
Chief Executive's Office

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Date: 27 March 2006

Chief Executive:
Donna Hall

Dear Councillor

CUSTOMER OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL - THURSDAY, 6TH APRIL 2006

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel to be held in the Committee Room, Town Hall, Chorley on Thursday, 6th April 2006 commencing at 6.30 pm.

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for absence**
2. **Declarations of Any Interests**

Members of the Panel are reminded of their responsibility to declare any personal interest in respect of matters contained in this agenda in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000, the Council's Constitution and the Members Code of Conduct. If the personal interest is a prejudicial interest, then the individual Member should not participate in a discussion on the matter and must withdraw from the Council Chamber and not seek to influence a decision on the matter.

3. **Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement Inquiry**

- a) **Discussion with Councillor D Gee (Executive Member for Traffic and Transportation)**

To discuss issues raised throughout the Inquiry and the draft recommendations with the Executive Member.

- b) **To consider the draft Final Report**

The draft Final Report will follow.

- c) **Consideration of the minutes of the Sub-Group held on 7 December 2005 (Pages 1 - 8)**

The notes of the Sub-Group are enclosed.

Continued....

d) Updated Inquiry documents (Pages 9 - 14)

To note the enclosed updated Inquiry documentation:

- Information Checklist
- Witness Checklist
- Project Plan

4. **Any other item(s) that the Chair decides is/are urgent**

Yours sincerely



Chief Executive

Distribution

1. Agenda and reports to all Members of the Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Mrs S Walsh (Chair), A Cullens, Mrs D Dickinson, M Lees, P Malpas, Miss J Molyneaux, G Russell, E Smith, Mrs J Snape and C Snow) for attendance.
2. Agenda and reports to Councillor D Gee (Executive Member for Traffic and Transportation for attendance.
3. Agenda and reports to Alan Capstick (Engineering Services Manager), Iain Price (Parking Manager) and Ruth Hawes for attendance.

This information can be made available to you in larger print or on audio tape, or translated into your own language. Please telephone 01257 515118 to access this service.

આ માહિતીનો અનુવાદ આપની પોતાની ભાષામાં કરી શકાય છે. આ સેવા સરળતાથી મેળવવા માટે કૃપા કરી, આ નંબર પર ફોન કરો: 01257 515822

ان معلومات کا ترجمہ آپ کی اپنی زبان میں بھی کیا جاسکتا ہے۔ یہ خدمت استعمال کرنے کیلئے براہ مہربانی اس نمبر پر ٹیلیفون

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کیجئے:

Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Sub-Group)

Wednesday, 7 December 2005

Present: Councillor Mrs S Walsh (Chair), Councillors Mrs D Dickinson, M Lees, P Malpas and G Russell

Also in attendance: Derek Topping (Contract Supervisor National Car Parks), Simon Hummer (Operations Support Manager National Car Parks), Andy Bradley (Contract Manager National Car Parks in Lancashire), Shelley Wright (Communications Officer), Dave Biddulph (Accountant for Decriminalization of Parking Enforcement) and Iain Price (Parking Manager)

1. DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

2. CONSIDERATION OF QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED

The Panel considered the questions to be asked of each person.

3. INTERVIEW WITH NATIONAL CAR PARKS CONTRACT SUPERVISOR, DEREK TOPPING

Could you outline your current role?

Derek introduced himself as the National Car Parks Contract Supervisor, responsible for the day-to-day operation of Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement in Chorley. His role involved ensuring Parking Attendants were briefed on a daily basis, uploading the hand held and inspecting any other equipment, routine maintenance for the Pay and Display machines, checking uniforms and the performance of Parking Attendants.

Derek liaised with all partners to deal with any special enforcement requests and met with the Chorley Borough Council Parking Manager on a weekly basis. Any complaints against Parking Attendants were investigated and monitored. There had been a high turnover in staff in the first three months of Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement, although since then the turnover had reduced. This was positive as local knowledge and ongoing training improved the performance and confidence of the Parking Attendants.

