

Appendix F – Consultation

CABINET – 13TH OCTOBER 2005

Report of the Director of Change Management

ITEM 12 PARKING ISSUES IN CHARNWOOD PANEL – REFERENCE FROM SCRUTINY

Purpose of Report

To report the findings of an in-depth scrutiny of Parking Issues in Charnwood by a Panel of the Investigation and Review Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendation

That the recommendations of the Scrutiny Panel, as endorsed by the Investigation and Review Scrutiny Committee, be endorsed and the Deputy Chief Executive, in conjunction with the Cabinet Lead Member be requested to report to the Cabinet on the issues raised, within an agreed timescale.

Reason

To enable issues raised by the Scrutiny Committee to be addressed before decisions are taken upon them.

Background

The Investigation and Review Scrutiny Committee on 14th September 2005 endorsed the findings of a Scrutiny Panel in relation to Parking Issues in Charnwood. A copy of the minute of the Committee's meeting and of the Panel's report are attached as appendix A and B to this report, respectively.

It is usual for the Cabinet to request reports in relation to issues raised by scrutiny committees prior to decisions being made within an agreed timescale

Key Decision: No

Background Papers:

Agendas: 7th April 2005
28th April 2005
11th April 2005
26th May 2005
7th July 2005
24th August 2005

Minutes: 7th April 2005
28th April 2005
11th April 2005
26th May 2005

7th July 2005
24th August 2005
5th September 2005

Off Street Parking Customer Satisfaction Survey 2005

Results of Off Street Parking Survey 2005

Car Parking Services – K. Biddulph

Plan of Town Centre Car Parks

Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands (RSS8)

Letter to Town/ Parish Councils including questionnaire

Responses to Town/Parish Council Questionnaires

Report of Site Visit to Mayorhold Car Park – 24th August 2005 – S. Phipps

Briefing Paper – Atkins Consultancy – J. Hale

Principles of Agreement for Establishment of DPE in Leicestershire –
B. Hayes

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PARKING ISSUES IN CHARNWOOD SCRUTINY PANEL

REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2005

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A Study of Parking Issues in Charnwood
Report of the Scrutiny Panel – September 2005

Introduction and Terms of Reference

The Panel comprised Councillors Slater (Chair), Bryant*, Edwards, Lewis, Pacey and Yardley. (* following Cllr Bryant's appointment to the Cabinet in May 2005 he did not attend Panel meetings).

The Panel was established, on a task and finish basis, to:

1. Examine the Borough Council's approach to and policies for providing off street parking facilities for motor vehicles in Charnwood, in particular with regard to;
 - a. Council owned Car Parks;
 - b. Problems specific to Loughborough.
2. Consider if the service provided by the Council is that which is required by users and stakeholders?
3. Consider what effect the decriminalisation of parking might have on on-street parking generally and the implications for off-street parking.

These terms of reference were agreed by the Investigation and Review Scrutiny Committee (I&RSC) on 7th April 2005 and are included at Annexe B.

Material Considered by the Panel

Response to the questionnaire survey of car park users in Loughborough
Site visit to Northampton Borough Council
Responses to the questionnaire survey of Parish and Town Councils
Briefings on the planning and transport policy contexts for parking
Briefing paper on the Borough Council's off-street parking service
Briefings on progress on and implications of de-criminalised parking arrangements
Notes from attendance of a meeting of the Loughborough Chamber of Trade
Decriminalised Parking Enforcement – Preliminary Study 2005
Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands (RSSB)

Witnesses

The Panel spoke with the following witnesses to obtain their opinion:

Borough Council officers: K. Biddulph, T. Herrington, J. Hale, B Hayes.

Representatives of the Chamber of Trade, the Market Traders Federation, the Charnwood Disability Forum and Transport 2000. Officers of Northampton Borough Council.

Supporting Information

The information upon which this report is based is collated with the record of the Panels' deliberations and is available as a separate supporting information pack.

The Report

This report was drafted by the Panel and supporting officers based on the notes taken of discussions at meetings of the Panel, and was agreed by the Panel at its final meeting on 5th September 2005.

The Panel found the documentary evidence, survey findings and witnesses' opinions invaluable in addressing its agreed terms of reference. The Panel would like to express its thanks to all who participated in and supported its work.

Background

The provision and management of car parking is an important matter of public interest with direct implications for the social, economic and environmental condition of the Borough and for those who live and work in Charnwood.

Parking is provided and managed by a number of agencies and interests:

- On street parking – controlled through Traffic Regulation Orders by the County Council as Highway Authority, with enforcement currently through the Police Traffic Warden Service (enforcement responsibilities are to transfer to local authorities in 2007 under the "de-criminalisation of parking" process – see below).
- Residents Only Parking Schemes – as above, although the Borough Council provides an agency service to the County Council for the issue of resident's permits.
- Public Off – street parking - there are a range of suppliers of off street parking sites for public use including the private sector, some parish and town councils and the Borough Council (a list of Borough Council off street car parks is attached as Annexe A).

In accordance with its terms of reference the Panel has principally considered the off-street parking services supplied by this Council. In doing that it has considered the views of Parish and Town Council's, some of which operate car parks in their own right or have Borough Council operated car parks. However, the Panel has recognised and taken note of the relationship between off-street parking and on-street provision, which often cropped up in the evidence considered. In particular, that relationship is an important factor in the proposals being considered by the County and District Councils to deal with the forthcoming move of on street

parking enforcement to local authority control (rather than through the Police Traffic Warden Service).

The Car Park Service

The Panel received a detailed briefing paper on the Council's parking service covering the following aspects:

The number of spaces at each site, including the number of spaces for people with disabilities – how many were paid for, the current charging and enforcing regimes, methods of payment, the mechanism for setting charges and income and expenditure analysis.

The Car Park Team consists of the following staff:

- Car Parks manager
- Car Parks Supervisor
- 2 Administrative Assistants
- 3 Car park Wardens

The financial position of the car park service in 2004/5 was as follows:

	£
Capital Charges	133,322.18
Support Service recharges	138,262.04
Other Expenditure	258,472.93
Total Expenditure	530,057.15
Income	787,176.36
Net Income	257,119.21

Annexe A provides details of Borough Council car parking sites in Loughborough and other towns and villages in the Borough.

The Panel's Approach to the Study

The Panel employed a range of research techniques to gather material to inform its review. These included:

1. Officers briefings to the Panel.
2. Briefing papers.
3. Four interviews with key interest groups.
4. Postal questionnaire survey of the views of Parish and Town Councils
5. A structured face to face questionnaire survey of 520+ users of Borough Council operated car parks in Loughborough.
6. Attendance by representatives of the Panel at a Loughborough Chamber of Trade meeting.
7. Visit to Northampton Borough Council where a car park has been converted from pay and display to pay on exit.

Term of Reference 1 & 2 – Borough Council Off – street parking services

Annexe A gives a list of Borough Council operated car parks. It should be noted that charging applies only to car parks in Loughborough.

Policy context

The Panel is aware that the overall approach adopted on parking needs to match the policy objectives established in approved guidance, in particular the Regional Planning Strategy, the Local Transport Plans and the Local Development Plan. In that context a balance has to be found between seemingly competing policy objectives in national, regional and local guidance to develop land use and transport solutions that are sustainable and integrated, with the aim of more people using public transport, walking and cycling, while at the same time sustain and enhance economic performance, including the viability and vitality of the town and village centres.

In addressing these competing issues convenient and secure car parking coupled with effective public transport has an important role in ensuring retention of spending power within the local economy. In sustainability terms that should reduce longer distance shopping trips and so the reduce the environmental impact of traffic in already congested shopping locations. In these terms the Panel saw the provision of sufficient, quality parking facilities as integral to the viability of town and village centres. The studies by Atkins for the Loughborough Town Centre Master Plan and the separate study of strategic car parking provision were welcomed by the Panel as informing the longer term approach to parking in Loughborough within the wider context of securing the future of the town centre.

