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21 December 2007

S U M M O N S

MEETING: Extraordinary Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
DATE: 9 January 2008
TIME: 6.00pm
PLACE: Council Chamber, Town Hall, Gosport
Democratic Services contact: Chris Wrein

LINDA EDWARDS
BOROUGH SOLICITOR

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Councillor Philpott (Chairman)
Councillor Dickson (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Davis	Councillor Mrs Mudie
Councillor Foster	Councillor Mrs Salter
Councillor Foster-Reed	Councillor Mrs Searle
Councillor Jacobs	Councillor Train
Councillor Kimber	Councillor Ward

FIRE PRECAUTIONS

(To be read from the Chair if members of the public are present)

In the event of the fire alarm (continuous ringing) or controlled evacuation alarm (intermittent ringing) sounding, please leave the room immediately.
Proceed downstairs by way of the main stairs or as directed by GBC staff, follow any of the emergency exit signs. People with disability or mobility issues please identify yourself to GBC staff who will assist in your evacuation of the building.

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

- If you are in a wheelchair or have difficulty in walking and require access to the Committee Room on the First Floor of the Town Hall for this meeting, assistance can be provided by Town Hall staff on request

If you require any of the services detailed above please ring the Direct Line for the Democratic Services Officer listed on the Summons (first page).

NOTE:

Please note that mobile phones should be switched off for the duration of the meeting.

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To receive apologies, if any, for inability to attend the meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

All Members present are reminded to declare, at this point in the meeting or as soon as possible thereafter, any personal (including financial) or prejudicial interest in any item(s) being considered at this meeting.

3. CAR PARKING CHARGES

Report to follow.

4. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

BRIEFING NOTE

To:	OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date:	9 JANUARY 2008
Title:	CAR PARKING CHARGES
Author:	DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE
Purpose:	For Information

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide background information and highlight a number of issues to assist the Committee's scrutiny of Car Parking Charges.

Background

Town Centre

Car parking charges were introduced into the Borough in November 2004. This included 3 Long Stay Car Parks and 10 Short Stay Car Parks with a maximum stay 3 hours at 50p per hour.

Jamaica Place North and South Car Parks became free car parks in summer 2005 but still have a maximum stay of 3 hours.

Long Stay Car Parks within the Town Centre are currently 50p per hour up to £3 for 24 hours. From early December 2006 the Short Stay Car Parks in the Town Centre (excluding Jamaica Place North and South) became free for 2 hours but still require that a ticket must be displayed. (Car park users must insert any coin into the machine to obtain a 2 hour free ticket and their coin is returned).

Lee on the Solent and Foreshore

Prior to November 2004 the Foreshore Car Parks at Lee on the Solent and Stokes Bay were free in the winter months but during the summer months the following Car Parks had an attendant taking payments:

- Beach Road (LoS)
- No 2 Battery (Stokes Bay)
- Pebble Beach (Stokes Bay)
- GAFIRS (Stokes Bay)

The charges at this time were:

- Cars: £3 per day (£2 per half day)
- Coaches: £15 per day (£10 per half day)

Permits for the Foreshore Car Parks were available at £12 for residents and £60 for non-residents. When pay and display was introduced, all the Foreshore Car Parks were Long Stay apart from the Shoppers Car Parks, Marine Parade West 1 & 2 Car Parks and Flower Buildings Car Parks which were 3 hours maximum stay. Charges for the short stay car parks are 50p per hour with the long stay being 50p per hour/£3 for 24 hours. Permits for the Foreshore Car Parks are now £60 for the year for residents and non-residents.

The following appendices are attached:-

Map and Key- Gosport Town Centre Appendix A

Map and Key-Lee on the Solent Appendix B

Map and Key-Stokes Bay Appendix C

Car Park Information Appendix D

Traffic Management Issues

Powers are given to Local Authorities to construct car parks primarily for the purpose of relieving or preventing traffic congestion and to protect the safety and amenity of road users.

All District and Borough Councils are required by legislation to seek consent from the County Council for the introduction or variation of Parking Orders pursuant to Sections 35(1) and 39 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

It is the view of the County Council that car parks and charges should be used to complement their transport policies aimed at encouraging more sustainable travel through modal shift to walking, cycling and use of public transport. Any proposed changes in the parking regime are judged against those criteria.

The availability and location of parking spaces, the permitted duration of stay and the price will influence mode and route of travel. In view of the heavy congestion on Gosport primary road network, trips to Portsmouth by ferry should be encouraged. The combination of ferry and parking costs influence mode choice and route. Increases in long stay costs encourage more driving especially by

those living further away from the ferry, as these costs have to be paid on a daily basis giving rise to a significant cumulative cost.

The introduction of long stay charges resulted in a significant reduction in parking in the long stay car parks and resolved the problem of inadequate parking capacity in the town centre. However there has been some displacement of parking to residential roads. A report was submitted by the Head of Traffic Management to a Parking Working Group on the problem though the Council has not resolved to do anything about it. 34 complaints were received in a period of 18 months from November '04 to March '06. There has been a steady trickle of complaints since, now mainly related to the Willis Road / Anchorage area and Grove Avenue.

