

HOSPITAL PARKING CHARGES TASK GROUP

31 AUGUST 2011

At the meeting of Watford Borough Council held at the Town Hall, Watford on Wednesday, 31st August, 2011.

Present: Chairman (Councillor K Collett)
The Mayor ()

Councillors K Brodhurst, K Hastrick, P Jeffree and M Meerabux

Officers: Committee and Scrutiny Officer
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (RW)

1 ELECTION OF CHAIR

The Task Group was asked to elect a Chair for the Task Group.

AGREED

that Councillor Collett is elected Chair of the Hospital Parking Task Group.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

3 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest.

4 SCOPE FOR THE TASK GROUP AND DISCUSSION

The Task Group reviewed the scope and the documents with which they had been provided and advised that they considered that sufficient information had been included.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer suggested that were they to require any additional information they could contact the Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer and she would research the required information.

ACTION: All (if required)

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer suggested that Members might wish to produce a list of questions for the Associate Director, Strategic Developments, at Watford General Hospital who had advised that he would be willing to attend a meeting of the task group to answer queries. The Associate Director would then be able to research the questions prior to attending the meeting.

Concessions

Members addressed the issue of concessions. They considered that information on concessions was not readily available for patients and visitors and that those details that were provided were difficult to understand.

Members discussed the possibility of using public transport to travel to the hospital. It was noted, however, that most patients were elderly or physically frail and were consequently unable to use this method of travel.

Members wished to ask the Associate Director:

- How patients and visitors could make use of concessions
- How information was communicated to patients and visitors and whether staff on the wards were fully aware of concessions available.
- Whether the information on concessions could be communicated to patients and visitors in a simpler way.

Scale of Charges and Use of Revenue

Members discussed parking costs and noted that charges for Watford were the highest in the area at £4.00 for three hours; the daily rate was also considerably higher than at other hospital trusts.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised that the Task Group needed to consider whether the hospital used revenue collected from parking charges in order to fund services. Consequently any cuts in the charges could have a direct impact on services provided.

One Member suggested that the high costs in the car park were intended to discourage drivers parking and then walking to the town centre.

Another Member said that high costs for parking would discourage car use thus promoting energy saving. The Member added that a comparison could be made between costs in town centre car parks and parking at the hospital.

ACTION: Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer

Questions for the Associate Director on the issue of charges included:

- Why charges for parking started at £4.00.
- How the charges were calculated (to include calculation for staff parking)
- What revenue was raised by Watford General Hospital's charges during the period 2009/2010 and whether this information could be publicised.
- Could a breakdown of the costs and also use of funds be provided

Methods of Revenue Collection

Members discussed methods of parking charges' collection. It was considered that the 'Pay and Display' option could lead to a loss of revenue through visitors 'donating' unexpired tickets to new arrivals whereas 'Pay on Exit' would result in 100% collection. Members noted the disadvantages of this method which included higher capital costs.

One Member stated that in the past a 'change station' had been provided for visitors who did not have the correct coins; this facility was no longer available. Another Member said that whilst it was possible to pay by debit or credit card this resulted in the addition of an extra 30p to the cost.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer said that questions would be compiled by the Support Officer and then sent by email to Members. She asked that Members then added any further questions they had and return the completed information to Democratic Services. Once completed the questions would be forwarded to the Associate Director in preparation for the next meeting.

ACTION: Task Group members and Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer

In reply to a Member, the Committee and Scrutiny Officer said that the Associate Director might be able to advise on other organisations who could be consulted.

The Disability Forum was suggested as a useful group to contact; the Chair added that it would be beneficial to contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS).

ACTION: Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer

AGREED –

that the Associate Director, Strategic Developments, be invited to a future meeting to answer queries raised by Members.

5 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

- To be confirmed

Members agreed that 6.00 p.m. would be the optimum time to hold the meeting.

Chairman

The Meeting started at 6.00 pm
and finished at 7.00 pm