

HEALTH SCRUTINY PANEL

8 MAY 2009

**PARKING AT JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL
A DISCUSSION ON THE CURRENT PICTURE**

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To introduce representation from South Tees Hospitals and Endeavour PLC, in attendance at the meeting today to discuss the topic of car parking charges at James Cook University Hospital.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. That Members note the content of the discussion at today's meeting and consider the course of action they wish to adopt.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORT

3. Members of the Health Scrutiny Panel will be aware of the recent local publicity around an increase (effective from 1 April 2009) in some parking charges at James Cook University Hospital. A copy of the press release from the South Tees Hospitals NHS Trust is attached for the Panel's information as Appendix 1.
4. The matter, and the accompanying local publicity, was discussed under Any Other Business at a meeting of the Health Scrutiny Panel on 7 April. At that meeting, Members of the Panel resolved to hold a meeting specifically to address the topic. It is to that end that today's meeting has been called.
5. In attendance at today's meeting will be the Director of Planning for South Tees Hospitals NHS Trust¹, and the Managing Director of Endeavour PLC². Members have previously expressed a particular interest in this meeting covering two fundamental themes within the topic of parking charges at James Cook University Hospital.

¹ The NHS Trust which runs James Cook University Hospital

² The Private Sector Partner for the Hospital

6. Firstly, The Panel has expressed a desire to gain an understanding of the process, which is undertaken when the car parking charges are reviewed, and then a decision is made as to any changes in price. The Health Scrutiny Panel has previously said it is not clear on how that process is managed, so it is anticipated that a part of the discussion today will focus upon that topic.
7. Secondly, the Health Scrutiny Panel has also expressed an interest in examining whether the parking charges are having an impact on equity of access to healthcare for local people. It is anticipated that the meeting today will also focus upon this issue.
8. As a result of the publicity that this issue has received recently, the Panel's secretariat has received a number of emails and telephone calls, objecting to the parking charges. The objections have been based on such grounds as an opinion that people should not have to pay to access healthcare, nor should visitors have to pay. It has been expressed that the specific amount of money people are required to pay is too much. There have been concerns expressed about the impact of parking charges on staff. There have also been concerns expressed about the perceived impacts of the parking charges on the neighbouring residential areas, with people parking in those residential areas to avoid the parking charges. A number of people have expressed the view that they have no choice but to pay for car parking, as public transport is not sufficiently accessible to act as a reasonable alternative in getting to the hospital site. One email has expressed the view that the parking charges are something that should be accepted as necessary.
9. It is highly likely that more views and representations will be received by the Panel's secretariat, between the time of the agenda dispatch and the time of the Panel meeting. As such, the Panel will be updated at the meeting as to how many people have been in touch to express their views. Nonetheless, the issues raised in paragraph 9 are representative of the issues raised so far.
10. Following a discussion of the themes outlined above, Members are asked to consider whether they would like to proceed with the matter by receiving additional evidence, or whether they would prefer to keep the matter under a watching brief.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

11. Please see Appendix 1, which is a copy of the press release outlining the changes in fees, which was published by the South Tees Hospitals Trust on 30 March 2009.

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