The Panel noted that similar issues albeit on a smaller scale would also be of concern to towns such as Syston, Thurmaston and Shepshed and to other village centres. Here there was a need to provide adequate parking for both shoppers and workers as well as linking these facilities to public transport services for longer journeys. The Borough Council, in partnership with Town and Parish Councils and the County Council, had contributions to make in addressing priority needs at some of these locations, as well as taking a leading role in Loughborough.

The Panel also recognised the inter-relationship between approaches to on and off street parking and their respective charging and enforcement regimes. The approach to charging is recognised as a way of requiring users to pay directly for the parking service but is also used as a means of influencing car use habits to support the desirable goal of reducing environmental damage caused by traffic. The Panel recognised that national and regional policy was an important influence in devising charging policies. The evidence considered by the Panel suggested local concerns about the degree to which charging policies were being used to support the local economy when the quality of public transport services were not seen as sufficient to offer a real alternative to the car for many people.

Evidence to the Panel did not suggest significant objection to the principle of payment for car parking in Loughborough where it is well established. It is likely that view would not be shared in other towns and villages where free parking is seen as a

key factor in maintaining trade for local services and shops. However, there was concern about the structure of charges and the method of payment currently employed in Loughborough.

Summary of Evidence Gathered by the Panel

Stakeholder Interviews

The Panel held interviews with representatives of the Loughborough Chamber of Trade, Market Traders Federation, Transport 2000 and the Charnwood Disability Forum. From those interviews the following themes emerged:

1. The degree of balance that had been achieved between often contradictory pressures of economic prosperity, reducing environmental impact and ease of access to services and facilities.
2. Concerns about the lack of effective enforcement of on-street parking controls and traffic regulations.
3. Charging structures and alternatives to the current Pay and Display system which was seen as inconvenient and unpopular, particularly following the use of Pay on Exit at the Rushes.
4. Wider promotion of pre-payment options.
5. The amount of parking in Loughborough appeared to be adequate considering all providers and current locations, however the strategic review by Atkins would consider the longer term needs and potential new sites should some existing car parks be redeveloped.
6. Parking provision and management should be part of an integrated approach to supporting viable, quality town and village centre services alongside facilities for walkers, cyclists and public transport users.
7. The importance of convenient parking provision for those with mobility problems particularly with an aging population. It was pointed out that those most likely to be caught for fixed penalty charges by overstaying are those with least control over the timing of their movements - the elderly, disabled and carers, including young mothers.
8. Large scale park and ride was not seen as viable for Loughborough.
9. The Market Traders raised particular parking needs of traders for convenient parking for their vehicles on market days.
10. There was a need for improved information to be available about the location of car parks, charging regimes and opportunities for pre-payment/permit purchase etc.

Parish and Town Council Comments

All Town and Parish Council's were invited to respond to a short questionnaire. 11 responses were received and all were considered individually by the Panel. Copies were also forwarded to the Highway Authority for its attention, as a number of issues raised fell into its remit. Specific issues of concern to the Borough Council were drawn to the attention of relevant services for consideration. For instance, the

Panel has been advised that concerns expressed by Sileby Parish Council about the condition of the Borough Council car park in the village will be addressed through a condition survey of that car park.

Copies of the responses are included in the information pack supporting this report.

The survey of Parish and Town Council's did not indicate any fundamental problems with Borough Council managed car parks outside Loughborough.

Most of the concerns related to problems arising from on-street parking and the lack of enforcement of on-street traffic regulations (a strong theme emerging from other evidence, for instance regarding the lack of enforcement of residents only parking in Loughborough). However, from these responses there appears to be support for a more proactive enforcement regime. The Panel recognised that such a regime could increase demand for off-street provision. In some towns and villages outside Loughborough this could exacerbate the pressure on existing provision (for instance at Syston). While enforcement is not currently a Borough Council responsibility this issue is relevant to the developing proposals for decriminalised parking enforcement. The Panel identified the introduction of decriminalised parking as an opportunity to introduce a more effective enforcement system.

The Panel also viewed a pay on entry parking system introduced at the Wanlip car park serving Watermead Country Park and observed the on-street parking problems caused due to visitors not wishing to pay the £1 flat fee. The Panel is aware of similar problems at Newtown Linford where a lack of enforcement of on-street parking restrictions is exploited by those not prepared to pay the car park fee. Not only can this cause obstruction but also damage to grass verges etc, for instance on Granite Way, Mountsorrel where people park to attend the Quorn Car Boot Sales . The Panel regarded this as further indication of problems with enforcement and a need for a proactive targeting of "hot-spots".

The last study into parking provision in towns and villages outside Loughborough was in 1993 and that recognised the following parishes as being in need of additional general parking; Anstey, Barkby, Hathern, Mountsorrel, Rothley, Sileby, Syston, Thurmaston and Woodhouse Eaves. That informed the Boroughwide Local Plan Policy TR120:

"Planning permission will be granted for new public off street parking serving district and local centres where parking is for short term and necessary to safeguard the vitality of district and local centres. The scale of provision will depend upon the accessibility of a centre in terms of bus, rail, cycling and walking."

The Panel considers that it is timely to commission, with the County Council, a new study to assess parking needs outside Loughborough given the length of time since the previous study. This would also link to the move to decriminalised parking enforcement and compliment the study to be undertaken by Atkins on strategic parking provision in Loughborough. It will also assist in the design and introduction of a more effective approach to parking enforcement.

The Panel visited the car park serving Syston Railway Station because of the interest in the potential of linking car parking to public transport, either rail or bus. It was noted that a recent expansion of the car park at Syston station was already well used and there was further potential of developing the parking at Loughborough, Barrow, Sileby and Syston Stations to promote short car journeys to these stations, with car users then switching to rail. Similar potential might also arise if there were stronger links between car parks and bus services in locations not served by rail. The Panel noted the potential role of such mini-transport hubs in meeting local parking needs and medium/longer distance travel to larger towns.

Loughborough Chamber of Trade – Summary Comments

Representatives of the Panel were invited to a meeting of the Loughborough Chamber of Trade to hear their views on parking. In summary, the key points raised were:

- Promote free parking for the first two hours to match the Rushes offering – this could be applied at particular times such as prior to Christmas etc
- Move to Pay on Exit – it was accepted this might not be possible at all sites
- Simplify the charging regime – the cross over from day time to evening charging was confusing.
- The two hour payment period was seen as major disincentive to retaining shoppers in the town – people timed their length of stay around the parking tariffs – two hour charge in particular should be reviewed.
- Should couple car park promotions with town centre events in a package – for instance linked to late night shopping, specialist markets etc
- Consider possibility of Market Traders having a concessionary rate for using the Southfield Road car park on Thursdays and Saturdays – this also needed to provide for larger vehicles that occupied two regular parking slots.
- Reconsideration of the extent of provision for people with disabilities (this seemed to relate to combination of on street and off street provision) and provision of additional parking for taxis and accessible locations (top of Baxter Gate was mentioned specifically).
- It was accepted that different regimes might apply at different car parks depending on demand, length of stay etc.
- Support for a wider review of the extent of car parking provision.

User satisfaction Questionnaire feedback

The Borough Council commissioned a user satisfaction survey of car park users in Loughborough. The survey was designed to: meet the requirements of the Car Parks Service to carry out periodic consultation with users of facilities to inform service development; and to provide data to the Panel on the views of a cross section of users of the current service.

