

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

14 December 2010

**Item 5 – Public Participation
Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 2011-2026 – Car Parking Strategy (item 6)**

**Statement and question from Jonathan Knee, General Manager,
HJ Knee Ltd Department Store, Trowbridge**

My name is Jonathan Knee and my family business H.J.Knee Ltd has been trading on Fore Street in Wiltshire County Town for 131 years, we are the oldest Department Store in the West Country and one of the oldest in the UK.

I am against the increase of car parking charges in Wiltshire. I am aware of the revenue that the county generates from the existing charges and would strongly recommend maintaining those levels at a time when the need for local jobs is of such a crucial importance to the future of our county and country.

Due to decisions of the past, our challenge is set – out of town shops with vast areas of free parking versus the traditional high street with council owned “pay & display”. It is a simple dilemma for some people who may have lived in a town for many years yet never visited its high street, they park for free and shop out of town (they probably have no contact with another human being and may even scan the products through themselves and pay a computer!). But what I see on Fore Street in Trowbridge is a community that loves its town centre shops and the identity it brings to their town, receive fantastic customer service and be treated like a human being rather than an internet order number. They like to catch up with friends and family – to keep with tradition.

I am asking you to protect this tradition by saying NO to any form of increase in car parking charges in Wiltshire.

I think it is time for the County to take a long hard look at itself and to start thinking long term rather than chasing a quick buck. Start protecting our future with a long term plan for business growth and generation - right in the heart of our market towns in Wiltshire.

The car parks should be maintained using the money that is generated from existing revenue streams that the council have. Car parking charges do NOT help the community or its businesses.

Does the committee agree with me that the communities that exist on our High Streets should be protected from those factors that are within the councils control, including any increase in car parking charges? If not, please explain your reasons?

Response

As stated in the consultation document, one of the objectives of the car parking strategy is to support the economies of Wiltshire's market towns. To this end, the Council has assessed the level of car parking charges in key competitor towns like Bath, has offered buy out and management opportunities to some towns and parish councils in order to keep free parking, and has kept the first hour charges as low as reasonably possible in recognition that many people only want to shop or visit a town for a short period of time.

However, another important objective is to help support, and encourage the use of, sustainable transport modes such as local bus services. In doing so, this can help the Council manage traffic congestion levels in towns, reduce carbon emissions and maintain access levels to essential services for those people without a car. The last of these factors is particularly relevant to local retailers as a proportion of their customers will travel by bus; the proposal to hypothecate surplus parking revenues will help the Council to maintain local bus services at a time when central government funding cuts would put many at risk.

It is hoped that the above demonstrates that the Council is thinking long-term and protecting all of our futures by using its approach to car parking to help support Wiltshire's economy, communities and environment.