By contrast, short stay charges are paid infrequently and would not be expected to have a lasting effect on either patronage of the town centre or parking in residential roads, or as great an influence as long stay charges on mode of travel.

Past surveys (before Gunwharf) have indicated that ferry use is substantially confined to residents of Gosport and Stubbington. The use of the Borough's car parks for park and ride in this manner is not harmful whilst there remains capacity to support the needs of the town centre and it creates an opportunity for revenue.

Lee on Solent

Abuse of waiting restrictions within Lee on Solent High Street and Pier Street is a perpetual problem. This results in some obstructions of buses, deliveries and through traffic. These problems might be reduced by the restoration of some free one hour shopper parking in proximity to the pelican crossing, giving some parity with nearby Stubbington whilst not significantly reducing the supply of longer stay spaces for those wishing to make leisure visits to the resort. Any permitted free period of stay should not be attractive to most walkers and users of the beach as it will undermine the function of the car park and the long stay revenue. For this reason a free stay of longer than 1 hour could not be recommended.

High Street Footfall Figures

The following paragraph contains a brief analysis of the effect that car-parking charges, introduced on 15th November 2004 and then subsequently removed in November 2006, had on Gosport's High Street Footfall figures. (see Appendix E)

High Street Footfall figures are used as an indicator, over a period of time, to establish whether Gosport High Street has become more or less successful. Whilst the footfall results do not directly indicate the success of individual shops or give an indication of the value of transactions, it does give a litmus test to the current shopping trends. The footfall data is collected on a quarterly basis and is

monitored on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday simultaneously at three different points of the High Street. On Tuesday and Thursday footfall, it is monitored at 10am, 12pm and 3pm for 20 minutes each time and on Saturdays for 40 minutes at 10am. For each period on each day, the weather conditions are recorded. Adverse weather conditions have an impact on the amount of shoppers.

Footfall has been recorded in this manner since Quarter 2 2004 and has shown a slight decline over the 15 monitored periods. Over the monitored period, Quarter 3 generally has the highest amount of footfall with lowest occurring in Quarter 1.

The Car-parking charges were introduced before the quarter 4 2004 footfall results were recorded and this quarter represents the highest recorded level of Customer Footfall per minute.

Over the period of car-parking charges there has been a slight downward trend in footfall figures. Quarter 1 2006 shows the lowest recorded footfall rate although there were extreme weather conditions experienced in this week including snow and sleet.

Since the short stay car-parking charges have been removed in November 2006 the downward trend has halted, although quarter 4 2006 was still lower than quarter 4 2005 and quarter 4 2004.

It is impossible to say definitively whether the car-parking charges have had an impact on usage of the High Street. The downward trend in recent years is more likely attributable to the retail offer in Fareham town centre and Gunwharf plus other external factors such as purchasing over the internet.

At a recent meeting the Council's market operator has repeated the previous assertion that charging for parking is not considered to be an issue that affects the viability of the market.

To summarise the survey data does not demonstrate a statistically significant variation in footfall in the Town Centre due to the changes in recent years to car parking charges.

Car Park Survey Analysis

Surveys of car park occupancy (See Appendix G) were undertaken on several days prior to and following the introduction of free parking in December 2006 and January 2007 respectively. The results were variable but displayed no significant overall changes in the levels of occupancy. The changes measured could not be solely attributed to the cost of parking as there are many other factors effecting patronage, such as duration of stay, seasonal trends, weather, special events and so on, especially around the Christmas period

Comparative Charging Data

Comparative charging data is included for Fareham, Eastleigh, Havant and Portsmouth in Appendix F

Car Parking Income data

The car parking Income for 2005/06, 2006/07 and 2007/08 is shown in Appendix H for both the short stay and long stay car parks. The income received from the long stay car parks has reduced since the short stays were made free although this could be partly the result of other factors.

Gosport Town Centre Principal Shopping Centre Quantitative Survey

Officers have carried out a number of Principal Shopping Centre Quantitative surveys since November 1997 and these are shown in Appendix I.

Gosport Ferry Passenger Numbers

The numbers of passengers using the Gosport Ferry each month from December 2003 to March 2007 are detailed in appendix J.

Budget Considerations

Whilst car parking charges were introduced partly as a traffic management measure, income generation was also a (valid) consideration. Making short stay parking “free” has had the predicted effect of a £25,000 per month income loss. Because Council Tax increases are capped, this annual shortfall of £300,000 can only be made good in the long term by reducing other budgets – primarily cutting services.

It is well reported that the Council is facing a funding crisis over the next 3 years with the need to reduce net General Fund spending by approximately 10% over that timescale – an average of over £400,000 per annum of new cuts, efficiencies or additional income. If this challenge is met by cuts alone, service levels will dramatically deteriorate.