The face to face survey was carried out from July 25th – August 8th (inclusive) using a market research company to carry out the interviews. In total 526 completed

questionnaires were achieved against a target sample of 500 split across Loughborough car parks as follows:

Beehive Lane	118
Browns Lane	144
Granby Street	98
Macaulay House Offices	28
Pinfold Gate	89
Southfields Rd	29
Southfields Office	20

The following summarises key results from the survey:

1. Most car park users (nearly 90%) had travelled less than 10 miles and 53% of those interviewed had travelled 5 miles or less.
2. The main reasons people had chosen to use the car park at which they were interviewed were "closeness" and "convenience" (82.6%) – "safety and security" and "cost of parking" were each chosen by 1.8% of respondents.
3. Over half those interviewed were not aware of the opening times of the car park they had used.
4. When asked about the facilities provided at car parks over 70% selected "level of lighting", "security patrol", and "CCTV" as "very important". The fourth highest ranked facility, in terms of being "very important" was "space availability" (70%).
5. "Payment method", "signage" were regarded as "very important" by less than 20% of respondents while "child /parent spaces" and "disabled spaces" were regarded as "very important" by less than 30% of respondents.
6. Taking the "very important" and "fairly important" results together only two of the facilities mentioned scored less than 70%. These were "payment method" and "child /parent spaces".
7. When asked about the quality of facilities the "very good/good" responses far out weighed the "poor/very poor" response for all the facilities mentioned with the exception of "cleansing". Over 30% of those interviewed considered "cleansing" to be "poor/very poor" with less than 5% saying it was "good/very good". Over 70% considered that "space availability", "accessibility" and "size of spaces" were "good/very good".
8. There is a general lack of support for higher charges to fund improvements. However, there is also a reasonable level of satisfaction with the status quo. The areas of potential improvement receiving the least negative responses (just under 50% said "no" to paying higher charges in these cases) were "better lighting", "more security patrols" and "more CCTV surveillance".
9. When asked about their willingness to pay higher charges for improvements to "different payment method" over 50% indicated they would not be willing to do so and over 30% stated that they were happy with current arrangements. When asked specifically about introduction of "Pay on Exit", 44.1% said they would "welcome it" while 39.4% indicated a

preference "to stay with the current system". If "Pay on Exit" caused higher charges, 39.1% of those who indicated they would "welcome it" would still be supportive while 51.9% would change from their initial view.

10. When asked about the purpose of the respondent's visits nearly 50% indicated that it was shopping related (supermarket (1.6%), other shops (38.3%) and market (10.3%)), 26.5% was leisure related and 9.5% was for work.
11. When asked about overall satisfaction 86.5% responded that they were either "very satisfied" (20.3%) or "satisfied" (66.2%). 4.3% answered that they were "dissatisfied/very dissatisfied".

Summary analysis of the survey results is attached at Annexe C.

Visit to Northampton

Members of the Panel visited the Mayorhold multi-storey car park in Northampton and spoke to car parks staff of Northampton Borough Council. The Mayorhold car park was of particular interest as it has fairly recently been converted to "Pay on Foot" rather than Pay and Display, which remained the system at all other Northampton Borough Council operated car parks.

The car park had re-opened in November 2004 following a major refurbishment (£3.1 m) which had seen it closed from the previous March. The car park offered 1080 spaces (incl 36 for disabled parking) between 8 am and 8 pm 7 days a week and had a staff presence through out this time.

The Car Park was accredited to the "Park Mark" security standard.

Summary of key points

- Introducing Pay on Foot at this site was carried out as part of the refurbishment and as a pilot prior to consideration for other locations (Northampton has 23 Council managed car parks serving the town centre).
- The pilot and refurbishment were part of a wider plan for car parking related to forthcoming town centre redevelopments that would affect other car parking sites.
- Income figures were not available but would be supplied – income was rising since reopening in November.
- The car park was promoted as a Shoppers Car park and so season ticket holders were not allowed to use it.
- There were 4 pay stations that all provided change and debit/credit card options – these also accepted and could be used to top up pre-pay cards but pre-pay cards had not been introduced yet.
- Although the Pay on Foot barriers and ticket machines could be controlled from a remote control room and so have no staff permanently on site, it was the Northampton view that a staff presence was needed to support users and resolve problems quickly. In this role staff were focusing on

customer service rather than enforcement. Staffing levels at the car park were 1.5 fte seven days per week.

- There were 3 entrance lanes and 4 exit lanes – Northampton considered that there was little congestion and less than prior to the refurbishment. There had been no queuing to exit. The exits feed into a one way traffic system with traffic light control upstream which broke up the main traffic flows.
- Only 8 Penalty Charge Notices had been issued since re-opening and those had been for “out of bay parking”. The decline in income from Penalty Charges had been identified at the feasibility stage and that would take time to recoup. Northampton stated that evidence from elsewhere showed that Pay On Foot led to higher usage in the longer term.
- The “grace time”, from paying to leaving the car park, could be adjusted by staff very easily should there be a problem. Similarly the payment tariff could be adjusted from the system control point very easily – for instance the six Thursday prior to last Christmas no fees had been levied, to support late night shopping.
- A full survey of a car parking site to establish how it might operate with Pay on Foot would be needed and the equipment suppliers would assist with that. This would also take into consideration the relationship between a car park and the prevailing traffic system.
- Pre-payment cards could be used and could be customised for different user groups, with top up was possible through the pay stations - Northampton had not introduced this yet.
- Separate provision adjacent to the multi-storey car park was set aside for market traders vehicles – this used a Pay and Display system and offered a preferential rate to traders. Tickets could only be purchased for this area for a limited period in the morning.
- The Northampton Car Park Service currently managed off street parking for the Borough and on street for the County (on an Agency arrangement). Under decriminalisation car parking services were to transfer to the County Council with income from parking being shared between the two authorities – the Borough would pay a management fee to the County. Off street car park sites would remain in the ownership of the Borough.

Atkins Consultancy

Atkins has been commissioned to produce a Town Centre Master Plan for Loughborough. As part of that work they will identify the location of car parking and the number of spaces required.

Atkins has produced a Strategic Framework which has been considered by the Council's Cabinet and Scrutiny process. That Strategic Framework identifies a number of themes, several of which have relevance for car parking.

1. **A More Accessible Town** – Atkins recommend that surface car parking within the town centre should be rationalised whilst ensuring adequate safe car parking at strategic points around the town centre.
2. **A Quality Place** – As part of this theme Atkins recommend that safety should be ensured through improved car park security.
3. **Ease of Movement** – Atkins recommend that additional strategic car parks should be provided, located within close walking distance of the town centre on major approaches to the town.

Atkins Baseline Analysis identified a large number of small and fragmented car parks. The Strategic Framework identifies the potential to rationalise parking provision and identify larger strategic car parks at key access points to the town centre. These include:

- Beehive Lane
- Carillon Centre
- Rushes Centre
- Former Hospital Site
- Browns Lane Leisure Centre

The report also refers to the possibility of dual use of other car parks in the town, e.g., Sainsbury.

When Cabinet approved the sale of part of the Pinfold Gate surface car park for the construction of the new Loughborough Magistrates Court, they resolved:

“that before construction of the Inner Relief Road commences, a new strategy for future car parking needs be produced to inform strategic needs”.

Atkins was commissioned to produce this further, more detailed study. It has been asked to complete this study in the same timeframe as the work on the Town Centre Master plan. This is expected to be complete by March 2006.

The scope of the additional study is as follows:

1. Recommend a consistent and coherent policy framework for the provision and management of car parking in and around Loughborough Town Centre.
2. Review the scale, location and quality of existing on and off street vehicle parking and recommend how this provision could be rationalised and improved.
3. Estimate the scale of any additional car parking provision likely to be needed to serve Loughborough Town Centre over the period to 2016.
4. Identify the form and most suitable locations for any additional on and off street parking to meet the estimated additional needs having regard to the scope for greater use of on street spaces arising from the implementation of decriminalised parking enforcement and residents preference parking schemes.
5. Identify the appropriate balance between short and long stay provision and the optimal locations for each time of car parking.

6. Provide guidelines on a charging policy to help deliver the proposed framework.
7. Provide guidelines on the effective management and enforcement of parking to help deliver the proposed framework.
8. Identify measures to improve public knowledge of parking and access to it.
9. Obtain the views and opinions of key stakeholders on local requirements and the potential impacts of the proposed policy framework.
10. Set out a costed programme for the implementation of any new parking provision and related measures recommended in the study.

Term of Reference 3 – Decriminalisation of parking

The responsibility for enforcing parking restrictions is due to transfer from the Police to Local Authorities by spring 2007.

Initially, the introduction locally of the new system will be the responsibility of Leicestershire County Council using a partnership approach with district councils. The primary issue being addressed is the potential costs of setting up the system, and consideration of those costs being recouped from fines. Discussions between the County Council and District Councils in recent months are continuing.