How do you feel the implementation of Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement has gone so far in Chorley?

Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement is an essential but not a popular service. Parking can be a very emotive issue. Traffic flow is increasing and there is a need to enforce for safety. At first it was a big change as previously there was not a great deal of enforcement. It should be noted that the disabled drivers association lobbied Central Government for enforcement of blue badges due to the large-scale abuse of blue badges.

It has gone well in Chorley. You can never please everyone; we want to be fair and consistent. There have been issues where Traffic Regulation Orders were out of date and need to be reviewed. It was highlighted that there was an observation period of 5 minutes and a ticket was issued at 6th minute at the expiry of the ticket. There were no more than 4 Parking Attendants in the town centre at any one time. It was noted that if the wheels of the vehicle were on the line of the space a Penalty Charge Notice would not be issued.

Has National Car Parks any service developments in the pipeline?

The Parking Attendants are gaining experience and local knowledge. There is continuous training and Parking Attendants are encouraged to interact with colleagues

and the public. Supervisors are trained in leadership, health and safety and teamwork. Confidence does help the Parking Attendants in their job and they do provide an information service to the public.

Some positive comments had been received for example residents in residents parking zones had thanked Parking Attendants for their efforts. It was noted that if a person parked in a bus stop a ticket would be issued instantly.

There was a discussion in relation to pay on exit car parks. Officers were not aware of any surface car parks that have pay on exit and it was noted that there was no scope for this currently. This would raise traffic management and operational issues and the implementation cost would be high.

Panel members have noted that some Parking Attendants have had a more relaxed approach with members of the public recently

The training does help here, but this depends on the personality of the Parking Attendant, some are naturally bubbly where others are introverted. There had been incidents at first that were negative, but one element of the training was customer focus and this training evolved through time. It was noted that this could be a public perception issue and that a smile could go a long way.

How do you measure the performance of an attendant?

The tour report for each Parking Attendant was considered, whether registrations were noted and then rechecked after allocated times. Feedback was received from the Parking Manager and from public. There were regular meetings with the Parking Attendants. It was noted that each beat was different and the beats were rotated, although certain beats would issue more Penalty Charge Notices, for example on the Flat Iron.

Are there any issues Chorley Borough Council could change to help you provide a better service to the customer?

The more information that can be given to the public the better. It would be helpful to give further information to disabled badge holders on how to display their badges and where they cannot park. An example of leaflet in Bolton that was used when a Penalty Charge Notice was issued was considered.

Can you outline the number and nature of any incidents of abuse against Parking Attendants?

Verbal abuse was almost accepted as normal sadly. Currently it was not specifically recorded although it could be recorded on the hand held equipment and in the pocket book. Physical threats had declined but did happen occasionally. There was a mechanism for rapid response from other members of the team and incidents were reported to the police. One Parking Attendant had been driven at and the mobile patrol vehicle had had all 4 tyres punctured.

It was noted that the high level of scrutiny, stress and abuse contributed to the turnover of staff. Although there were situations that were difficult to deal with high standards were strived for. The Parking Attendants were provided with access to a help line for support.

Can you give any examples of other services that Parking Attendants in Chorley provide?

There were often requests for directions, where disabled drivers could and could not park, where to purchase things, lost property such as keys etc. Parking Attendants also reported faulty lighting, broken glass and litter, looking after people if they were taken ill and liaising with the Closed Circuit Television operators to keep an eye on car doors/windows that had been left open. Tax warning notices were issued if the vehicle tax was out of date.

When would a warning be given instead of a Penalty Charge Notice?

If a new Traffic Regulation Order was introduced a warning would be given for the first week, although the registration number would be logged in case the driver was a repeat offender. It was noted that the guidance stated that once a Penalty Charge Notice was served the Parking Attendant should have no leeway in relation to cancelling the Penalty Charge Notice to stop any allegations of bribery.

