



# HOSPITAL PARKING CHARGES TASK GROUP MEETING

**Wednesday, 4th January, 2012**

**6.00 pm**

**Publication date: 21 December 2011**

**CONTACT**

If you require further information or you would like a copy of this agenda in another format, e.g. large print, please contact Rosy Wassell on 01923 278375 or by email – [legalanddemocratic@watford.gov.uk](mailto:legalanddemocratic@watford.gov.uk) (Minicom available on 01923 278499).

Welcome to this meeting. We hope you find these notes useful.

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# **AGENDA**

Councillor Collett (Chair)  
Councillors Brodhurst, Hastrick, Jeffree and Meerabux

- 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
- 2. NOTES OF THE MEETING ON 1 DECEMBER 2011** (Pages 1 - 4)
- 3. DRAFT REPORT FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** (Pages 5 - 16)  
  
Discussion on the Draft Report to be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.  
  
The Draft report is attached.
- 4. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

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## HOSPITAL PARKING CHARGES TASK GROUP

1 December 2011

Present: Councillor Collett (Chair)  
Councillors Brodhurst, Hastrick, Jeffree and Meerabux

Officer: Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (RW)

### 14. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

### 15. NOTES OF THE MEETING ON 5 OCTOBER 2011

The notes of the meeting on 2 November 2011 were agreed and signed.

### 16. RECOMMENDATIONS TO PUT FORWARD TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chair asked the Committee whether they had any changes or amendments to make to the list of Proposed Recommendations.

#### Recommendation 1 – '30 minute bays'

The Chair informed the meeting that she had visited other hospitals where signage for 'free' parking was more visible than at Watford.

#### Recommendation 5 – Concession Information/User Booklet

One Member recommended that the dissemination of information on concessions should be more pro-active; at present it appeared that users were expected to request this information rather than be offered.

The Chair stressed that staff in wards did not have the time to look for users who might require this information. She reiterated the need for a booklet which included information on available concessions.

A Member suggested that the term 'main carer' should be used in order to make the information clear.

#### Recommendation 6 - £2.50 charge

Members agreed that to start payment at a two hour stay for £2.50 would result in extra revenue from the car park. It was noted that visitors who were leaving currently passed tickets on to drivers who were just arriving at the car park; this resulted in a loss of payment. It was felt that a lower charge for less time would be more acceptable for visitors; there would also be less 'time' left on a ticket making it less likely that this would be passed on.

One Member noted that a lower charge would also result in less 'free' parking in neighbouring residential streets.

#### Recommendation 7 – exit onto Vicarage Road

One Member considered that this Recommendation should be drafted as a 'suggestion' rather than as a Recommendation.

#### Recommendation 8 – Survey of Parking Charges

One Member drew attention to parking costs for staff at the hospital which were relatively low. He reminded Members that the Directors had explained that parking costs were such as to balance expenditure against income. The Member advised it would be wise to balance the relative costs of staff and visitors to the hospital more equably.

The Member agreed that revenue was needed and that there should be balance within the accounts but questioned whether it was fair that the public charge was so high compared to that of the staff. He suggested that the whole system of charging should be re-considered.

Another Member reminded the meeting that the Directors had advised that the Hospital Management would be looking at charges for staff in the future.

Members discussed their support for this review which it was hoped would ensure an overall balance in charges for all users.

A further Member advocated a 'progressive' charging system for staff; he agreed that stakeholders should be consulted on parking costs.

A Member advised that the report should make mention of the Task Group's support of the review of staff parking charges and to ask that it ensured that charges for staff were progressive in order to protect lower paid staff.

The Task Group discussed the use of public transport in lieu of driving to the hospital. Whilst it was agreed that there were good bus routes these were not always useful; Members noted some staff would be on late night shifts when buses would not be running.

#### Recommendation 9 – Vouchers

One Member advised that, whilst this was a good idea, it would be difficult to operate as it would not always be justifiable. He said, however, that where a longer stay than anticipated had occurred through no fault of the patient, such as an appointment running late, this would be sensible. He added that it was frequently beyond the patient's or visitor's control to return to their vehicle within the specified time.

Another Member advised that staff did not have the time to note which patients might need vouchers but were the information contained in a comprehensive booklet this would be useful.

The Chair added that she had seen no notices about available concessions in the Reception area.

One Member suggested that vouchers should be offered at the discretion of nursing staff.