The Panel was informed that there are two options under consideration. The first is for the County Council to operate an enforcement system across the whole of Leicestershire with it levying a 5% charge on district council off street parking income to off set projected losses on the on street enforcement service. The difficulty with this option, besides the financial modelling, is that it would solely be a parking enforcement service whereas districts are interested in staff taking wider ambassadorial duties to report graffiti or litter etc. The second option is for there to be two enforcement groups: Charnwood and Northwest Leicestershire and the other districts in the County working together. These would offer a generic patrol function.

Leicestershire County Council and the District Councils are still negotiating on a preferred solution based on financial modelling of ticket enforcement and set up costs etc. Once those decisions had been made further consideration would need to be given to who enforces the parking restrictions, who would collect the fines and where that money would be utilised. It was estimated that from the point of agreement it would take a further 12 months before implementation.

Conclusions

1. The adequacy of parking (both on and off street) is a concern for many across the Borough. That needed to cater for short term users but also needed to cater for the needs for longer term day time parking for people working in town and village centres. In seeking views of parish and town councils there were concerns about specific parking problems, highways issues and lack of enforcement. The approach to be taken to decriminalisation of parking is important to these concerns. Alongside that though the Panel noted that the last review of parking provision outside

Loughborough was carried out in 1993. Taking these elements together it is the Panel's view that the implementation of the agreed solution to decriminalised parking would be better informed if an up to date assessment of parking capacity (to include cars, cycles and motor cycles) outside Loughborough was available, when implementation in Charnwood is being planned. Such a study should also inform land use planning processes and consideration of opportunities for linking parking and public transport provision. The Panel notes that commissioning such a study ought to be joint exercise between the County Council and the Borough Council with significant input by town and parish councils.

2. The Panel has concluded that due to the continuing negotiations between the County and district councils on an agreed approach to decriminalisation of parking it is not in a position to fully address the third element of its terms of reference. The Panel has been briefed on the complex discussions that are continuing and has taken into account the effects of a decriminalised regime in its recommendations. It is the Panel's view that if Charnwood Borough Council has a direct involvement in managing decriminalised parking then a further Panel should be established in the future to review those arrangements.
3. An important theme identified by the Panel concerned the lack of effective enforcement over a range of on-street parking and traffic related problems. The Panel considers the switch to decriminalised parking as a major opportunity to re-introduce effective enforcement services and this needs to be fully addressed in the operational arrangements for the new decriminalised service.
4. The Panel notes that the Atkins Study has been commissioned to look at the longer term strategic issues of parking provision in Loughborough. Based on the evidence it has considered, the Panel agrees that there is a need for a clearer strategic approach to providing convenient, safe and cost effective parking that will support the development of the Town Centre and meet the needs of current and new users. The Panel asks that this report and recommendations are taken fully into account in the Atkins Study.
5. The Panel notes that great weight can be attached to the importance of parking for ensuring viable town and village centres. While the Panel accepts that it is an important factor it is only one of a number of factors that together contribute to the amount of trade and number of visits that occur. The Panel is concerned that expectations remain realistic about how changes in car parking provision or policy alone might have wider beneficial effects on commerce. However, there appear to be real opportunities for joint working between Councils and local business interests to promote town and village centres more effectively and that parking facilities can *make positive contributions to that wider agenda.*
6. The Panel considers that the overall degree of satisfaction with the current parking facilities in Loughborough, as expressed in the survey, is to be commended. There is little concern with the number of spaces available and there is realism about the need for town centre parking to be paid for. However, while the overall picture is pleasing there are always

opportunities for further improvement and key areas identified through the Panel's work are:

- a. Improving the level of cleanliness in our car parks.
- b. Improving reassurance to users about security and consider further improving security provision (it is noted though that the Beehive Lane Car Park is accredited as a secure car park and that improvements to CCTV at Browns Lane are planned).
- c. That the Council seeks to achieve the "Park Mark" security standard at all car parks that can qualify for the standard and as the standard to be met in any new car park provision.
- d. Improving the information available about Council car parks, charges, signage, facilities and a more proactive approach to marketing these services. This could be coupled with more publicity about the steps already taken to safeguard security (see b. above). This should also encompass improved marketing of the existing arrangements for season tickets and pre-payment systems.
- e. Reviewing the current charging tariffs for the 2 hour period, in that this is seen as a constraint on the amount of time people will spend in the town. Consideration should be given to extending the time frame for this charging period, for instance to three hours.
- f. Explore more innovative charging regimes, for instance, to offer free parking to support late night shopping or when other town centre events are taking place. This should include investigation of more flexible approaches supporting those with mobility difficulties but who do not qualify for a Blue Badge and application of a "grace period" on the expiry of parking tickets. The Panel noted the discount system offered at The Rushes - 2 hours free parking when spending above a defined amount but accepts that such a scheme would require a Pay on Exit system to be available.
- g. There is support in the survey findings for considering a move from Pay and Display to Pay on Exit. The visit to Northampton, and experience at the Rushes car park, indicates to the Panel that this system is a much more flexible system for car park users and for the operator and also enables the car park service to move away from a primarily enforcement role to one of customer service. The Panel suggests that a detailed feasibility study is commissioned to assess the cost/benefit and equalities implications and practical operational issues of introducing Pay on Exit at Beehive Lane and Browns Lane Car Parks as potential pilot sites. The Panel considers that this should be done in parallel with the Atkins Study so that the potential of adopting Pay on Exit as the preferred payment system can be fully assessed as part of the Council's strategic approach to car parking provision.
- h. The Panel received representations about the particular issues affecting market traders. These cover two issues; the availability on market days of convenient, reserved parking for traders vehicles; and secondly the possibility of some form of discounted parking fee, possibly paid with the stall rent fee, to support/encourage traders attendance. The Panel noted that at Northampton special provision

was made for market traders and considers that a case could be made for a similar approach in Loughborough. The number of suitable sites is very limited with perhaps the Southfield Road/Crown House Car Park offering the best current option while the operation of any discount would need to be explored between the Markets and Car parks Services. Again Atkins should be asked to give full consideration to this in their study.

7. The Panel welcomed the Chamber of Trade's desire to work closely with the Borough Council to implement initiatives to boost Loughborough's trading position in the lead up to this Christmas, for instance free parking coupled with late night shopping. Cabinet is recommended to ensure action is taken as a matter of urgency to follow this up.

Recommendations

1. That the Investigation and Review Scrutiny Committee is recommended to add to its current work programme the establishment of a Panel to review implementation of the agreed option for decriminalised parking provided the agreed option includes a role for the Borough Council.
2. That a study to assess parking needs (to include cars, cycles and motor cycles) outside Loughborough is commissioned, jointly with the County Council, to complement the Atkins Study and to inform implementation plans for decriminalisation of parking, land use planning decisions and public transport planning. The study to include the concept of better linking of parking and public transport services.
3. That the Council uses its influence to ensure that the introduction of decriminalised parking is used to re-introduce effective enforcement through the operational arrangements for the new service.
4. That the findings of this review are taken into account fully in the Atkins Study of parking provision in Loughborough.
5. That there should be further joint working between Councils and local business interests to promote town and village centres more effectively and that integral to that should be innovative approaches to marketing parking facilities.
6. That the overall degree of satisfaction with the current parking facilities in Loughborough is to be commended but that the following improvement areas be acted upon speedily:
 - a. Improving the levels of cleanliness in our car parks.
 - b. Improving reassurance to users by publicising the security measures in place and, together with the Community Safety team, consider the feasibility of further improving security provision.
 - c. That the Council seeks to achieve the "Park Mark" security standard at all car parks that can currently qualify (Beehive Lane is already accredited) and as the standard to be met in any new car park provision.
 - d. Improve availability of information about Council car parks, charges, facilities and adopt a more proactive approach to marketing these

