

HOSPITAL PARKING CHARGES TASK GROUP

2 November 2011

Present: Councillor Collett (Chair)
Councillors Brodhurst (for minute numbers 12 and 13), Hastrick,
Jeffree and Meerabux

Officer: Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (RW)

10. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

11. NOTES OF THE MEETING ON 5 OCTOBER 2011

The notes of the meeting on 5 October 2011 were agreed and signed.

12. REVIEW OF ANSWERS FROM PATIENT ADVICE AND LIAISON SERVICE, WATFORD GENERAL HOSPITAL

Members had had sight of a letter from the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) representative at Watford General Hospital. The Chair noted that of the seven complaints on car parking received, five had related to Watford.

Signage

The Chair pointed out that the letter said that a number of signage improvements had been made across the three sites at Watford, St. Albans and Hemel Hempstead. She noted, however, that no improvements appeared to have been actioned at Watford; she reminded the task group that the hospital directors who had attended the previous meeting had said that work on these improvements was on-going.

One Member advised that signage for the 30-minute 'free' bays was not good.

Members AGREED that signage and information about the 30 minute bays should be improved.

The Task Group discussed parking areas for visitors and staff. Several Members noted that it was unclear which parts of the car park were for staff and which for visitors.

Members AGREED that improved signage was required to distinguish where visitors could park.

Members noted that the sloping nature of the car park could be hazardous in bad weather and AGREED that signage warning of slippery roads would be prudent. Members also suggested that it would be wise to indicate the distance from the entrance to the hospital reception.

Concessions and Payments

Members discussed methods by which information on parking concessions was disseminated to patients and visitors. The letters from the PALS representative

advised that emails explaining the criteria and a copy of the concessionary parking form were sent to Matrons, Departmental Managers and Divisional Managers. Members noted that this information was not always filtered through to those who needed this information.

One Member referred to the minutes of the previous meeting and noted that the Associated Director of Strategic Development had said that some wards had been using out-of-date forms. He advised that all ward staff should be aware of the concessions which were available.

Members also discussed concessions for carers. They noted that whilst ward staff would define who qualified as a carer, it was the carers themselves who must make the application for a concession. One Member said that nursing staff should not necessarily be responsible for making decisions on concessions; this task should be performed by the ward administrator. She added that the ward administrator should notice 'patterns' of visiting and advise of concessions where appropriate. Other Members pointed out that it would not necessarily occur to visitors that they would be entitled to concessions and that ward staff should be more pro-active in proffering information.

Information Availability

Several Members said that they had visited the hospital and had been offered very little information and neither had they found information leaflets. One Member suggested that a booklet could be prepared giving all necessary information; one booklet could then be placed at each bed. Members agreed that this would be helpful for visitors and would not cut into nurses' time. Topics covered in the booklet could include a definition of who would be entitled to concessions. The booklet should be available to both patients and visitors and should be prominently displayed not only by the bedside but also on a stand at the entrance to the wards.

Payment

One Member stated that he was unconvinced that parking charges should start at £4.00 for a three hour stay. He felt that a two hour charge would be more reasonable and suggested £2.50 as a sensible fee.

Members AGREED that the parking charge should start at £2.50 for a two hour stay.

Members discussed the difficulties inherent in paying for parking at the hospital. They noted that at times of high emotion, payment for parking would not be at the forefront of visitors' minds.

Another Member said that appointments frequently took longer than had been anticipated and that a 'pay on exit' system would be preferable. A further Member reminded the group that the Directors had advised that this system would be difficult to operate due to the fragmented nature of the site.

Members noted that the small car park near the restaurant had two means of exit and AGREED that the exit onto Vicarage Road should be made 'one-way'.

Consultation

Members noted that there had been no consultation on increases in charges.

The Chair advised that there had been no involvement in policy making and agreed that there had been no survey on raising the charges for parking. She considered that patients should be consulted in these matters.

One Member considered that this would not be feasible as it was unlikely that much feedback would be received.

The Chair suggested that survey forms could be handed out whilst patients waited for blood tests.

Members AGREED that stakeholders should be surveyed prior to charges being increased.

Other Matters

One Member recommended that offers of help should be available at hospital reception.

Members advised that in some situations it was inevitable that visitors were obliged to stay later than they had intended due to exceptional circumstances. One Member suggested that in such a case and where the time paid for had expired it should be possible to obtain a 'free' card which would enable parking for longer than had originally been anticipated.

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

Recommendations:

1. Signage and information on the free '30 minute' bays be improved.
2. Signage and information on parking areas for visitors could 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. The exit onto Vicarage Road to be made a 'one way' exit.
8. Stakeholders to be surveyed prior to increases in parking charges.
9. Vouchers to be offered in the event that visitors park for longer than their anticipated stay.

13. **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

Members proposed that the next meeting be at 6.00 p.m. on Wednesday 30th November 2011.

Chair
Hospital Parking Charges Task Group

The meeting started at 6.00 p.m.
and finished at 7.00 p.m.