

MINUTES

Meeting: SALISBURY AREA BOARD
Place: South Wiltshire Grammar School for Girls, Stratford Road, Salisbury, SP1 3JJ
Date: 4 August 2011
Start Time: 7.00 pm
Finish Time: 9.30 pm

Please direct any enquiries on these minutes to:

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Papers available on the Council's website at www.wiltshire.gov.uk

In Attendance:

Wiltshire Councillors

Cllr Richard Clewer (Chairman), Cllr Bill Moss (Vice Chairman), Cllr John Brady, Cllr Christopher Cochrane, Cllr Brian Dalton, Cllr Mary Douglas, Cllr Ricky Rogers and Cllr Paul Sample

Cllr John Thomson (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Adult Care, Communities and Housing) and Cllr Dick Tonge (Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport)

Wiltshire Council Officers

Richard Mortimer, Parking Services Manager
Steve Milton, Head of Community Governance
Tom Bray, Southern Wiltshire Community Area Manager
Anne Huggett, Media Relations Officer
James Hazlewood, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Town and Parish Councils

Salisbury City Council – Cllr Cheryl Hill, Cllr Derek Brown, Cllr Anne Chalk, Cllr John Collier, Cllr John English, Cllr John Lindley, Annie Child
Laverstock and Ford Parish Council – David Law
Wilton Town Council – Phil Matthews
Alderbury Parish Council – Amanda Newberry
Bishopstone Parish Council – Norman Barter
Firsdown Parish Council – Mike Willis

Partners

MP for Salisbury – John Glen

Wiltshire Fire and Rescue – Jason Underwood

St Edmunds Community Association – Mary Stephens

Salisbury Chamber of Commerce – C Mitchell

Salisbury Civic Society – Alastair Clark

Salisbury City Centre Management – Ian Newman, Graham Gould, Richard Eadie,
Josephine Crowther, Rachel Tribbeck

Federation of Small Businesses – George Trotsman, Mary Webb

Harnham Neighbourhood Association – John McGarry

Salisbury Journal – Annie Riddle

Total in attendance: 118

<u>Agenda Item No.</u>	<u>Summary of Issues Discussed and Decision</u>
1.	<p><u>Welcome and Introductions</u></p> <p>The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Salisbury Area Board and invited the members of the Board to introduce themselves.</p> <p>Also present were Councillor John Thomson (Deputy Leader of the Council) and Councillor Dick Tonge (Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport).</p> <p>The Chairman explained the background for holding the meeting, noting that there was a huge level of public interest in the issue of Car Parking charges in Salisbury. The Area Board Councillors had been lobbying Wiltshire Council's Cabinet to ensure the return of a 1-hour parking option, and the meeting was to allow the public and business community to air its views for the Area Board to take forward.</p>
2.	<p><u>Apologies for Absence</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence had been received from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader of Salisbury City Council – Cllr Su Thorpe • Marianna Dodd – Salisbury Community Area Manager • Stephanie Denovan – Service Director for the Salisbury Area Board
3.	<p><u>Declarations of Interest</u></p> <p>There were none.</p>
4.	<p><u>Car Parking charges in Salisbury</u></p>
4.1.	<p><u>Background to date</u></p> <p>Councillor Dick Tonge gave a brief overview of the background to car parking in the Salisbury area.</p> <p>As part of setting the County-wide car parking strategy in 2010, a consultation had been undertaken between July and September, incorporating the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press release with article in Salisbury Journal • Emails/letter to around 8,000 contacts • Documents on Council website and in libraries • Announcement at Salisbury Area Board meeting on 22 July 2010 • Presentation on feedback at 30 September 2010 meeting • Cabinet meeting on 14 December 2010

- Full Council meeting on 22 February 2011

As part of the consultation, Salisbury City Centre Management had responded in support of a 2-hour minimum charge. This, and other responses, such as a petition from Mere, had been taken into account in the final decision.

Councillor Tonge also referred to the services which were funded by revenue from car parking charges:

- **Bus Services** – Around half of all bus journeys in Wiltshire (5 out of 10 million journeys annually) were subsidised by the Council, costing around £1.05 million per year in Salisbury alone. One of the changes to local government funding arrangements was the removal of the fuel subsidy for bus services; this would create further impact on the bus subsidy.
- **Park and Ride** – This helped to reduce traffic congestion, air pollution, carbon emissions and noise in the city. Also, by reducing the usage of city-centre car parks, it allowed valuable land to be released for new development. The subsidy for Park and Ride was £1.3 million in 2010/11 and £624,000 in 2011/12

It was noted that all income from parking was ring-fenced to these transport services and could not be used to fund other services. This was set against the context of the general financial pressure on Wiltshire Council with cuts of over £30 million in government funding this year and next, and the need to invest to meet anticipated increases in service demand (e.g. £3.3 million on elderly and vulnerable adults and £700,000 in waste services)

In addition, the general economic climate in the UK had seen a drop in retail spending, and car park usage was down in most retailing centres.

