

Minutes

Economic Scrutiny Panel

10th July, 2007, Belmont Community Centre

Present: Councillor Hopgood (in the Chair)
and Councillors Bartle, Guy, Colledge, Kelly, Lightley, Marsden, Simmons and
Stoddart

Also Present: Mrs Diane Prested
Mr Colin Wilkes Managing Director Durham Markets Company
Mr Richard Toynbee Manger Prince Bishop's Shopping Centre
Councillors: Kellett, Thomson and Thompson.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Simpson and Wilkes.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 13th June, 2007 were agreed as a true record.

3. Scrutiny of Disabled Parking in the District

Mrs Diane Prested a member of the public who is disabled agreed to attend the Panel meeting to give a disabled person's perspective on disabled parking. Mrs Prested advised the Panel that the parking spaces were wider to allow room for wheel chairs to get in and out of vehicles, especially electric wheelchairs. Mrs Prested informed the Panel that she usually came into Durham on the Access bus which collects disabled people from their homes and drops them off in the Market Place. However, there is a problem accessing the Market Place paved area as the dropped kerb is usually blocked by vehicles parking either directly in front of the access or not leaving enough room to manoeuvre.

Councillor Peter Thompson suggested that the wardens/police should be informed of the day and time of the access bus to ensure that the dropped kerb area was free from vehicles at this time.

Mrs Prested also advised the Panel that it was common in supermarket car parks to find the designated spaces taken by able bodied people.

Councillor Les Thomson, City Council representative on Access for All advised the Panel of an occasion when he had visited Tesco with a disabled person in their vehicle and there had been no disabled parking spaces available as vehicles not displaying blue badges had parked in the bays and that he had informed Tesco of the abuse. Tesco had placed notices on the windows of the offending vehicles.

The Chair reiterated that some local authorities and supermarkets had started to use the Baywatch scheme, which was basically a sticker placed on the window of an offending vehicle advising that the registration may have been taken.

Mr Toynbee advised the Panel that Sainsbury's supermarket took registration numbers of vehicles parked in disabled bays that were not displaying the blue badges and announced the numbers in the store.

The Chair asked Mr Toynbee as Manager of Prince Bishops Shopping Centre what measures his staff took when they noticed cars parked in disabled spaces without displaying a blue badge. Mr Toynbee advised that his staff monitored the designated disabled parking area and any vehicles not displaying blue badges had notices put on their windscreens.

Mr Wilkes of Durham Markets Company advised the Panel that retailers wanted accessible parking for disabled customers to encourage trade. He suggested that some of the park and ride bus stops still left disabled visitors with a very steep climb before they got into the Market Place. He also advised that there was abuse of parking at back Silver Street, where blue badge holders park their vehicles and then proceed to run up the Market Hall steps!

Councillor Les Thomson informed Members that there was abuse of the blue badge scheme and that the following cases had been highlighted;
A blue badge holder comes to town with an able bodied person, the badge holder parks the car and the able bodied person then leaves the disabled person in the vehicle while they do their shopping.

Badges of deceased badge holders are in circulation and are being used.

There is a black market for blue badges making hundreds of pounds for unscrupulous dealers.

The Chair advised members of a leaflet she had picked up from Shopmobility which detailed their services including their minibus services that picked disabled people up from home and would bring them into Durham Shopmobility unit or another location of the person's choice within a radius of Durham.

Mrs Prested advised members that the staff at Shopmobility were very helpful.

The Panel agreed that publicity was the key, and that there could be people unable to leave their homes that had no idea of the services on offer. The Chair suggested that information leaflets should be included with the blue badge packs and be displayed at the park and ride, tourist information centre and in all disabled toilets within the city. It was also suggested that shopmobility be publicised in Durham City News.

The Chair also suggested that Doctor's Surgeries and Health Centres should publicise the benefits of the Access bus and the Shopmobility bus.

Mrs Prested advised the Panel that there were problems finding wheelchair taxi's, especially on a Sunday.

The Chair thanked Mr. Wilkes, Mr Toynbee and Mrs Prested for their attendance and the information they had given to the Panel.

4. Any Other Business

The Chair informed Members that Danny Harland of the County Council's traffic division would be in attendance for the next meeting and if Members had any questions could they inform Democratic Support by the end of July.

The Chair asked Mrs Prested if she was available to attend the next panel meeting.

The Meeting terminated at 6.20 p.m.

