



PUBLIC MEETING HELD ON 7 DECEMBER 2011
CAR PARKING CHARGES, LISKEARD

At a public meeting held in the Public Hall, Liskeard at 6.30 pm on Wednesday 7 December 2011 there were present:-

Liskeard Town Council	Councillors Roger Holmes (Vice Chairman), Nick Mallard, Rosa Mashiter, Ian Goldsworthy, Susan Pike and Andrew Deacon (Town Clerk),
Residents	Mr Mike Gregory (Chairman)
Cornwall Councillors	Jan Powell
Cornwall Council	
Community Transport Manager	Peter Moore
Community Network Manager	Stephen Foster
Attendees	List of attendees attached

The Chairman opened the meeting at 6.30 pm and informed those present of Housekeeping matters and advised that the purpose of the meeting was to inform the Cornwall Councillors of the Forum's proposals in relation to car parking charges in Liskeard.

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from: Bernie Wooster, Sandra Newns, Councillors Tony Powell, Lori Reid and Bruce Hawken and Cornwall Councillors Jay Schofield and Mike George.

SPEAKER

Steve Foster, Community Network Manager, Liskeard & Looe, Localism Service, Cornwall Council introduced himself and advised that the Town Forum has called this public meeting in response to local concerns about Cornwall Council's proposals for car park charges in 2012/13, particularly the suggestion of £1 for 2 hours proposed for Westbourne, Sungirt and the Cattle Market car parks. These proposals were out to consultation until 19th December 2011.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the proposed charges and have a constructive discussion to see if there are any other solutions that might assist the Town and be economically acceptable to Cornwall Council.

Mr Foster went on to explain that the final decision on charges will be taken by the relevant Cornwall Council Cabinet Member and Corporate Director. All representations will be considered and judgements made where there are opposing views. The charges have been developed by the Parking Policy Advisory Panel, a group of 17 Cornwall Councillors reporting to the Cabinet.

Mr Foster explained that to balance its budget, Cornwall Council must raise a certain income from its car parks. If it fails to do this, potentially cuts to other services or a rise in Council Tax would ensue. One of the considerations of the Parking Panel is to set charges that can realistically achieve this overall level of income. This income has to be raised within each local area, however, there is some flexibility, for instance higher prices in the summer or a premium charge for some car parks.

Mr Foster advised the meeting that Peter Moore, Community Transport Manager, was present to give advice on the proposals and possible alternatives. Mr Moore will then report the Forum's views as part of the consultation.

Mr Foster then opened the meeting to the floor.

Rik Jones, Chairman, Liskeard Chamber of Commerce addressed the meeting and stated that as business owners they were aware of the need to balance the books. He went on to say that he understood the rationale behind the Council's proposals and that the minimum stay of 2 hours would increase the amount of time people spend in Town and would therefore hopefully increase the footfall and free up the 30 minute spaces for people to make shorter visits. He also believed that a split for long and short stays is an excellent idea to help reduce the huge costs currently incurred by the Town's workers.

To this effect he proposed that Lower Sungirt car park was classified as a long stay car park as well as Rapsons which is not currently adequate. Mr Jones also proposed that all Blue Badge holders were allowed to park in all car parks for free. This would reduce them parking in less than suitable places in and around the Town on yellow lines.

Mr Jones summed up by stating it was hard for businesses to succeed in the current economic climate, the new parking rates were an improvement on the current charges, however it still does not encourage people into the Town or companies to invest in Liskeard. The Chamber would like to see parking charges back to the levels before we became part of the unitary authority when the car parks were full.

Ian Stevenson, Chairman of the Liskeard Traders Association then addressed the meeting stating that they were extremely annoyed and worried by the proposed new charges as Liskeard has already lost four retail outlets this year, two of which were larger chain stores.

Mr Stevenson stated that, although the revenue for the Car Parks seem to show an upward trend it was not as much as the Council would have liked. He asked whether the Council could provide actual figures for the number of vehicles purchasing tickets compared with prior to the increased charges. Mr Stevenson then quoted a recent edition of BBC Spotlight that stated that it was not permissible for any council to make money by putting up car parking charges and any authority would be acting unlawfully if they were to do so.

Mr Stevenson suggested a lower charge for the first half hour, agreed with the proposal of £1 for two hours although some sort of all day charge for people that work in Liskeard was still needed. He finished by saying that as traders we would want to work with all the concerned bodies for a speedy and sensible solution to this problem.

Peter Moore advised the meeting that parking charges were introduced to avoid congestion in our towns and that the law provides a chance to decide the costs, Road Traffic Act 1984.

The Town Clerk spoke, stating that there should be no profit from on-street enforcement and that any off-street fines could be used for whatever the Council thinks fit.

