

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 2nd February 2012.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting to be on Wednesday 4th January 2012.

Chair
Hospital Parking Charges Task Group

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