

Countywide Analysis of the Impact of Car Parking Charges

Question From Councillor David Jenkins **Westbury North Division**

To Councillor Dick Tonge

Question 1a

If parking sales tickets were in decline why did the council introduce new increased parking charges?

Response

The Car Parking Strategy does not only deal with car parking charges; it also provides the overall policy position on the management of car parking in Wiltshire which includes parking standards, managing the council's parking stock, residents' parking, etc. It also forms part of the Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 2011-2026 which seeks to achieve wider objectives related to the economy, climate change, air quality, road safety, health and the environment.

The main reason why the council reviewed the strategy when it did was because the previous strategy dated back to the year 2000 and needed to be reviewed and updated to reflect changed circumstances. One of these was the formation of Wiltshire Council which meant that the management of car parking needed to be reviewed to adopt a more consistent approach across the county.

Question 1b

Car parking usage is noticeably down since the introduction of the increase in charges. Does this not prove that behavioural patterns are not in a state of flux but the people have made their minds up?

Response

While car park usage is down, this was already happening before the current charges were introduced in April 2011. The decline in usage is comparable to the situation in other local authorities (see paragraph 41).

Question 1c

I understand that it is anticipated there will be a shortfall of approx £1.1m in car parking income. In business terms this is a catastrophe therefore what are the council going to do to resolve this problem?

Response

As reported to the Environment Select Committee on 1 November, the actual deficit in income is predicted to be in the order of £500,000. This will be managed by the council.

Question 1d

The agreement by the council to offer free parking over Christmas to help encourage shoppers to visit their town centres is very welcome but does this not highlight the fact that car parking charges do have a direct effect on customers and the long term survival of town centres?

Response

As agreed by Cabinet at its meeting on 18 October, the offer is for an additional free hour on any parking ticket (excluding on-street parking tickets in Salisbury) purchased on 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd and 24th December using a token printed in the next your Wiltshire Magazine. the council is therefore simply providing people who purchase a parking ticket on these days with a little more time to carry out their Christmas shopping when the shops will be much busier than usual and the queues will be longer. In the past requests for Christmas concessions have been made, this concession anticipates similar requests being made this year.

Question 1e

In Westbury I polled 189 residents in my division and a large percentage have changed their habits concerning shopping locally due to parking charges and are taking their business elsewhere. Westbury is suffering as a result of the charges and therefore is there not a case that due to its fragile economy , geographical location, lack of growth and the fact that it's economy is being squeezed by the surrounding towns, for the town to be in band 4?

Response

Appendix 2 (page 107 of your summons) sets out the criteria for the banding of the towns; the concept of banding was supported by the majority of the respondents to the consultation on the car parking strategy in the summer of 2010. Appendix 5 outlines what the council is doing to support the Westbury Vision.

A proposal to 'buy back' a small proportion of short-stay spaces from Wiltshire Council to offer as free spaces was made to Westbury Town Council. This opportunity was not taken up by the Town Council.