Andy Blackwell of Blackie's Barber Shop spoke in relation to Mr Foster's comment that car parks were designed to prevent congestion. Mr Blackwell stated that the higher prices have increased the congestion as more people are parking in residential areas to avoid charges. He went on to say that if the prices were reduced more people would use the car parks which would increase safety in the Town and encourage more trade. The best advert a town could have would be to announce free parking, therefore, it might be a good idea to put extra on the Council Tax. Mr Blackwell went on to say that it was deplorable to see so many people using supermarkets and that if people wanted market towns then it was the Council's responsibility to meet their demands.

At this point Steve Foster advised that he had received the petition for cheaper parking and that this would be submitted as part of the evidence.

Richard Turnham, The Jewellers Workshop spoke to the meeting stating that he has worked in Liskeard for 22 years, his business being situated 10 metres from Westbourne Car Park. Mr Turnham stated that the decisions were made by people who do not have any idea how the Town operates and that the maximum 3 hour stay resulted in a decrease in trade. He went on to say that it was important that a very small charge was made for the first hour. Mr Turnham went on to say that the Council workers at Luxstowe House get their parking free of charge and that he would like this to be addressed.

Mr Philip Hicks, 60's Coffee Bar addressed the meeting and asked the Forum representative, Roger Holmes what he thought of the new charges and how would he go about increasing trade in the Town. Roger Holme's replied stating that he would like to see the first hour to be free. Mr Hicks believed that the Town Council were doing nothing about the charges.

The Town Clerk, assured the meeting that there had been over the last twelve months a continuing representation by the Town Council regarding car parking charges and parking within the Town generally.

Mr Colin Scott, retired partner, Luxstowe Veterinary Surgery stated that the current charges were encouraging out of town shops and that he would like to see a cost benefit analysis. He went on to say that out of town shops were prevalent in Brittany but the towns were still thriving because, with the exception of Morlaix, all parking was free. Mr Scott also stated that the higher costs were encouraging people to park on the outskirts of Town and that it was a lottery to pass parked cars in Coldstyle Road. Mr Scott felt that the first two hours parking should be free.

Councillor Bruce Hawken in a letter stated that he would like to see cheaper season tickets for out of Town car parks and remove the three hour limit on Westbourne Car Park which effects people making use of the Public Hall. It would be a good idea to have one car park charging £1, i.e. Sungirt.

Helen Tolban of Knit & Natter Group, Stuart House stated that she hires Stuart House from 10.00am until 1.00pm and that less people come to her group since the increase in the parking charges. She went on to say that we need Morrisons, but we must bring people to this town, therefore parking has to be free.

Peter Moore thanked everybody for attending and said that he would take their points to the next Strategic Meeting. A decision would be made by the Cabinet of Cornwall Council. To cut out this revenue would cost many millions of pounds which will have to be financed in other ways.

Mr Moore commented on some of the points made. Free parking for Blue Badge holders would incur a significant cost and proposed every stay plus one extra hour free. He stated that Cornwall Council agrees that better provision should be made for Blue Badge holders.

Mr Moore agreed that it might be possible to make Sungirt Car Park a long stay and he would take this suggestion back to the meeting. He also took note of the discussion that it might be more productive to offer people to come to Liskeard for two hours which might be a time people would want to stay in the Town and therefore £1 for two hours would be a significant improvement.

Mr Moore also took the point about the long stay workers having a designated car park.

He stated that parking costs effect many towns across Cornwall. Liskeard would have to make a case that the charges were having a more significant effect than elsewhere. In other words Liskeard had to make a special case.

Mr Moore stated that Cornwall Council had to raise revenue. Over £2m in business rates collected in the County went to Central Government as did 20% VAT on the Car parking charges was also forwarded to the Government. Therefore it could be seen that not all monies were received by Cornwall Council. He also stated that it did take some £6m to run the Car Parks.

A resident protested that Enforcement Officers offered no flexibility. He said that he had been outside Blakes for two seconds one day and got booked, he considered that not fair and discouraged shopping in the Town.

Mike Holman who lives in France had returned home for Christmas. He had been resident in Liskeard for very many years. He was shocked by the number of boarded up shops. He was also depressed that his Daughter had run three businesses in the Town and had employed a number of staff but was now only running one business. He was also struck by the low morale of the Town Centre shopkeepers.

The Chair of Liskeard Traders, talked about raising hopes of the people of Liskeard and wanted everyone to be more positive. He said he had been dismayed to learn that despite the Olympic Torch Relay coming to Liskeard, the Leader of Cornwall Council Alec Robinson, has categorically stated that there would be no free car parking on the day.

Mike Gregory closed the meeting and thanked Peter Moore and Steve Foster for coming. He also thanked all those for attending the meeting.

The meeting was closed at 7.30 pm.