

Directorate of Planning
The James Cook University Hospital
Marton Road
Middlesbrough
TS4 3BW

Tel: 01642 850850
Direct Line - 01642 854630
Fax: 01642 854590

24 June 2009

Our ref JM/KL/MBC

Mr J Ord
Scrutiny Support Officer
Middlesbrough Borough Council
Members Office
Town Hall, PO Box 99A
MIDDLESBROUGH
TS1 2QQ

Dear Jon

**RE: HEALTH SCRUTINY PANEL – MAY 2009
FINAL REPORT – CAR PARKING AT JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL**

Thank you for sending me a copy of the above report. We have had discussions within the Trust about the report and the recommendations. Taking each recommendation in turn :

35 That a weekly parking ticket be introduced, guaranteeing a maximum amount that people can pay to park at the James Cook University Hospital site.

The Trust will look at the feasibility of introducing a weekly ticket. The Panel is aware that a monthly ticket, priced at £8 is already available but we do see that it may be attractive for some patients and visitors to have access to a weekly ticket. We will explore how other Trusts in the region administer weekly tickets and their charges.

36 That the 15 minutes for free car parking be extended to 30 minutes.

The Trust does see that 30 minutes would allow more time for patients to be dropped off and collected. We will establish how many visitors / patients currently incur a charge in the car parks for stays of between 15 and 30 minutes and then discuss with Endeavour the implications of making the change.

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37 *That the Trust explores ways to make the parking charge setting process much less opaque and seeks the views of interested groups, in line with the Department of Health guidance. The Panel would be happy to assist in this.*

The Trust needs to consider how this can be done. As a start, we will introduce a link onto the trust's internet site so that members of the public can comment on car parking issues and specifically on the structure of charges. We will take comments received into account when reviewing charges for next year.

38 *That when subsequent parking pricing reviews are ongoing, the Trust Board be involved in the discussions as a formal agenda item, prior to a decision being made.*

I will discuss with the Board of Directors their views on how they wish to be involved in the decision-making process on car parking charges.

39 *That the Trust seeks to publicise the £8 monthly ticket much more assertively and clarifies the price of the monthly ticket. For example, the trust could include information in relevant patient letters and on car parking ticket machines.*

The monthly ticket is advertised on car parking machines in the North and South car parks, on the entrance doors at the North and South entrances. In addition each ward and department are asked to display posters advertising the permit in all patient and visitor areas. However, the Trust will check on the consistency of this between wards and departments.

The information is also available on the Trust's internet site and. We will check what information is included in information sent to patients and if there is a gap here we will make sure that appropriate information is supplied.

40 *That the Trust clarifies the process for applying a monthly ticket and highlights the process that people can expect to go through. The Panel would also like to see the Trust confirm criteria for such tickets and the identity of the ultimate decision-maker.*

The patient or visitor needs to speak to a member of staff on the ward they are visiting or the Travel Link Department and they will be given an application form. This form is then signed by a member of staff on the ward / department and a permit is then issued from the Travel Link Department. The only criteria is that the applicant is a patient or visitor (members of staff are not allowed to apply for these permits).

To my knowledge, the Trust has never declined a request from a patient or visitor for a ticket. We have deliberately made the criteria very open to ensure that people are not deterred from applying.

In reviewing the process, we have identified that there is a weakness is the accessibility of the Travel Link Office. Extending the opening hours of the office has resource implications but we will explore how we can achieve this.

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Mr J Ord, Middlesbrough Borough Council
24 June 20009

42 *The Panel recommends that James Cook University Hospital investigates whether it has enough disabled parking spaces to meet demand. The Panel would like to hear the outcome of this work.*

The Trust will review the number of spaces against both best practice guidelines and current demand and report back to the Panel.

43 *The Panel would recommend that the Trust investigates the viability of providing car parking spaces for those people who are temporarily immobile due to their condition, or a medical intervention, but who would not qualify for a disabled space. The Panel would like to see evidence of this being done.*

There was some limited discussion of this when Keith Abel and I attended the Committee. The question of extending the availability of dedicated car parking to groups of patients and visitors other than those who meet the criteria for disabled parking is one that we have already considered within the Trust and decided not to pursue. This decision was taken on the grounds that it would be impossible to draw up clear guidelines as to who did and did not qualify – and also potentially very inequitable. Our discussion was particularly about providing specified parking for cancer patients. Whilst some cancer patients are very ill, others may be physically quite well and mobile during their visits to the hospital and non cancer patients may be more physically impaired. I think the Panel's concern will, to some extent, be addressed by some of the other actions we have undertaken to review – if drop-off is made easier for instance as, presumably, patients who are 'temporarily immobile' will be being driven to the hospital rather than driving themselves.

We will also review what other hospitals are doing when we look at disabled parking and the weekly ticket to see whether there is any good practice elsewhere which we could consider.

We will respond formally to the committee on the outcome of our work. Can I suggest that we provide an update by the end of September 2009.

Thank you for the interest the Panel has shown in this perennially difficult subject.

Yours sincerely



JILL MOULTON
Director of Planning

Cc S Pleydell, Chief Executive
D Jenkins, Trust Chairman
P Birch, Hotel Services Manager
L McQueeney, Switchboard & Residential Manager
M Lavin, General Manager, Endeavour Sch PLC