- services, including the existing arrangements for season tickets and pre-payment systems. Review current car park signage as part of this initiative.
- e. Review the current charging tariff for the "up to 2 hour period", for instance by extending the time period to three hours to encourage longer stays by shoppers and visitors to Loughborough.
 - f. Explore and implement more innovative charging regimes, for instance, to offer free parking to support late night shopping or when other town centre events are taking place. This should also include investigation of more flexible approaches supporting those with mobility difficulties, but who do not qualify for a Blue Badge, and application of a "grace period" on the expiry of parking tickets.
 - g. That a detailed feasibility study is commissioned to assess the cost/benefit and equalities implications and practical operational issues of introducing Pay on Exit at Beehive Lane and Browns Lane Car Parks as potential pilot sites. The Panel considers that this should be done in parallel with the Atkins Study (to be completed for March 2006) so that the potential of adopting Pay on Exit as the preferred payment system can be fully assessed as part of the Council's strategic approach to car parking provision.
 - h. That the Southfield Road/Crown House Car Park is made available to market traders for parking for a pilot period (including for Farmers and other specialist markets). That the Markets and Car Parks Services are asked to discuss with the Market Traders representatives other means of assisting the traders with parking for instance, pre-payment cards and/or discounted parking fees and report further with proposals to Cabinet.
 - i. That the parking needs of the market traders are taken into account in the Atkins Study.
7. That Cabinet takes urgent action, in conjunction with Loughborough Chamber of Trade, to implement parking related initiatives (for instance "d", "e" and "f" above) as part of a package to promote Loughborough's trading position in the lead up to this Christmas.

Annexe A- Borough Council Car parking in Charnwood

Loughborough Town Centre Car Parks

Car Park	No of Spaces total	No of Disabled Spaces	No of Parent/Baby Spaces
Beehive Lane	603	13	
Brown's Lane	192	7	
Pinfold Gate	92	2	3
Granby Street	202	25	4
Maculay House	42	14 (including 8 shop mobility spaces)	
Southfields Office	95	3	
Southfields Extension	45	1	

Car Parks-Villages

In addition to the car parking facilities offered in Loughborough Town Centre the Borough Council provide 'free parking' in the following locations:

- The Nook, Anstey
- High Street, Barrow upon Soar
- Three Crowns, Barrow upon Soar
- Leicester Road, Mountsorrel
- Station Road, Quorn
- Cross Green, Rothley
- King Street, Sileby
- Chapel Street, Syston
- Melton Road, Syston
- Main Street, Woodhouse Eaves

The table below gives information re the number of spaces at each location along with details as to whether facility is owned/leased by the Borough Council.

Car Park	Owned/Leaded	No of Spaces	No of disabled spaces
Anstey Car Park	Owned-CBC	68	2
Barrow Upon Soar - Three	Leased	17	1

Crowns			
Barrow Upon Soar - Station Car Park	Owned-CBC	34	1
Mountsorrel Car Park	Leased	35	2
Quorn Car Park	Leased	66	5
Rothley Car Park	Leased	34	1
Sileby Car Park	Owned-CBC	102	2
Syston-Chapel St	Owned-CBC	20	
*Syston-Melton Rd	Owned-CBC	65	3
Woodhouse Eaves Car Park	Leased	30	1

*Syston Town Council are responsible for the traffic management/enforcement in this Car Park and any income generated from parking penalties goes direct to the Town Council. The Borough Council are still responsible for maintenance/repair of this area.

Annexe B – Terms of Reference

Scrutiny Plan

A Study of Parking Issues in Charnwood

Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine the Borough Council's approach to and policies for providing off street parking facilities for motor vehicles in Charnwood, in particular with regard to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Council owned Car Parks; b. Problems specific to Loughborough. • Consider if the service provided by the Council is that which is required by users and stakeholders? • Consider what effect the decriminalisation of parking might have on on-street parking generally and the implications for off-street parking.
Witnesses Who?	<p>Car Park Officers and Wardens – Council owned Car Parks;</p> <p>Chief Executive – Decriminalisation of parking;</p> <p>Tony Herrington – Council's strategic view of transport issues;</p> <p>Representative of the Market Traders Association;</p> <p>Representative of the Chamber of Commerce;</p> <p>Representative of the Disability Forum;</p> <p>Representative of Transport 2000.</p>
Why?	<p>To understand the Council's policies and strategies.</p> <p>To obtain the views/ experiences of stakeholders of the Car parking facilities.</p>
Documents/evidence What?	<p>The Council's Car Parking Policies and Strategies;</p> <p>Current charging regime;</p> <p>Comparative charging regimes;</p> <p>Map based analysis of the number of Car parking sites, spaces and disabled spaces.</p> <p>An outline of the extent of public use off-street parking by other providers</p>
Why?	
Site visits Where? Why?	<p>To be determined during the Panel's consideration of the issues.</p>
Consultation/Research/ other methods	<p>Public consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper questionnaire available at Council owned

Why? What ? Who?	<p>Car Parks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council's website • Surveying Parish and Town Council's on their car parking provision.
Timescale for Review Including dates of future meetings of the Panel	<p>Dates of meetings to be agreed;</p> <p>Submit final report to the Investigation and Review Scrutiny Committee at its meeting to be held on 13th July 2005.</p>
Officer Support	<p>Assistant Chief Executive (Change Management) Committee Services Officer AN Other</p>
Conclusions and Recommendations	

Annexe C – Summary of Responses



Charnwood Borough Council
Car Park Exit Survey (2005)

Summary of Responses

Introduction

The purpose of this consultation was to provide the council with the views and ideas of service users to make service improvements where necessary, to inform future plans & decisions and to establish a baseline for an annual review of the car park service

Within this, three main issues were identified as needing consideration if the above was to be achieved:

- Current user satisfaction levels.
- Willingness to accept increased charges to fund service improvements.
- Support for pay-as-you-leave car parking.

Executive Summary

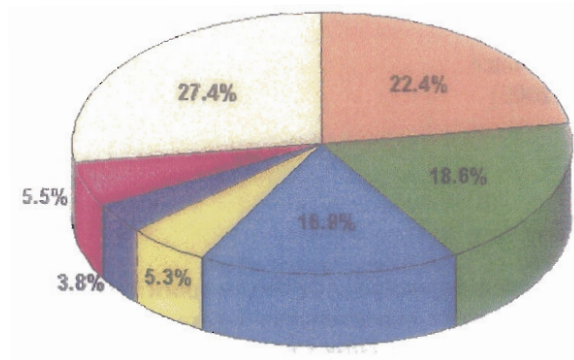
The data collection was carried out by Marketing Innovation on behalf of the council between July 25th – August 8th (inclusive).

A total of **526** Questionnaires were completed, surpassing the target of **500**.

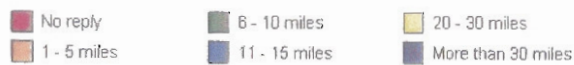
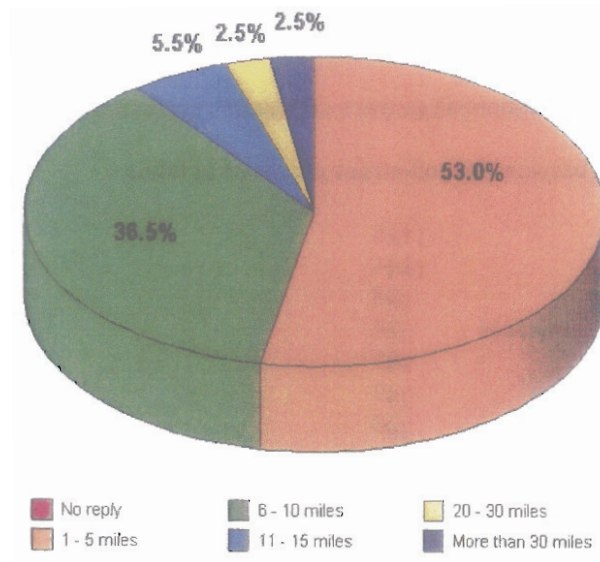
This was split between the off-street car parks as follows:

Beehive Lane	118
Browns Lane	144
Granby Street	98
Macaulay House Offices	28
Pinfold Gate	89
Southfields Rd	29
Southfields Office	20

