

Policy Development Scrutiny Committee



Date	25 August 2010
Venue	Town Hall, St Annes
Committee members	Councillor Fabian Craig-Wilson (Chairman) Councillor Kiran Mulholland (Vice-Chairman) Brenda Ackers, Ben Aitken, Frank Andrews, David Chedd, Leonard Davies, John Davies, Patricia Fieldhouse, Richard Fulford-Brown, Craig Halewood, Ken Hopwood, Kath Harper, Barbara Pagett
Other Councillors	Albert Pounder
Officers	Paul Walker, Ian Curtis, Andrew Dickson, Annie Womack,
Others	Members of the public

Public Platform

Two members of the public had made requests to address the committee on the topic relating to the call-in request. The Chairman invited them to speak at the start of the meeting, in accordance with the Public Platform rules.

1. Declarations of interest

Members were reminded that any personal/prejudicial interests should be declared as required by the Council's Code of Conduct adopted in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000.

Councillors Pagett and J Davies declared an interest as elected representatives of the ward in question.

2. Confirmation of minutes

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the Policy Development Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 15 July 2010 as a correct record for signature by the chairman.

3. Substitute members

The following substitutions were reported under council procedure rule 22.3:

Councillor Ken Hopwood for Councillor Elizabeth Oades

Councillor Kath Harper for Councillor Elaine Silverwood

Councillor Barbara Pagett for Councillor Heather Speak

4. Request for Call-in – Charging on North Beach Car Park

Ten members of the council had invoked the recovery and call-in procedure to question an individual cabinet member decision made on 4 August 2010 relating to the introduction of car parking charges on North Beach Car Park. This decision was made by Cllr Albert Pounder, the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Wellbeing. Members of the committee were required to consider whether the decision was not in the interests of the inhabitants of the borough and ought to be reconsidered.

The Chairman invited the lead signatory, Councillor John Davies, to explain why he felt that the decision was not in the interests of the inhabitants of the borough and ought to be reconsidered.

Cllr Davies called into question the financial case, and gave his opinion that the income figures projected did not accurately reflect the actual income which could be achieved.

He also queried the level of expenditure which would be needed, including signage and lining the car parking spaces. Cllr Davies also suggested that the cost of clearing sand should be taken into account, and the potential loss of revenue from only having one pay and display machine which could be subject to breakdown through windblown sand. Additionally, the distance from town and from the next nearest car park would make servicing and enforcement less practical. The car park's remoteness also led Cllr Davies to suspect that vandalism and theft could potentially be a problem.

Cllr Davies argued that imposition of charges would lead to a large-scale increase in on-street parking in the surrounding residential areas, by people wanting to avoid the charge, leading to traffic and pedestrian safety problems and unwarranted disruption to local residents.

He felt that the concessions for Fylde Borough residents would be problematic and difficult to police and monitor, and wondered what cost had been in-built for administration of the scheme.

Cllr Davies ended by saying that he thought that the imposition of parking charges was in opposition to the aims of the Classic Resort initiative – Fylde is looking to encourage better use of the dunes, but parking charges could be counter-productive resulting in fewer visitors, and could be an obstacle in the development of the nearby wind sport centre.

The Chairman asked Councillor Albert Pounder, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Wellbeing, to respond.

Councillor Pounder addressed each of the issues which had been raised. He explained how the income figures had been arrived at, providing measurements which had been used to establish the number of parking spaces that would be available.

He pointed out that expenditure on the car park would be minimized as it would not be lined – this in turn meant that there would be no need for sweeping wind-blown sand away in order to keep the lines visible.

Cllr Pounder disagreed that the car park was remote, being overlooked on two sides and did not see vandalism of the pay and display machine, nor theft from it, as a problem. Additionally he said that the machines were robust enough to withstand such attempts and that they would also resist damage from wind-blown sand having a shelter around it.

He also did not agree that parking on the side roads by people seeking to avoid a charge would be an issue, as the roads were wide, or they already had parking restrictions on them.

Cllr Pounder agreed with Cllr Davies' assertion that there was a risk that income expectations might not be achieved, though he felt that officers had done their best to make a realistic projection – however, at the moment there was a substantial cost to run the car park as a free car park, and any income would be welcome.

He confirmed that any resident of the Fylde could pay the £50.00 annual charge for a permit as an alternative to "per visit" charges, and that they would show their eligibility through proof of payment of Council Tax and proof of vehicle registration. The permit would be assigned to the vehicle.

Cllr Pounder said that the charges would help to secure the future of the dunes, and of the overall area, and that the introduction of charges would not be a hindrance to any local business, such as the Trax wind-sports centre.

Members had several comments and questions for Cllr Pounder. They included:

- Would there be a problem with people causing more damage to the dunes if they parked off the car park and did not use established pathways?
- Had there been consultation, and if so what opinion had Natural England voiced?
- Whether the resource needed to manage the enterprise would reduce the effective income from North Beach, or whether the need to manage it

would draw resources away from town centre car park, resulting in reduced enforcement and lower income from those car parks.

- Whether the parking was time limited and whether controlled entrance and exits had been considered.

Cllr Pounder confirmed that consultation had taken place, that the dunes officer was aware of the proposal and had no objections, and in fact was looking at boardwalks as an option to reduce damage to the dunes whilst still encouraging visitors; also that Natural England had lodged no objection. He advised that 11 residents had sent in comments, but 3 of those were not residents of Fylde. He also stated that no extra staff were to be employed and confirmed for members that the charges applied between 9 am and 6 pm. Controlled "pay on exit" had been considered but was too expensive.

At this point, prior to the committee debating the topic, the Chairman asked Cllr Pounder to leave the room.

After an in-depth debate of the various issues raised, and following a recorded vote, the committee RESOLVED:

That the decision of the Portfolio Holder should not be called in, on the grounds that the decision was not against the interests of the residents of the Borough.

Votes against a call-in (8) Cllrs Ackers, Aitken, Andrews, Fieldhouse, L Davies, Halewood, Mulholland, Craig-Wilson

Votes for a call-in (5) Cllrs J Davies, Chedd, Pagett, Harper, Hopwood

Abstentions (0)
