

Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Wednesday, 9 November 2005

Present: Councillor Mrs S Walsh (Chair) and Councillors A Cullens, M Lees, P Malpas, Miss J Molyneux, G Russell, Mrs J Snape and C Snow

06.CUS.63 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Mrs D Dickinson.

06.CUS.64 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

No interests were declared

06.CUS.65 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 5 October 2005 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

06.CUS.66 BUSINESS PLAN AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORTS

The Panel received the Business Plan Monitoring Statements for July to September 2005 for Housing Services, Customer, Democratic and Office Support Services, Information, Communication Technology Services and Property Services.

The respective Service Unit heads gave a summary of the Monitoring Statements and the Key Performance Indicators for their Unit and responded to queries from Members.

RESOLVED – That the Business Plan Monitoring Reports for July to September 2005 for Housing Services, Customer, Democratic and Office Support Services, Information, Communication Technology Services and Property Services be noted.

DECRIMINALISATION OF PARKING ENFORCEMENT INQUIRY

06.CUS.67 DISCUSSION REGARDING THE SITE VISIT TO SEFTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

The Panel discussed the site visit to Sefton Borough Council earlier that day.

Perceptions: The negative perception of Parking Attendants was an issue in Sefton, this supported the feeling that this was a national issue and not confined to Chorley. Articles and letters were still sent to the press on a regular basis. Sefton had implemented on-street pay and display parking which had caused a higher level of public dissatisfaction than the implementation of DPE.

Numbers of PCN's issued: It was highlighted that the number of PCN's issued was set by the motorists as if no one parked in contravention no PCN's would be issued! The number of Penalty Charge Notices (PCN's) issued had not reduced over the 5 years that DPE had been operating; in fact the numbers had increased.

Disabled Drivers Badges: Sefton had taken over the issuing of the Blue Badges. The funding of this was partly funded by the PCT and Social Services. A sticker was

placed on the badge to show which side should be displayed, resolving the problem of drivers not display the badge on the correct side. A database had been set up to enable the PA to verify badges. This was accessed via the hand held computer.

Contractor: The contractor was based in the same building as the Parking Manager for the Council, this was noted as a benefit. The contractor had no targets for the numbers of PCN's issued and the PA's were assessed for the quality of tickets, e.g. the number of PCN's issued in error. The turnover of PA's was 12-18 months, this better than the national average. The PA's used scooters to move around the urban core.

PA Uniform: A softer uniform was under consideration, in the corporate colour.

Training: At the beginning of the training sessions the Parking Manager from the Council spoke to the PA's to connect them with the Council's perspective, as well as receiving training on Customer Services from the contractor.

Benefits of Decriminalization of Parking Enforcement: It was now easier to park at busy periods.

Appeals: When an appeal is made an investigation is carried out looking at the PCN itself, if a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) is in place and potentially a site visit. This sometimes led to a review of the TRO.

Leaflets: A leaflet produced by Sefton was noted as giving the public a lot of information. It was suggested that a leaflet could be sent out to drivers with their V5 certificate from the DVLA.

Scrutiny Inquiry: Sefton had recently undertaken a Scrutiny Inquiry into Parking.

RESOLVED –

- 1. That the Democratic Services officer write and thank the officers at Sefton Borough Council for their help and information,**
- 2. That the information collected from the site visit be taken forward to the recommendations stage of the Inquiry,**
- 3. That copies of the Sefton Borough Council Scrutiny Inquiry be requested for future consideration,**
- 4. That the report from the site visit be emailed to the Members who had attended for their comments.**

06.CUS.68 RESULTS OF SURVEY UNDERTAKEN IN SEPTEMBER

The Panel considered the Final Report of the Chorley Parking Survey undertaken by Beacon Research

From the statistics considered the positives outweighed the negatives. The challenge for the future was to improve the perception of the public about Parking Attendants.

The vast majority (76.3%) agreed that PA's were always around and provided a visible deterrent to illegal parking, with 46.3% agreeing that PA's provided effective enforcement for the outer and residential areas. Opinions were divided on the subject of PA's as might be expected.

The report would go forward to the next Parkwise Management Meeting. Representatives from all of the Authorities involved in Parkwise would have an opportunity to discuss it. Chorley was the first Council to undertake a Scrutiny Inquiry into Parkwise.

A positive response rate was received from the Borough Councillors and the survey being posted on the Council's web site.

RESOLVED –

- 1. That the Final Report of the Chorley Parking Survey be noted,**
- 2. That recommendations be made to address the negative perception of PA's by the public.**

06.CUS.69 PRESS ARTICLES RELATING TO DECRIMINALISATION OF PARKING ENFORCEMENT

Throughout the inquiry there had been articles and letters in the press and the Panel examined some of these. Members felt that some of the articles and comments were misleading and not helpful to the vitality of Chorley town centre.

Members noted that a recent Press Release had highlighted that drivers had a 5-minute 'grace' period to return to their car after the ticket had expired. A 'top up' parking ticket could be purchased and displayed without needing to move spaces or move to another car park. Blue Badge holders were urged to read the instructions on how to display their badge correctly and a reminder that the appeals process was detailed on the back of each PCN.

Members noted that the Car park ticket sale had remained within the same levels as prior to the introduction of DPE. A survey of other local authority parking charges would be compiled to demonstrate that Chorley did not have higher parking charges than other local areas.

RESOLVED – That the articles and letters in the press be noted.

06.CUS.70 SUMMARY OF AREAS VISITED BY THE MOBILE PATROL

A schedule outlining the wards visited by the mobile patrol from 23 September to 28 September 2005 and the totals of tickets issued in each ward over a period of 4 weeks was considered. Adlington, Coppull and Clayton were noted as having a higher number of PCN's issued.

The Panel discussed methods of increasing the presence of PA's in rural areas. It was noted that this would be considered further at the Sub-Group (the date of which to be set later in the meeting).

RESOLVED – That the summary be noted and considered further at the Sub-Group.

06.CUS.71 TO SET A DATE FOR AN INTERVIEW SESSION WITH IDENTIFIED WITNESSES

RESOLVED – That an interview session with the identified witness take place on 7 December at Duxbury Conference Room, Duxbury commencing at 10.00am.

06.CUS.72 TO SET UP A SUB-COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER THE RECENT CHILDS REPORT

RESOLVED – That a Sub-Group be held on 24 November 2005 commencing at 6.30 to consider the Childs report and other documentation relating to the Inquiry.

06.CUS.73 TO CONSIDER A RECENTLY DEvised LEAFLET ENTITLED "PARKING TIPS"

The Parking Manager distributed a recently devised leaflet entitled "Parking Tips". This would be distributed to the shops highlighting that a top up pay and display ticket could be purchased. The Panel suggested that the leaflet was also distributed to the Parish Councils.

RESOLVED – That the leaflet be supported.

06.CUS.74 TO NOTE THE UPDATED INQUIRY DOCUMENTATION

RESOLVED – That the updated Inquiry documentation be noted.

06.CUS.75 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED – That the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme be noted.

Chair