

**Policy and Service
Review Scrutiny
Committee**



Date	Tuesday 28 April 2009
Venue	Town Hall, Lytham St Annes
Committee members	Karen Buckley (Chairman) Elizabeth Clarkson, Ken Hopwood, Cheryl Little, Elizabeth Oades; Thomas Threlfall
Other Councillors	Tim Ashton; John Davies; Maxine Chew; Albert Pounder; Kath Harper; Kevin Eastham
Officers	Eugene Leal; Ian Curtis; Annie Womack
Others	Press representative; members of the public

Public Platform

There were members of the public present, and the Chairman asked if anyone would like to speak on the topic of the Lytham on-street parking survey. Mr Silverwood, as representative of the Lytham Action Group, told the committee that the Action Group were in favour of a change from 1 hour to 2 hour on-street parking. Their feeling was that the results of the survey had shown a clear majority in favour. They believed that a 2 hour parking slot offered the shopper time to shop in a relaxed manner, and have time to go for a coffee if they wished, without being afraid of getting a parking ticket. They felt that it was essential to attract more people to Lytham centre, and that the parking restrictions did not help to achieve that.

Cllr Davies said that we should be looking to improve the visitor experience, and he agreed that limiting on-street parking to one hour meant that visitors were not able to enjoy their shopping and also have a coffee.

Cllr Chew also agreed with Cllr Davies and said that visitors should be encouraged to stay in the town centres as long as possible. She pointed out the difference in off-street car park charges between Wyre and Fylde.

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.

Councillor Tim Ashton had a personal and prejudicial interest in item 3 on the agenda in so far as he was the Cabinet member responsible for making the decision under consideration for call-in. He attended the meeting as a witness at the invitation of the committee and withdrew from the meeting prior to the debate and decision.

2. Substitute members

Councillor Ken Hopwood for Councillor Elaine Silverwood

3. Call-in Request - Lytham On-Street Parking Survey

Ten members of the Council had invoked the recovery and call-in procedure to question an individual cabinet member decision made on 6 April 2009 relating to the results of the on-street car parking survey which had been undertaken to assess the strength of feeling for changing 1 hour on-street parking in the town centre, to 2 hours.

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

Councillor Hopwood began by stating that he understood that the final decision relating to on-street parking lies with Lancashire County Council (LCC). However, he believed that Fylde Borough Council had a responsibility to advise LCC Highways Department with regard to their position on this matter. He believed that the Cabinet member's decision to recommend to LCC that the results of the survey be put before the Lancashire Locals committee did not meet that responsibility.

He explained the background of the need for the survey to the committee, how and why it had been devised, and how it had been conducted. The survey was to establish the strength of feeling from traders and residents, and from shoppers and visitors, for changing on-street parking restrictions from 1 hour to 2 hours. He told the committee about his concerns that the questionnaires for visitors and shoppers had been distributed by Parkwise by leaving them under car windscreen wipers in wet weather. He felt that this had adversely affected the returns.

Cllr Hopwood challenged the officers' assertion that the 60/40 result (60% in favour and 40% against) was inconclusive; this view of the results had led to their recommendation that there should be no change.

Cllr Hopwood also talked about off-street parking and gave his opinion that it did not meet the aims of the Car Park Strategy, and that it appeared that funding was not available to make improvements and no changes would be made. Similar problems existed with street signage.

He felt that without a clear direction from the Cabinet Member to LCC stating Fylde's preferences regarding on-street parking, LCC would also opt for no change to the present arrangements.

The recommendation to LCC to refer the matter to Lancashire Locals would, because of meeting schedules, mean that the matter would probably not be decided by Christmas 2009 and he believed that this was unacceptable.

He concluded by restating his belief that 60/40 was a clear and conclusive result, and asked the committee to call-in the Cabinet Member's decision, and to send a recommendation that should go to LCC supporting the majority decision in favour of 2 hour

parking.

The Chairman then invited the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Well Being, Councillor Tim Ashton to respond.

Councillor Ashton started by thanking Cllr Hopwood for his help in carrying out the survey.

He pointed out that Lancashire Locals has a responsibility for overseeing Traffic Regulation Orders, and felt that he was doing the correct thing in asking LCC to refer it to them.

Cllr Ashton acknowledged that there were some traders who wanted to change the on-street parking from 1 hour to 2 hours, and that this was reflected in the survey. He said, however, that he was not an expert in these matters, but took advice from experienced officers who had been given the results and who had stated that their recommendation was for no further action as the results were inconclusive.

Cllr Ashton had spoken to FBC and LCC highways experts and to an independent consultant, and all had also assured him that the results were deemed to be inconclusive. He told the committee that he was still not convinced about officer recommendations and so he had gone against their advice (which was to take no further action), and had decided that the matter should go to Lancashire Locals. He pointed out that this was a group of democratically elected members who would have the final say, and that members of the public, local people and traders could speak for the first half hour of any Lancashire Locals meeting.

He also stated that even if he had referred it to LCC for a decision, there would certainly be objections whether it was approved or not, and it would be referred to Lancashire Locals anyway.

Committee members were then invited to ask questions, and some of the topics they covered were as follows:

The Chairman asked Cllr Ashton to clarify whether Fylde officers had recommended no further action, and he agreed that this was the case.

The Chairman asked Mr Leal how he had come to the opinion that 60/40 in favour was inconclusive. He advised the committee that discussions with Andrew Shore and County Council had resulted in this opinion, because the ratio in favour was less than 2:1.

Cllr Little asked whether a comparison had been made with any other towns of a similar make-up to see what solutions they had found to this kind of problem. She was told that no specific comparison had been made but Mr Leal advised that Lytham was not unusual in providing high turnover, short stay parking outside shops to provide increased footfall, and longer stay parking further away, where people can park and walk in and spend a longer time in the centre. The one-hour restriction enabled people who wanted to visit only one or two shops to find a parking space more easily.

When the committee was ready to move on to debate the matter prior to reaching a decision, Councillor Ashton was required to withdraw from the meeting.

Several issues were debated including:

A suggestion that a topic like this was best served by being investigated by the Planning Policy Scrutiny Committee. This would enable highways staff to be present to answer questions from local traders and residents, in preference to leaving the matter to Lancashire Locals. The Chairman expressed her opinion that this would draw out the process even longer because the decision lies with Lancashire, not FBC.

The issue of the loss of shopping hours and footfall to the traders if there was a change from 1 hour to 2 hour parking (it was pointed out that there are a lot of residents living in the centre of Lytham who additionally have visitors, all of whom would potentially be taking up 2 hours parking intended for shoppers).

It was commented that it was unfortunate that part of the survey had been undertaken in a manner that could have affected the results either way (the visitor and shopper survey was left on car windscreens in the rain).

Several comments were made that it was preferable that Cllr Ashton should have made a recommendation one way or the other to LCC, and that would have speeded the issue along.

Some members of the committee believed that in fact 60/40 was a significant steer, and was in no way inconclusive.

After a full debate, the committee RESOLVED:

- 1 That the decision of the Portfolio Holder should not be called-in.
- 2 To recommend to the Portfolio Holder that he should add his own steer to the referral of this topic to Lancashire Locals, and that he should also forward the minutes of this meeting to Lancashire Locals to help inform their debate.