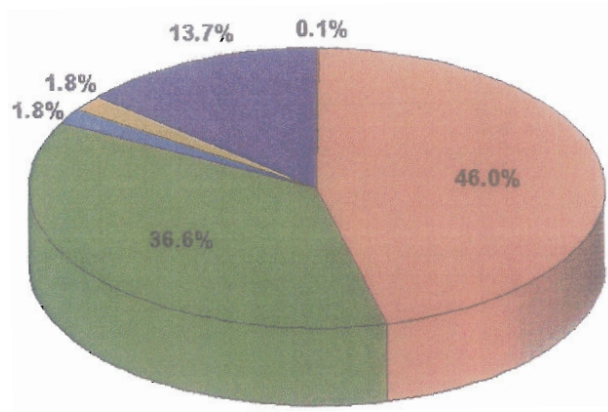
Q1 Location of Respondents when Questioned



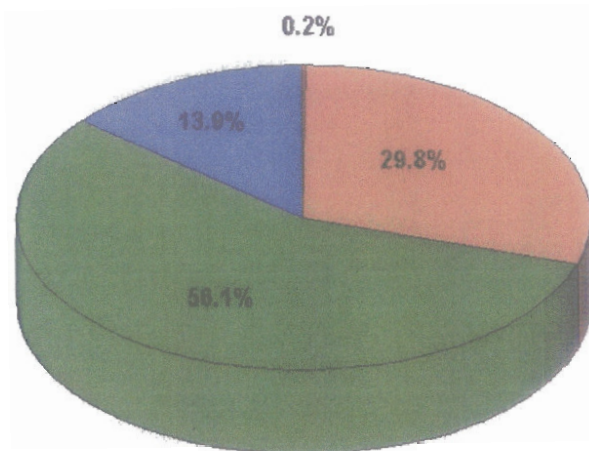
Q2 Distance travelled by Respondents



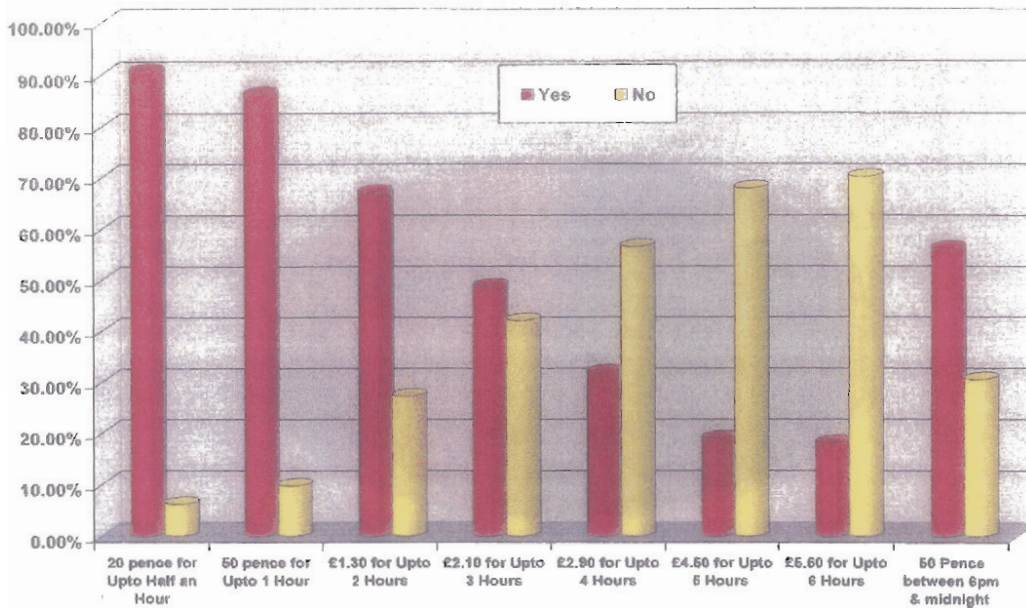
Q3 Reason for Choosing Car Park



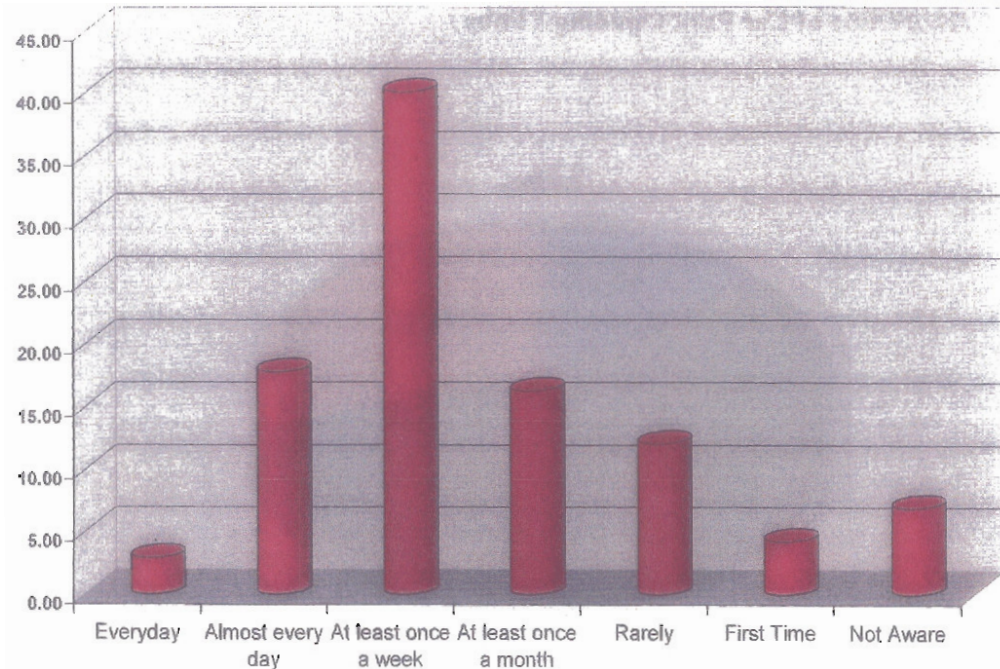
Q4 Awareness of Car Park Opening Times