By contrast, Salisbury bus passenger numbers were up by approximately 2% over the past year, and recent months had been more encouraging. In addition, Park and Ride usage figures had increased slightly over the past six months, although this may be partly attributable to the summer tourism trade.

Other issues which related to overall car parking strategy in Salisbury included the following:

- Air Pollution – Salisbury was a hot spot for air pollution, and so it was considered important to reduce traffic and congestion in the city centre.
- Salisbury Vision – The Vision was developing a number of projects to regenerate areas within the city, including the Marketplace, and the Maltings/Central Car Park, and other smaller car parks. These would result in fewer city centre parking spaces.
- South Wiltshire Core Strategy – Around 6,000 new houses and 8,000 jobs were proposed for Salisbury and Wilton over the next 15 years.

Councillor Tonge set out the revenue implications which would apply if the

	<p>Council were to re-introduce the 1-hour charge, noting that the new charges had reduced the cost of parking for 2 hours from £2.50 to £2.20.</p>
4.2.	<p><u>Questions and comments</u></p> <p>The Chairman thanked Councillor Tonge for the presentation, commenting that the Area Board would be looking at the issue of the Salisbury Vision in more detail at another Extraordinary Area Board meeting.</p> <p>During the course of the discussion, the general view was expressed from the floor that the new parking charges had resulted in a significant fall in car park occupancy, with a resulting impact on footfall in the city. The business community raised serious concern regarding the financial impact on local retailers, particularly small and independent shops, and considered that the issue needed to be addressed as a matter of urgency.</p> <p>Questions and comments were invited from the floor, and responses given as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In response to a question, Councillor Tonge undertook to make available the financial basis on which the revenue implications of reintroducing the 1-hour charge had been calculated. • Councillor Thomson responded to a comment from John Glen, MP for Salisbury, explaining that the move to a unitary authority had saved around £18 million per year, and had put Wiltshire Council in a more financially secure position than other authorities, resulting in fewer reductions to frontline services than in other areas. In addition to the reduction in government funding, the Council was seeking to invest in certain services and to make savings of £80 million from the rationalisation of offices. • Also in response to a question from John Glen, Councillor Tonge explained that the Council's car parking strategy had been based on "bands", with small towns in band 4, market towns in band 3, Chippenham and Trowbridge in band 2 and Salisbury in band 1 (due to its unique nature). This had been set out in the consultation and had been supported by the Scrutiny process. • The parking charges in Salisbury had been set following comparisons with retail competitors in the south/south west, such as Southampton and Winchester. • Councillor Tonge reported that the parking income had dropped by around £500,000 across the county. • Graham Gould of Salisbury City Centre Management stated that Wiltshire

Council's own figures showed that short stay car parking was down 25% in the last year, and long stay car parking was down 66%, with around half of these cars using Park and Ride. The City Centre Management considered that Salisbury should be compared to Southampton as its most important retail competitor; car parking charges in Salisbury were currently around 10-12% higher than in Southampton.

- In response to allegations that Parking Enforcement Officers were being chauffeur-driven on Sundays and regularly worked in pairs, it was clarified that the Council did not employ any chauffeurs. Parking Enforcement Officers did occasionally work in pairs; for training, and in some locations for safety reasons.
- Following comments regarding disabled parking and access to Bourne Hill, Councillor John Thomson noted that the same comments had been raised at the previous meeting on 14 July. Officers had offered to meet with the person who had raised the issue and to investigate the possibility of improved signage. This offer was still open.
- The view was expressed that the drop in car park occupancy would not only lead to a drop in car park income, but also in business rates, due to the impact on the local economy. Councillor John Thomson responded that the Cabinet had recognised the need to support local businesses by addressing these concerns.
- In response to a suggestion that parking charges be introduced for evenings, Councillor Dick Tonge explained that Southampton currently charged for parking in the evenings, however this had not been proposed for Salisbury during the consultation, and it was not considered that there would be much enthusiasm for evening parking charges in Salisbury.
- It was noted that Winchester had reversed changes to their car parking charges very quickly, and it was queried why Salisbury could not do the same. Councillor Thomson explained that the change in Winchester was a minor variation to charges, whereas what was being requested in Salisbury was the reintroduction of a 1-hour charge. Initial advice from the Council's legal department was that this may constitute a change to the whole parking scheme and so this would need to be re-advertised and subject to public consultation. Councillor Jane Scott (the Leader of Wiltshire Council) had written to Eric Pickles MP (Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government) to seek a dispensation to amend the charges without the need for this consultation which could delay implementation for several months (letter circulated with papers for the meeting). Following a request, John Glen MP undertook to lobby Mr Pickles over this issue, to allow Wiltshire Council to bring in any new charges as soon as possible.

