

16 June 2011

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Mr I Newman
Chairman
Salisbury City Centre Management
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Our ref: AK/CR/21311

Dear Mr Newman, Mr Trytsman and Mrs Murrell

Salisbury car parking charges

Thank you for your letter dated 24 May 2011 regarding the above.

Before addressing the issues you raise, I would like to emphasise that the Council is committed to the regeneration of Salisbury through the work of the Salisbury Vision board. As you know, a range of projects that will deliver new housing, retail and employment space and public realm improvements are underway. The Council also funds the work of the South Wiltshire Economic Partnership that, amongst other things, supports the development of local businesses and in partnership with Wiltshire Council and other organisations, is working to attract inward investment to the area.

However, the Council is having to deal with challenging circumstances and needs to make significant financial savings over the next four years and this means taking difficult decisions. With regards to Salisbury's car parking charges, Cabinet took the decision to increase the charges by 10% as, not having done so, would have meant that a larger number of subsidised bus services would have needed to have been cut. These bus services are vital to many people - particularly in Salisbury where some 27% of households do not have access to a car and 47% of households only have one car available - to enable them to travel to essential services and facilities. The level of subsidy in and around Salisbury is in the order of £1.3m.

I note that you feel that the new car parking charges are too high. As you are aware, the consultation on the car parking strategy took place between 12 July to 3 September last year and Cllr Tonge presented the results of the consultation to the Salisbury Area Board on 30 September. At that meeting car parking charges were not raised by members of the public, their main concern being residents' parking zones.

At Cabinet on 14 December, representations were made by Warminster Town Council, Stonehenge Chamber of Trade, the Wessex Chamber of Commerce, Amesbury Town Council, the Association of Kennet Passengers, Mere Parish Council and an individual from Tisbury, but there were none from Salisbury. The car parking strategy was also considered at Full Council on the 22 February as part of the Local Transport Plan. These were open meetings where interested parties could make their views known.

Given that there were no representations from Salisbury, Cabinet and Council had to assume that the proposals were acceptable.

I am sorry to hear of the downturn in trade reported by some of your members although it is clear that the general economic climate is not making it easy for most retailers in the UK at the moment. In terms of discerning the economic impact of the current car parking charges, you may not be aware that at the Full Council meeting in February, Cllr John Brady (in his previous capacity as Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Strategic Planning) committed the Council to conducting a post-implementation analysis. This review will be done early next year when people's behaviour and patterns have stabilised and when we have a year's economic and transport-related evidence to analyse.

With regards to Salisbury being competitive in terms of parking charges, we need to ensure that parking charges in Salisbury are appropriate given its form and function (and this is something we feel we have done through the review of the car parking strategy). Competing on price would simply lead to a chase to the bottom which would increase traffic congestion, produce more air pollution, undermine efforts to encourage people to reduce their reliance on cars and ultimately make Salisbury a less attractive city.

You have carried out a comparison of parking charges in Salisbury with other towns. I should like to respond to your bullet points below:

- One of the main reasons why Bath and Salisbury can have higher longer-stay parking charges is because they both have a comprehensive network of Park & Ride sites. For a town of Salisbury's size, having five Park & Ride sites is quite unusual and we need to make the most of them. In practical terms, this means that adequate parking spaces can be provided at an attractive charge that avoids cars clogging up the city and polluting it. In doing so, this makes Salisbury a more attractive and cleaner city. As you know, the Park & Ride service enables an individual to park for a very reasonable £2.50 all day and a group of up to four adults or children aged over seven for £3.50. Having a comprehensive network of Park & Ride sites also provides the opportunity to redevelop city centre sites such as the Maltings. The journey time (including waiting time) using the Park & Ride service is, on average, only seven minutes longer than for a car and the motorist is saving fuel costs of around 20p a mile.
- I consider that the level of two hour charges relate to differences in some key local circumstances found in each of the towns. For example, Andover has a smaller population than Salisbury, is not a key tourist destination, and has no air quality management areas. Winchester, on the other hand, has a similar population to Salisbury, is also an historic tourist destination and has a city centre air quality management area.
- For stays of up to three hours, people have a choice when going to Salisbury. They can either drive to a car park in the centre and pay £4.00/£4.20 or use the Park & Ride service and pay £2.50 or £3.50 for a group. While the former is more convenient (but on average only by seven minutes each way) it can increase city centre congestion and add to air pollution levels.
- The £2.20 charge for a two hour stay in Salisbury was agreed by the Council's Cabinet as a compromise between a lower one hour charge and a higher two hour charge - you will recall that the previous two hour charge was £2.50. The rationale for this compromise was that one hour in Salisbury is often not long enough for many people and that for those people who want less than an hour there are the 144 up to one hour on-street parking spaces, 60 spaces in the Market Place and another 548 in the privately owned New Street multi-storey car park. So in total there are 752 spaces that allow one hour parking.

Park & Ride

We would be pleased to accommodate extended hours of the Park & Ride if it were to be cost neutral. However, we are not in a position to take the risk of a three month trial without supporting data. If you were to consult your respective members on this matter to establish what passenger numbers would be on the earlier and later buses, and how many would be displaced from the existing schedule, the data could be used to carry out a proper evaluation. If you were able to agree to this approach, we would be happy to arrange for officers to meet with you to discuss the details of your consultation and we would evaluate the hours of other Park & Ride facilities operated by other local authorities to establish what the usage is during the suggested extended hours.

I hope the above clearly sets out the Council's position and clarifies the points you have made.

Yours sincerely



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Chief Executive

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