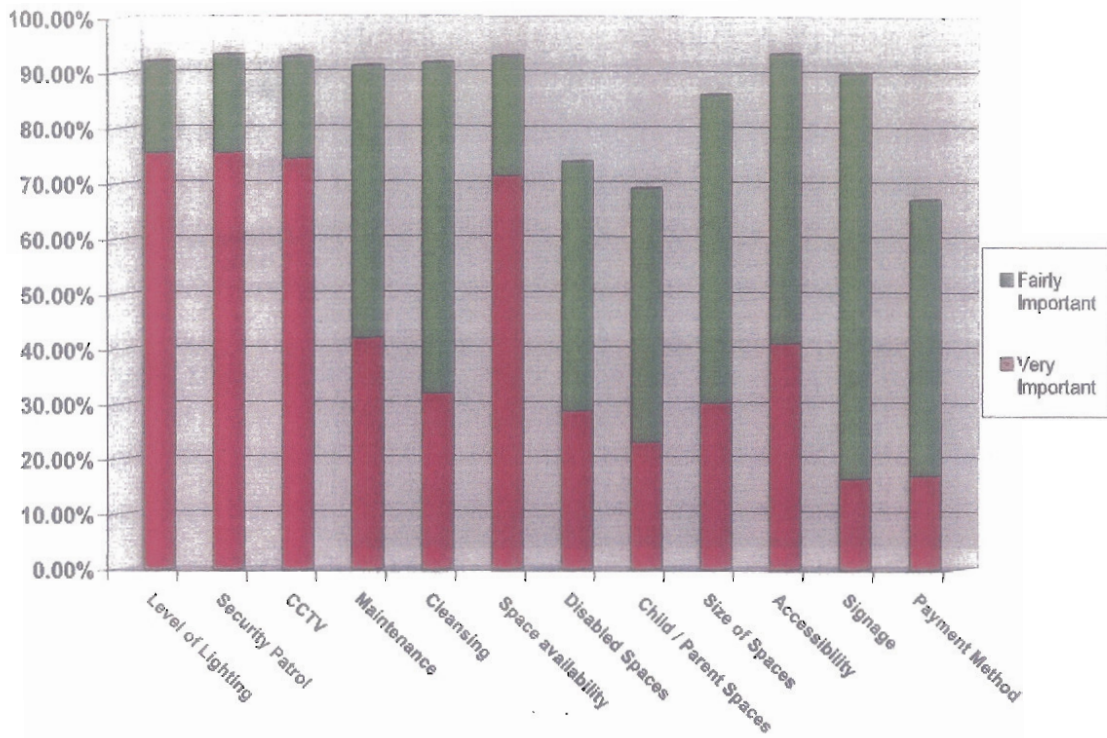
Q5 Value for Money



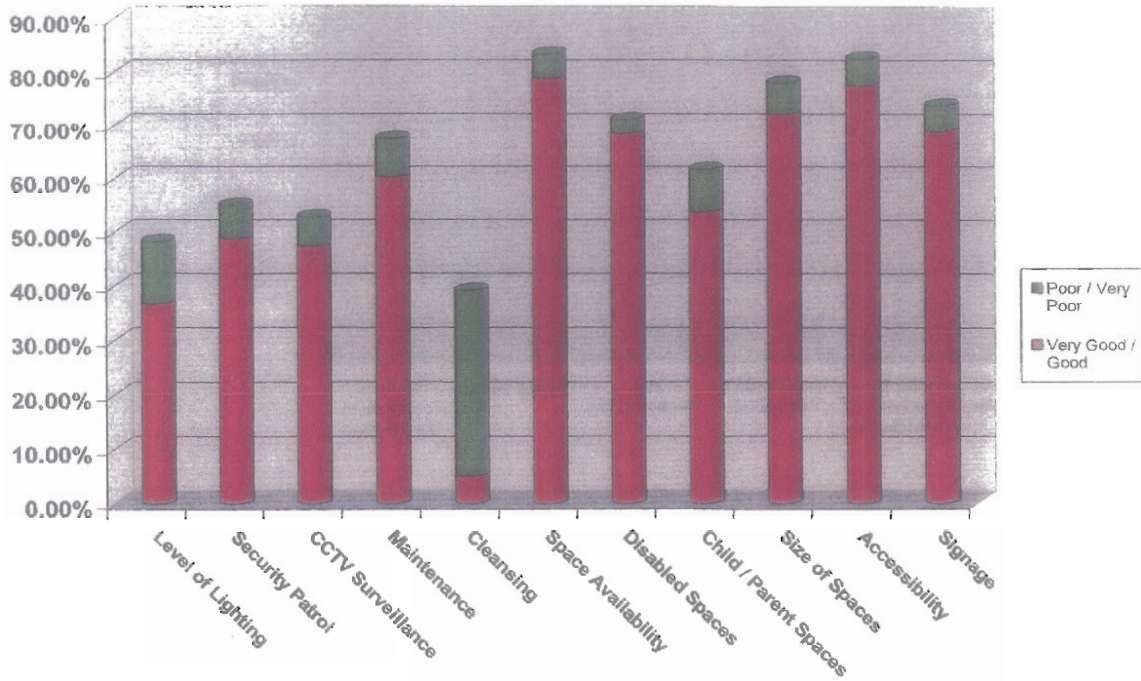
Q6 Frequency of Use - All Car Parks
(as percentages of total respondents)



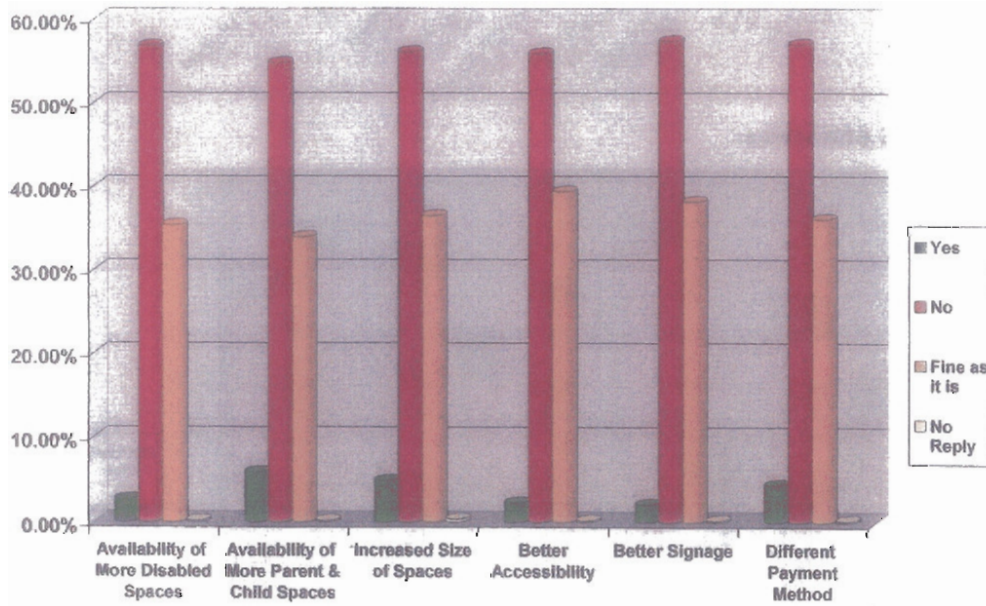
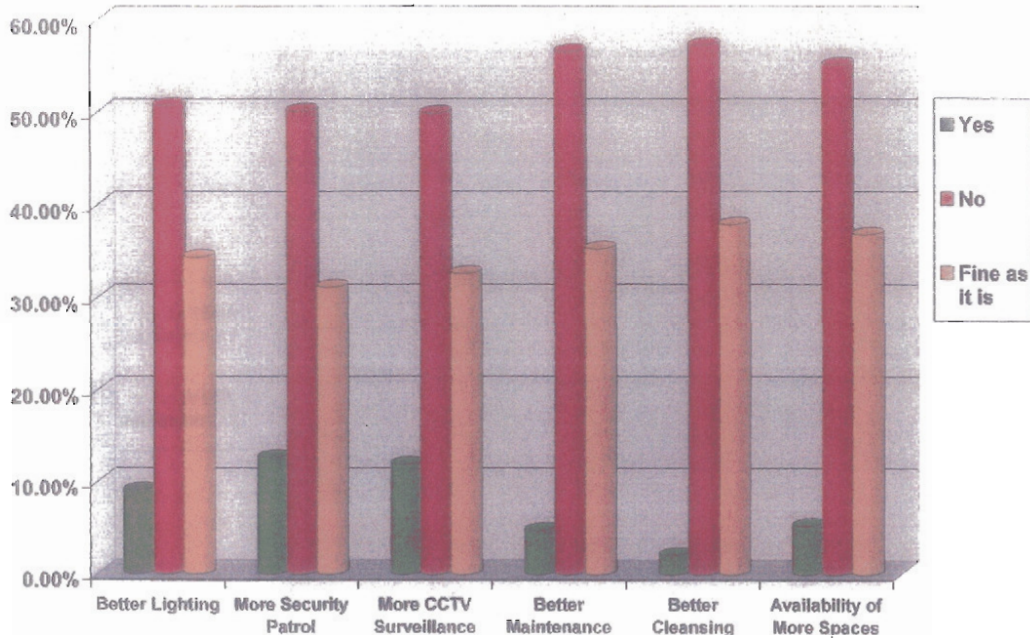
Q7 Importance of Facilities