The Panel thanked Derek for his contribution to the Inquiry.

4. INTERVIEW WITH CONTRACT MANAGER FOR NATIONAL CAR PARKS IN LANCASHIRE, ANDY BRADLEYCould you outline your current role

Andy introduced himself as the Contract Manager for National Car Parks in Lancashire. Simon Hummer was introduced as one of the three Operation Support Managers for Lancashire.

Andy explained that his role involved working and meeting with the districts and Lancashire County Council on a regular basis and the cash collection service. The aim was to ensure that everything was provided for those who delivered the service on the front line and an open and supportive culture and were any mistakes were learnt from.

How do you feel the implementation of Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement has gone so far in Chorley?

It has gone well considering it was first time where a County Council and districts have implemented Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement. It was a learning curve. The implementation included the provision of separate uniforms, tickets and equipment for each district. The training programme had developed since the initial implementation and the Parking Attendants were now more experienced. The first 12 months of any new contract of this nature were usually the most difficult.

The number of Parking Attendants had been devised after consideration of the number of car parks, Traffic Regulation Orders and residents parking schemes. The report of the consultant originally suggested 14, but this was re-evaluated as the ring road could be removed from the calculation. There were 7 Parking Attendants on duty at any one time. It was noted that sometimes the enforcement problem could move from one area to another.

Has National Car Parks any developments in the pipeline?

There were plans to stop using notebooks and use electronic hand held devices. This helped if it was raining and meant that the devices could be viewed in real time. Digital cameras were already used to take quality photographs to help with the appeal process.

There were various schemes ongoing throughout Lancashire such as a vulnerable parking scheme in Preston, recording if a vehicle had been left open, a letter would be sent to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency and then to the owner.

The recommendations of the Panel would be brought to Parking Managers Group and discussed with the contractor before agreement to implement them.

Westminster Scrutiny Committee have stated that National Car Parks sought to focus on providing a better customer experience, including improving the training and support given to supervisors. Can any of these lessons be learnt here in Chorley?

In Westminster there was a need for a culture change due to the nature of the contract, there had been a conflict as the Police had delivered training. The training had been reviewed and closer working and data sharing was implemented with Police.

The Group considered the training pack and noted that it included customer focus and conflict training. Prospective Parking Attendants now shadowed a Parking Attendant, not in uniform, before any formal training to get an idea of the job. This aided the following five days training, prior to the exam.

Each Parking Attendant had a probationary period, where they were closely monitored and had regular meetings with the supervisor. The integrity of National Car Parks and the Parking Attendant was paramount.

In response to a query Andy clarified that National Car Parks were keen to reward their staff for teamwork, integrity, customer focus and knowledge. Due to the nature of the job this was difficult as there could be no suggestion of incentives. Parking Attendants were nominated and received points on an Argos card. Per month there were 200 points for distribution across the whole of Lancashire, comprising 140 staff with a maximum of 20 points usually given to one person at a time.

How did National Car Parks reduce staff turnover and address the abuse issue faced by Parking Attendants and the public to improve interaction in Westminster? Would these apply in Chorley?

At Westminster 20% of abuse came from meter feeding and is not applicable to Chorley. The perception issue was addressed so that Parking Attendants felt their worth.

One of the recommendations the Panel is looking at relates to additional Parking Attendants in outer core areas. What implications would there be in relation to health and safety and lone working arising from this?

This is a difficult one and risk assessments would have to be conducted. If a Parking Attendant was to be dropped off in the outer core the hand held equipment would have to be trialed in relation to the radio being able to reach base. Mopeds had proven effective in city centres. The visibility of a Parking Attendant itself would move people on who had parked in contravention.

The Panel has discussed the current design of the Parking Attendant uniform and felt it was not customer friendly and over officious. Can you comment on the implications of changing the Parking Attendant uniform?