Members agreed that information on extended time in such cases should be available to users and should be clearly stated in a booklet.

#### Charging Methods

One Member said that the current method of paying for parking, ie. 'Pay and Display' was an area of concern.

The Task Group agreed that 'pay on exit' would be a better option and that this should be included in the report. The Chair advised that, having asked many users their opinion, the overwhelming response had been that this method would be the optimum.

A Member noted that the Hospital Directors had advised that all options had been considered

## 17. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

#### Patient Advice and Liaison Service

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) representative had asked for feedback on the information he had passed on to the Task Group.

Members agreed that the information he had supplied had been helpful and that thanks should be forwarded to him.

**ACTION:** Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer

It was agreed that the PALS representative would be forwarded a copy of the report and that he should be advised that he could attend the Overview and Scrutiny meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2012.

#### Date of next meeting

The next meeting to be on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2012.

Chair  
Hospital Parking Charges Task Group

The meeting started at 6.00 p.m.  
and finished at 6.40 p.m.

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## COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

### Watford Borough Council

Councillor Karen Collett .	Chair of the Task Group and Councillor for Meriden Ward
Councillor Ken Brodhurst .	Councillor for Callowland Ward
Councillor Kareen Hastrick .	Councillor for Meriden Ward
Councillor Peter Jeffree .	Councillor for Park Ward
Councillor Malcolm Meerabux	Councillor for Park Ward

### **External Support and Information**

#### Watford General Hospital

Eric Fehily . . .	Associate Director of Infrastructure
Kyle McClelland . . .	Associate Director of Strategic Development

#### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Hamed Zarin . . . . .	PALS Co-ordinator
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### **Officer Support**

#### Watford Borough Council

Sandra Hancock, . . . . .	Committee and Scrutiny Officer
Rosy Wassell, . . . . .	Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer

## **PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS TO PRESENT TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### Proposed Recommendations:

1. Signage and information on the free '30 minute' bays be improved.
2. Signage and information on parking areas for visitors to be improved.
3. Signs informing on slippery roads to be installed.
4. Signs to indicate distance to hospital reception to be installed
5. Information on concessions to be made clearer and available in an information booklet.
6. Parking charges to start at £2.50 for a two hour stay.
7. Stakeholders to be surveyed prior to increases in parking charges.
8. Vouchers to be offered in the event that visitors park for longer than their anticipated stay.
9. Pay on exit system to be introduced

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

At the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 23 June 2011, Members discussed the formation of Task Groups.

Following a proposal by Councillor Karen Collett, it was decided that a Task Group would be established to review "Hospital parking and its high charges" and that the scope be presented at the following meeting.

The scope for the review was approved at the meeting on 26 July 2011.

It was anticipated that the review would establish:

- The basis for the current charges
- The range of parking options and charges for patients, members of patients' families and visitors.
- How parking costs compared with other Trusts locally
- Whether charges were 'reasonable'
- Whether, were there options, these were known and understood by visitors.

At the close of the review, were it to be felt appropriate, recommendations to improve the parking and charging policy could then be forwarded to the Trust.

Prior to the meeting on 26 July 2011, five Councillors had expressed an interest in working on this review; it was agreed that these Councillors would form the membership of the Task Group.

The Task Group would comprise:

Councillor Karen Collett (Proposer)– Councillor for Woodside Ward  
Councillor Ken Brodhurst – Councillor for Callowland Ward  
Councillor Kareen Hastrick – Councillor for Meriden Ward  
Councillor Peter Jeffree – Councillor for Park Ward  
Councillor Malcolm Meerabux – Councillor for Park Ward

### **First Meeting - 31 August 2011**

For information, the Task Group had received the Watford General Hospital Transport and Parking Strategy and the Department of Health's 'Best Practice for the Implementation of Car Parking Charges'. They had also received a list comparing parking charges for hospitals within a 30 mile radius.

It was agreed that the Task Group produce a list of questions for the Associate Director of Infrastructure at Watford Hospital who had advised that he would be willing to attend a meeting in order to answer the group's questions.

### **Second Meeting - 5 October 2011**

Both the Associate Director of Infrastructure and Associate Director of Strategic Development had been able to attend this meeting. They had previously submitted answers to questions from the group and expanded on these during the meeting. The document from the Directors is included within the appendices.

Members agreed that the representative from the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) be contacted to discover whether any feedback had been received with regard to parking at the hospital.

