

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

14 December 2010

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

Statement from Mr John Niklin, Chairman of the Car Parking Strategy working group, for and on behalf of Warminster Town Council

Warminster Town Council have a significant concern about the underlying tenet of the policy which is the supposed underlying need for harmonization. Although we note that the particular word is largely absent from the report before you today. We wonder what, if any, research led to this assumption and whether it has been challenged and revisited? It might be noted that when North Yorkshire conducted a root and branch review of parking policy, one of their key findings was that harmonization of parking policy across the county was neither beneficial nor sensible since virtually every town could reasonably prove to be a “special case”. I believe that the letter sent to you by WALC, representing the smaller councils across the council, perpetuated a similar view. Warminster is, of course, a special case along with Amesbury, Bradford-on-Avon and every other town in our diverse county. I think it’s pretty fair to say that most towns are happy for you to harmonise parking across Wiltshire....but.....not in our town as we are a special case!

Looking at the supporting papers for the car parking agenda item, one of the opening observations is that “There is a general lack of consistency in parking charges, standards and management in Wiltshire.” The reason for this is simple: that the towns have developed their specific charging structures (including provision of free parking) due to their own special needs, understood by local people and adapted over the years as towns, habits and needs develop. Even at this stage you are proposing a special arrangement for Devizes based on a perceived need to equalise a special arrangement in Marlborough, along with options for smaller towns to either buy back some spaces, or take over their own parking – some will pursue this avenue and others will not. Meanwhile Salisbury has an excellent park and ride system – but is the only town to have one. So where is the harmonization? There appears to be no evidence that the diverse, variable approach that had developed under District Councils was broke; so why fix a system that ain’t broke?

One final matter to ask you to consider and that is reference to the part played by (quote) “sustainable transport measures – e.g. local bus services” in Wiltshire Council’s proposed strategy. In Warminster we witness buses, often unsuitably large and belching diesel fumes, travelling in and out of town almost always either empty or with single digit numbers of occupants. The bus companies are receiving subsidies from this council to provide a service

that is barely used, inefficient, cost-ineffective and, what's more, polluting. If sustainable transport is accepted as a goal then I suggest that we stop kidding ourselves that rattling, rumbling, belching 52-seaters buses are that incarnation. They represent an assault on our town, largely paid for from our local taxes. If you genuinely want to start down the path toward sustainable options then you will need to be more forward thinking and seek significantly more innovative solutions.