ACTION: John Glen MP

- It was suggested that, in the meantime, the 2-hour parking charge could be reduced, to alleviate the effect on local businesses. Councillor Thomson commented that this proposal was one of a number of options which would be discussed with stakeholders at a meeting next Monday.
- Further to a comment regarding a complaint about the behaviour of Parking Enforcement Officers, Councillor Thomson reported that he was aware of the issue which was currently being investigated. The outcome would be reported to the complainant.
- In response to a comment regarding a legal requirement for councils not to use income from car parks as revenue to fund other services, it was clarified that this referred to income from on-street parking, and that the Council adhered to the wording of the Act.
- It was noted that small shops in the rural villages around Salisbury had seen a small increase in trade as a result of the removal of the 1-hour parking charge. As such, it was requested that any new 1-hour charge be set with this in mind, rather than encouraging trade into the city at the expense of rural shops.
- In relation to the subsidy for bus travel, the meeting noted that around 70% of bus users had a concessionary bus pass, while the majority of these could afford to pay for bus travel. John Glen acknowledged that this system could be improved, but noted that a “means tested” system would cost even more to administer, and that it was politically difficult to change the free bus pass scheme. It was suggested that a voluntary system be introduced, for people to contribute £1 towards the cost of their journey. By a show of hands, it was established that a majority of bus pass holders present would be happy to contribute on such a voluntary basis. However, Councillor Thomson reported that this had already been investigated and was not considered to be legally possible.
- The suggestion was made that Park and Ride needed to be cheaper (or free) to encourage greater use. This would help keep traffic out of the city, thus improving air quality, while maintaining the footfall to sustain the local economy.
- Further to a question regarding the use of traffic management consultants in Salisbury, the Chairman asked officers to provide a response to the questioner.

ACTION: James Hazlewood

- It was noted that some towns had been given the opportunity to take over the running of the local car park. Councillor Tonge reported that this had only been considered for very small car parks, and that the same

approach would not be possible with bigger car parks due to the costs involved with maintaining larger sites.

4.3.

Summary and Conclusion

Before inviting comments from the members of the Area Board, the Chairman asked for a show of hands from the public. The view was overwhelmingly in support of the reintroduction of 1-hour parking, and for the immediate reduction of the 2-hour parking while the process of bringing back the 1-hour charge was undertaken. Following a further show of hands it was established that the room would prefer a £2 charge for 2-hours and £1/£1.20 for 1 hour.

The Chairman then sought comments from members of the Area Board:

- In terms of Salisbury's potential as a tourist destination it was stated that Salisbury was unique and special within Wiltshire, and so needed to be promoted independently of Wiltshire as a whole.
- The point was made that issue of parking demonstrated the need for local input and local knowledge into the decision-making process.
- It was suggested that one or two of the Park and Ride sites could be closed down, as most cities had fewer than five sites. However, Councillor Tonge responded that the sites has been designed to meet the main traffic routes into the city; closing one site would mean routing some traffic through the city to another site, which would undermine the aim of keeping traffic out of the city.
- The view was expressed that Southampton should remain the main comparator for parking charges as a retail competitor, although Southampton currently offered a better retail choice that Salisbury. This highlighted the need to support the Salisbury Vision to help increase and develop retail choice in Salisbury.
- At the Chairman's request for a show of hands, the majority of those present would support a scheme to request a voluntary £1 donation towards bus travel, from holders of concessionary bus passes. Councillor Thomson reiterated that this was not considered to be legal under the current system, but commented that John Glen could lobby the government to look at changing this.

ACTION: John Glen MP

- Another show of hands demonstrated that the room did not support the suggestion of a parking redemption scheme, whereby some businesses would refund parking costs to customers.

	<p>Following discussion and debate, the following resolutions were moved, seconded and agreed:</p> <p><u>Decision</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Having heard the views expressed this evening by the people of Salisbury, the Salisbury Area Board recommends to Wiltshire Council's Cabinet that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) the 1-hour parking option for off-street car parks in Salisbury be reintroduced as soon as possible; b) in the interim and while the process of reinstating the 1-hour charge is taking place, the 2-hour charge be immediately reduced; and c) following the reintroduction of 1-hour parking charge as at 1a) above, the charges be set as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 hour: £1.20 • 2 hours: £2.00 2. The Salisbury Area Board recognises that the Cabinet is faced with a difficult decision in how to find the costs of the proposed measures set out at 1a, 1b and 1c above. 3. The Salisbury Area Board wishes to ensure that Wiltshire Council engages in 2012 at an earlier stage with the local community (residents, businesses, traders and other organisations). <p>The Chairman concluded by commenting that the Area Board would take the messages from the meeting back to the Cabinet, and would seek to address the issues raised as quickly as possible.</p> <p>It was also hoped that the Area Board and the City Council could work together more closely on these types of issues in future, to address issues at an earlier stage.</p>
5.	<p><u>Future Meeting Dates and Close</u></p> <p>The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and noted that the next meeting of the Salisbury Area Board would be held on Thursday 15 September 2011, 7pm at South Wiltshire Grammar School for Girls, Stratford Road, Salisbury SP1 3JJ.</p>

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