### **Third Meeting - 2 November 2011**

The Group had received a letter from the PALS representative which had advised feedback and enquiries on parking provisions and charges at the hospital.

Members discussed:

- parking areas for visitors and staff
- signage
- concessions and information available on the subject
- the starting cost for parking charges
- methods of paying for parking and
- consultation with stakeholders.

Members then compiled a list of Recommendations for consideration.

### **Fourth Meeting - 1 December 2011**

Members had further discussions on the Recommendations decided at the previous meeting.

Members agreed that the Recommendations should form the basis of the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be presented at the February 2012 meeting.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Recommendation 1 ~ Signage and information on the free '30 minute' bays be improved.

During discussions on charges for parking, the Directors advised that '30 minute' parking bays were provided free of charge. They had advised that the Trust was attempting to improve the locations and signage of these bays.

Members agreed that signs to indicate where these bays were located were poorly situated and needed to be improved.

### Recommendation 2 ~ Signage and information on parking areas for visitors could be improved.

Members discussed the parking areas for visitors and staff, several Members noting that it was unclear which parts of the car park were for staff and which for visitors.

Members agreed that signage was required to explain where visitors were allowed to park. Clear signs to indicate where the 63 'free' spaces for disabled users were located would also be wise.

### Recommendation 3 ~ Signs informing on slippery roads to be installed.

Members noted the steep slope in the car park which could be hazardous in bad weather.

Members recommended that signs be installed to warn of slippery roads.

### Recommendation 4 ~ Signs to indicate distance to hospital reception to be installed

Following the recommendation on signs to warn of hazardous conditions, Members considered that signs to indicate distance to the main hospital entrance would be wise.

Recommendation 5 ~ Information on concessions to be made clearer and available in an information booklet.

Members had discussed the issue of concessions and had concluded that information on concessions was not readily available for patients and visitors and that the details that were provided were difficult to understand.

The Hospital Directors had replied that the availability of concessions was advised on:

- each pay and display machine,
- the hospital's website,
- on display boards in each ward,
- adjacent to lifts,
- in posters situated in well used public areas and
- on the concession application form.

Members had agreed that at times of stress, patients and visitors would be unlikely to notice the signs.

With regard to Members' concern that the details on concessions were difficult to understand, the Directors advised that the categories had recently been simplified and consequently more user-friendly and that the website included a simple table including permit types. .

Members noted that the status of 'Active Carer', for whom concessions were available, would be determined by ward staff. It was assumed that visitors would ask whether they could have a concession under this category. Members considered, however, that it would not occur to most visitors that they would have such an entitlement.

Members suggested that an information booklet be provided offering all necessary information and that one such booklet be placed at each bedside and at a stand at the entrance to wards. Topics covered in the booklet could include a definition of who would be entitled to concessions in addition to the website table which explained permit types. Members added that the term 'main carer' be used in order to make the information clear.

Members concluded that communication of information on concessions should be more pro-active and recommended that since staff in ward had little or no time to note which users might require this information, the information should be contained in a booklet available to all visitors.

Recommendation 6 ~ Parking charges to start at £2.50 for a two hour stay.

Members had considered the table of charges at other hospitals in the vicinity. They had noticed that charges at Watford General Hospital were the highest in the area at a starting payment of £4.00 for three hours; the daily rate was also considerably higher than at other hospital trusts. Members also compared charges for public car parks in Watford.

The Hospital Directors had advised that the charges reflected demand for parking in the area, the cost for providing parking facilities and the security and management's assessment of the average duration of visits to the site. It was noted that income was balanced against expenditure costs. He added that charges were consistent across the three sites at Hemel Hempstead, St. Albans and Watford.

With regard to the high cost of the first level of payment, the director advised that this cost had been chosen because most patients attended for a typical time span of over two hours. He added that a daily rate would tend to attract commuters and shoppers who would not be visiting the hospital.

Members considered that a parking charge starting at £4.00 for a three hour stay was too high. They decided that a two hour charge would be more reasonable and recommended £2.50 as a sensible fee.

Members also discussed the practice amongst car park users of passing on tickets which had time remaining on them.

Members determined that to start payment for a two hour time span would result in extra revenue for the car park as a lower charge for less time would be more acceptable for visitors. There would also be less time left on a ticket making it less likely that this would be passed on to other users.