The basic uniform was implemented across the County and districts and the individual logos were then put on the uniform. This is the first time the question has been asked, but could be discussed at the Parking Manager Group to consider the cost implications. There was a cycle of change for uniforms, but from a consistency point of view all the Parking Attendants should be the same.

The Panel will be making several recommendations in relation to publicity. Is there scope for joint working on this?

Tim Cowen, at Lancashire County Council would be interested in joint working and to improve the perception of service.

During the site visit the Panel appreciated the benefits of the Parking Manager and the contractor being located in the same building. Could you clarify the terms of the current lease?

It was part of the contract that Chorley Borough Council would provide the office accommodation and the current lease is for five years. There was a good working relationship between Chorley Borough Council and National Car Parks and although there was no detriment to service with the current arrangements it would be better if the offices were based together in the future.

The Panel thanked Andy for his contribution to the Inquiry.

5. **INTERVIEW WITH CHORLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER, SHELLEY WRIGHT**

Could you outline your current role?

Shelley introduced herself as the Communications Officer at Chorley Borough Council, responsible for all external corporate communications, including the Council's newspaper, the website and press releases and internal communications, including the intranet, the monthly staff newsletter and team brief.

Have enquiries/comments re Parkwise increased or decreased in the last few months?

The interest in Parkwise had been steady. There were weekly queries from people who had received a Penalty Charge Notice and felt they shouldn't have. In this instance people were encouraged to follow the appeals procedure. If a case had gone to appeal clarification would be sought from the Parking Manager and a response given. There had been an increase in press coverage over the last few months due to the ongoing scrutiny inquiry.

Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement was a hot topic and the papers would cover it as long as it was an issue for readers. If there was a letter in the press that was inaccurate the Council would challenge it, although if a response was given this could fuel the exchange. It was noted that Lancashire County Council did have an officer responsible for communications.

The Panel are looking at recommendations about publicity. Has Chorley Borough Council got a strategy for Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement?

Shelley advised that the Council had a corporate strategy, but not a specific strategy in relation to Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement as funding was not available for specific campaigns. Lancashire County Council had a budget for communications and ran ongoing radio adverts and leaflets.

The issue to be tackled was the negative perception of Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement. There was a discussion regarding educating drivers to reduce the numbers of Penalty Charge Notices issued. It was noted that shops should talk up the town otherwise shoppers would believe the negative myths about parking.

The benefits of Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement for customers were now highlighted on related Press Releases highlighting that there was a five minutes grace period after the pay and display ticket ran out and that a top up pay and display ticket could be purchased without the need to move the vehicle. It was noted that less than 1% of people using the car parks were issued with a Penalty Charge Notice.

Shelley distributed a leaflet about parking from Wigan that had been produced by outside company.

What are the funding implications for our recommendations?

Press releases would not cost a lot, but brochures and leaflets designed by an external company would cost more. It was suggested that the County Council could devise a marketing toolkit for use by the districts, for example posters, leaflets, bus or radio advertising.

The Panel thanked Shelley for her contribution to the Inquiry.

6. **INTERVIEW WITH ACCOUNTANT FOR DECRIMINALISATION OF PARKING ENFORCEMENT, DAVE BIDDULPH**

Could you outline your current role?

Dave introduced himself as the Accountant for Public Space Services with responsibility for Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement finances. This involved monitoring the financial position of Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement.

The Panel understands you are involved in a sub-group comprising Lancashire County Council and other districts looking at the way the accounts are prepared. Can you give the Panel an update on this?

The Group meets every 6 weeks and comprises representatives from Chorley, Preston, West Lancashire and Burnley Councils plus Lancashire County Council. The purpose of the Group was to resolve any financial issues and to feed solutions back to the districts. This allowed the districts to be involved in the workings of Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement and to oversee the financial decisions that would affect them. As a member of the group Chorley would be in a position to influence key decisions. The first two meetings have mainly looked at creating a year-end template.

The Panel has heard concerns that Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement is costing the residents of Chorley, but have heard that the scheme is designed to be cost neutral. Can you give us some details on this?

Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement is self-financing and should not cost Chorley Borough Council anything as the costs are carried over until it makes a surplus. All costs and income are held in a separate trading account.

If the numbers of Penalty Charge Notices reduced the running costs of the service would have to reduce. However, from experience the numbers of Penalty Charge Notices would not decrease. To a certain extent Lancashire County Council would instruct Chorley Borough Council to cut costs.

Month by month the service was currently breaking even but there was a deficit from the first year. It was noted that bailiffs would be instructed after Christmas in the cases where payment was outstanding. If the bailiffs were unsuccessful in collecting the amount the bailiffs would not receive payment for their services. The appeals procedure was set out in Regulations meaning that other districts were in the same position.

There had been £356,000 income received to date from Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement. 35% of the total amount due was at bailiff stage due to non-payment. From 6 September 2004 to 1 December 2005 52.2% of Penalty Charge Notices were paid at the discounted rate, 11.7% were paid at the 100% rate and 1.7% were paid at the charge certificate rate.

There had been a delay from Northampton Court, which dealt with the Penalty Charge Notices at bailiff stage. This had now been resolved and the outstanding cases would be dealt with. It was noted that there were a number of multiple offenders.

Other than paying Penalty Charge Notices Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement should not be costing Chorley Borough Council or its residents.

In your opinion does operating Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement have a financial advantage or disadvantage to Chorley Borough Council?

There is no additional cost to the Council. The net off street fines surplus came to the Council and the on street surplus goes to Lancashire County Council as the Highways Authority. So far £175,000 had been collected from on street and £187,000 from off street.

The Panel thanked Dave for his contribution to the Inquiry.

7. CONSIDERATION OF PARKING ATTENDANTS TOURS LOG FROM THE MOBILE PATROL

The Group examined the tour log for Parking Attendants from 23 to 28 September 2005. The Parking Manager highlighted that if there were any specific requests for enforcement in any areas and times to let him know.

8. CONSIDERATION OF EVIDENCE SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

The members considered the letters and emails received from the public. Some of the comments included increasing the 30 minutes bays and having a articles in Chorley Borough News about Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement. It was noted that Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement had encouraged the review of Traffic Regulation Orders and that areas of residents parking had recently been consulted on. Officers would be reviewing the annual permit and residents visitors passes in areas of residents parking schemes.

9. INTERVIEW WITH MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (IF APPLICABLE)

No members of public appeared as witnesses.

10. REVIEW OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**RESOLVED –**

- 1. To thank the officers and members of the public for their contribution to the Inquiry,**
- 2. To request an officer from Legal Services to give an update on the status of the agency agreement between Lancashire Count Council and Chorley Borough Council.**
- 3. To send a letter to all Chorley Borough Councillors and Parish Councillors highlighting that specific requests for enforcement at locations and times could be made to the Parking Manager.**
- 4. That the following recommendations be made as part of the Inquiry**
- 5. To note that:**
 - (a) Traffic flow in general was increasing and there was a need to enforce for safety reasons.**
 - (b) That Disabled Drivers Association lobbied central government for the enforcement of Blue Badges due to the large-scale abuse of the scheme.**
 - (c) If a driver parked in a bus stop a Penalty Charge Notice would be issued instantly.**
 - (d) That a pay on exit car park would not be suitable for the surface car parks in Chorley.**
 - (e) That Parking Attendants provide other services to the public, such as directions.**
 - (f) This was the first time that a County Council and districts had implemented Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement.**
- 6. To recommend:**
 - (a) To record verbal abuse on the hand held equipment and in the pocket book.**
 - (b) To produce a leaflet to explain why a Penalty Charge Notice had been issued to a Blue Badge holder.**
 - (c) To support the use of technology to enhance the provision of the service.**
 - (d) To undertake risk assessments for Parking Attendants lone working in outer core areas.**
 - (e) To review the Parking Attendant uniforms.**
 - (f) Shelley Wright would contact Tim Cowen, the Communications Officer at Lancashire County Council to discuss any possible joint working with all districts.**
 - (g) To support the benefits of Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement for customers being highlighted on related Press Releases.**

