

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – ECONOMY
16 JANUARY 2014

MEMBER QUESTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 20

Questions from Councillor Prowse

In February 2013, I discovered that this Council had chosen to lease a small car park to a private parking company. I have now found that this was not the only car park. The second car park, which has received the same disposal, is at Flowerpot Lane. This car park holds 62 cars. The daily charge set by the Private Parking Company (PPC) is £2. A modest charge. However, it is worth noting that adjacent to this car park is Okehampton Street car park which we still control. The daily charge is £1.80. Its capacity is 84 spaces. The Portfolio Holder will agree that if at full capacity both car parks on a daily basis would take the same revenue.

1. Who took this bizarre decision?

Reply: At the Executive meeting held on 8th February 2011, alternative parking enforcement arrangements were considered for Council-owned sites not covered by the parking order. Executive resolved not to transfer responsibility for enforcement to the parking service. Land-holding services were able to carry on managing parking on these sites by way of a range of prohibition and enforcement regimes. Parks & Open Spaces were faced with a situation where this car park was being used as free parking to the detriment of the nearby Okehampton Street Pay and Display car park. In consultation with the Estates team, a business lease of the premises was granted under which the tenant occupier had to install and operate pay and display machines and share the income with the City Council on an equal basis.

2. Did any Councillor on this entire Council become involved in any part of the decision making involving this situation?

Reply: The decision not to extend the remit of the parking service was taken by Executive. In light of that decision, the management of the land is the responsibility of the land-holding service who, on advice from Estates agreed to a lease solution in this case. The power to agree terms and enter into leases is set out in the delegated powers in the City Council's Constitution.

3. Are there any other parks that have received the same disposal attention?

Reply: The car park in Station Road, Exwick is also covered by a lease, but they have a charging regime designed to discourage long staying customers, so that it can be available to recreational users of the Valley Park. Consideration of similar arrangements was given for a number of other sites but it was not felt appropriate in those cases.