Members agreed that they recommend that the parking charges start at £2.50 for two hours.

Recommendation 7 ~ Stakeholders to be surveyed prior to increases in parking charges.

At the meeting on 2 November 2011, Members noted that there had been no involvement in policy making and no survey on the raising of charges for parking.

The Task Group agreed that stakeholders should be consulted and that survey forms should be handed to patients whilst they waited for their appointments.

Recommendation 8 ~ Vouchers to be offered in the event that visitors park for longer than their anticipated stay.

Members discussed problems for visitors paying for parking at times of high emotion. The Task Group acknowledged that there would be situations when it was inevitable that visitors were obliged to stay later than they had intended frequently through circumstances beyond their control. Whilst a 'Pay on Exit' scheme would obviate there being any difficulty of exceeding time paid for, it was decided that, under the current system it should be possible to obtain a 'free' card which would enable parking for longer than had been anticipated.

In discussion, one Member advised that the voucher scheme would have inherent problems in that, whilst this was a good idea, it would be difficult to operate as claims would not always be justifiable. Members agreed that information on the voucher scheme should be included in the booklet as recommended in Recommendation 5 above and that vouchers should be offered at the discretion of nursing staff.

Members recommended that a voucher for unexpected car park use should be offered.



### Recommendation 9 ~ Pay on Exit system to be introduced

Members discussed the method of collecting parking charges and referred to the practice referred to in Recommendation 6 above whereby unexpired tickets were 'donated' to new arrivals.

A 'Pay on Exit' scheme would be a fairer method of payment and would result in a 100% collection rate. It was noted that in the event of an appointment or visit extending for longer than anticipated, the 'Pay on Exit' system would cause less worry to users concerned that their tickets had expired.

The Directors explained that a 'Pay on Exit' system would not be easy to install at Watford due to the location of the various car parks on the site.

In reply to the suggestion that a 'change station' be re-instated, the Directors advised that in the past the change station had been a regular target for vandalism and theft. The Directors added that a 'Pay by Phone' system had been installed.

The Chair commented that the overwhelming response from users had been that a 'Pay and Display' system would be the best option for payment.

Members agreed that they would recommend that this system be installed.

## Other matters of concern to the Group

- Parking Charges for Staff

Members discussed parking charges for staff working at the hospital which were relatively low. The Directors had explained charging policy for staff and had demonstrated how these fees were calculated. Directors had added that parking costs were calculated in order to balance expenditure against income.

Members agreed that revenue was required but questioned whether it was fair that the charge to the public was high compared to that of the staff and agreed that it would be wise to balance the relative costs of staff and visitors to the hospital in a fairer way. One Member advocated a 'progressive' charging system for staff in order to protect lower paid staff.

The Task Group noted that the Directors had advised that Hospital Management intended to review charges for staff.

Members wished to record their support for this review which would hopefully ensure overall balance in charges for all users. They also asked that the review considers ensuring that charges for staff should be progressive.

- One Way exit onto Vicarage Road

Whilst discussing car parking arrangements, Members noted that the small car park near the Spice of Life restaurant had two means of exit.

Members wished to suggest that the exit on to Vicarage Road should be made 'one way'.

- Availability of Information

Members suggested that information and help should be available at the hospital reception desk.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY AND APPENDICES

### Bibliography

The following two documents were found to be useful

1. Department of Health Income Generation Car Parking charges ~ Best Practice for Implementation:

[http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod\\_consum\\_dh/groups/dh\\_digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh\\_062854.pdf](http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh_062854.pdf)

2. West Herts Hospitals' Transport and Parking Strategy:

[http://www.westhertshospitals.nhs.uk/about/documents/WHHT\\_Transport\\_parking\\_strategy\\_version1.pdf](http://www.westhertshospitals.nhs.uk/about/documents/WHHT_Transport_parking_strategy_version1.pdf)

### Appendices:

- Appendix 1: Scrutiny Review final Scope
- Appendix 2: Site map of Watford Hospital
- Appendix 3: Other Hospital Car Parking Charges
- Appendix 4: 'Harlequin' car park charges
- Appendix 5: Town centre car park charges
- Appendix 6: Letter from Patient Advice Liaison Service
- Appendix 7: Minutes 31.08.2011
- Appendix 8: Minutes 05.10.2011
- Appendix 9: Minutes 02.11.2011
- Appendix 10: Minutes 01.12.2011

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