- (h) That the Council produce a leaflet about parking, similar to the one used by Wigan.**
- (i) That, on a trial basis, there is a proactive press campaign with resources for this from the Parking budget.**
- (j) That if an infomercial, or a new corporate video, is produced references should be made to Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement.**

Chair



SCRUTINY INQUIRY INFORMATION CHECKLIST

Name of Inquiry: Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement (DPE)

Scrutiny Body: Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Ref.	Information Required	Date	Venue
1	Background information on DPE and Parkwise	9 Aug 05	Union Street
2	Ticket Statistics On Street/Off Street, Appeals Successful/Not Successful, Appeals By Offence	9 Aug 05	Union Street
3	Comparisons with other areas for numbers of tickets, numbers of PA's, number of PCN's issued and cancelled	9 Aug 05	Union Street
4	Articles regarding two reports on the public perception of DPE (Childs report and report by the University of Birmingham)	7 Sept 05	Town Hall
5	Information relating to Disabled Badge holders	7 Sept 05	Town Hall
6	An example of a Penalty Charge Notice	7 Sept 05	Town Hall
7	Publicity information to raise awareness for drivers who park inconsiderately	7 Sept 05	Town Hall
8	Comparison with rural and urban areas within Chorley	5 Oct 05	Town Hall
9	Result of questionnaire in relation to DPE undertaken by members of the public, Councillors and Parish Councils	9 Nov 05	Town Hall
10	Summary of letters to the local press	9 Nov 05	Town Hall
11	Best practice from other Authorities	9 Nov 05	Town Hall
12	Consideration of the recommendations of the Childs report	24 Nov 05	Town Hall

13	Consideration of Mid-Bedfordshire, Westminster and Sefton Parking Services Scrutiny Report	24 Nov 05	Town Hall
14	Consideration of the PA Tours Log	7 Dec 05	Duxbury
15	Consideration of evidence submitted by the public	7 Dec 05	Duxbury
16	Training Manuals for the PA's	7 Dec 05	Duxbury
17	Additional Information leaflet for Blue Badge holders	22 March 06	Town Hall
18	Comments received with applications for residents parking permits	22 March 06	Town Hall
19	Comparison of car parking charges	22 March 06	Town Hall



SCRUTINY INQUIRY WITNESS CHECKLIST

Name of Inquiry: Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement (DPE)

Scrutiny Body: Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Ref.	Witness	Information Required	Date	Venue
1	Members of the Public	Feedback on experiences/suggestions for possible improvements.	Sept 05 Dec 05	By means of a questionnaire Consideration of letters/emails
2	Chorley Borough Councillors/ Parish Councils	Feedback on experiences/suggestions for possible improvements	Sept 05	By means of a questionnaire
3	Disability Liaison Group	Feedback on experiences/suggestions for possible improvements	21 Nov 05	Town Hall
4	Representative from the contractor (NCP)	Identified questions	7 Dec 05	Duxbury
5	Parking Attendant Supervisor	Identified questions	7 Dec 05	Duxbury
6	Communications Officer	Identified questions	7 Dec 05	7 Dec 05
7	Accountant for Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement	Identified questions	7 Dec 05	7 Dec 05
8	Town Centre Forum	Feedback on experiences/suggestions for possible improvements	7 Dec 05	Town Hall
9	Markets Liaison Group	Feedback on experiences/suggestions for possible improvements	21 Feb 06	Town Hall
10	Councillor I Smith	Feedback on experiences/suggestions for possible improvements	22 March 06	Town Hall
11	Deputy Director of Legal Services	Update on Legal Issues	22 March 06	Town Hall
12	Executive Member for Traffic and Transportation	Consideration of draft recommendations and feedback as Executive Member	4 April 06	Town Hall

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