changing the call centre could be identified.

Recommendation

That the charge for the helpline should increase in line with the retail price index.

36. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting was closed at 17:03.