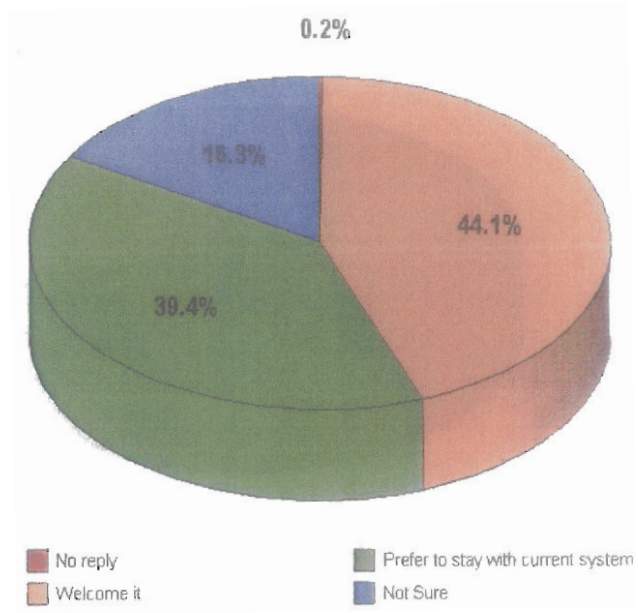
Q8 Quality of Services



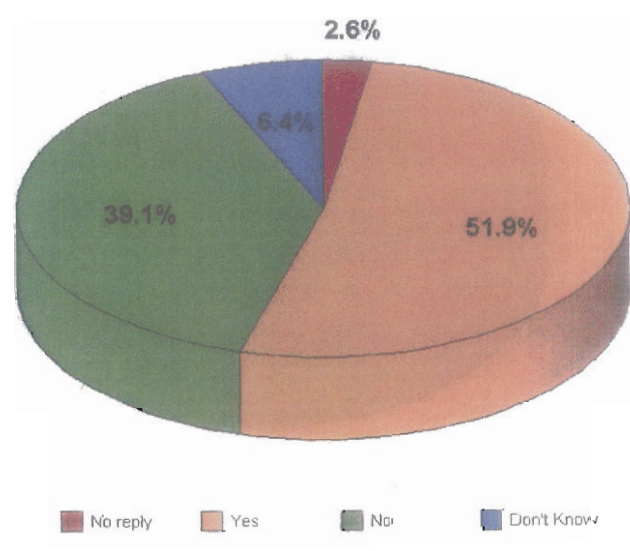
Q9 Willingness to Pay Higher Charges to Fund Improvements



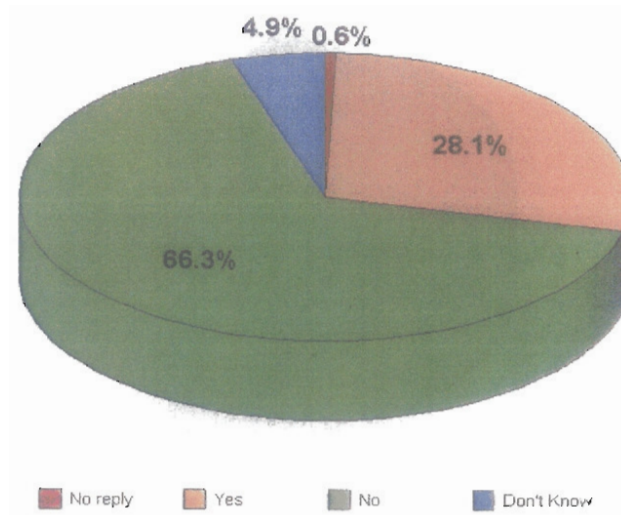
Q11 Level of Support for Introducing Pay on Exit – Initial Response



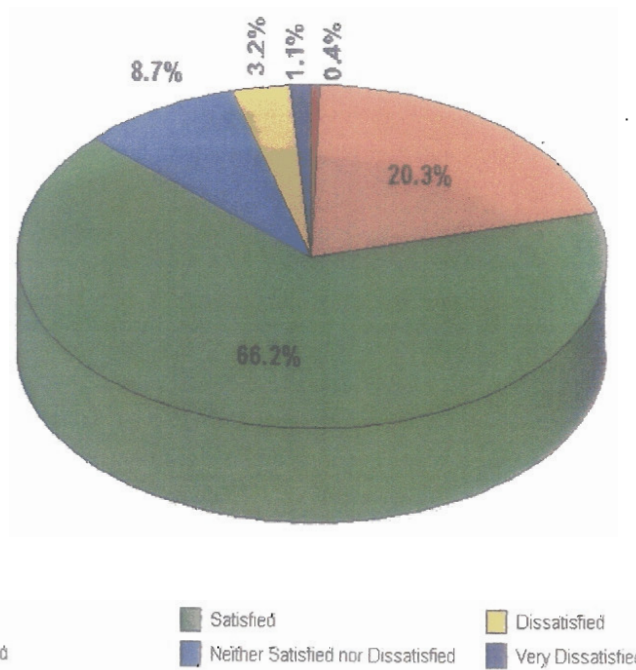
Q12 If you would welcome pay on exit: would you feel different if a feasibility study showed that it would lead to higher charges?



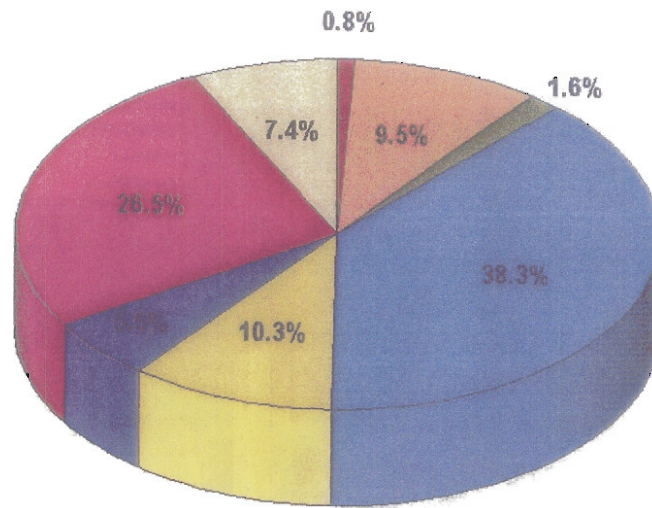
Q13 Level of Interest in Pre-purchasing Car Park Time



Q14 Overall Level of Satisfaction

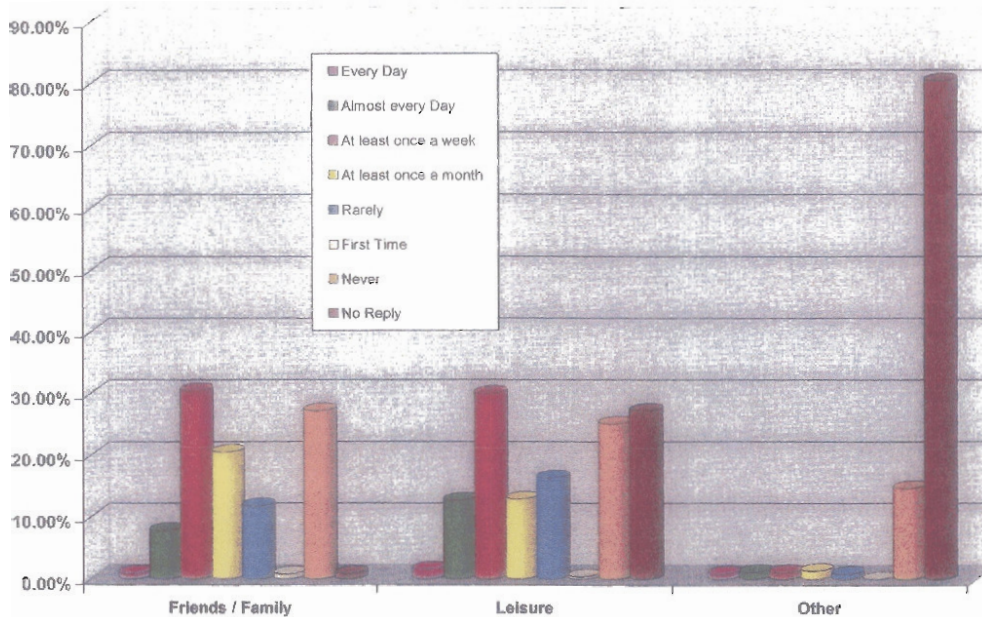
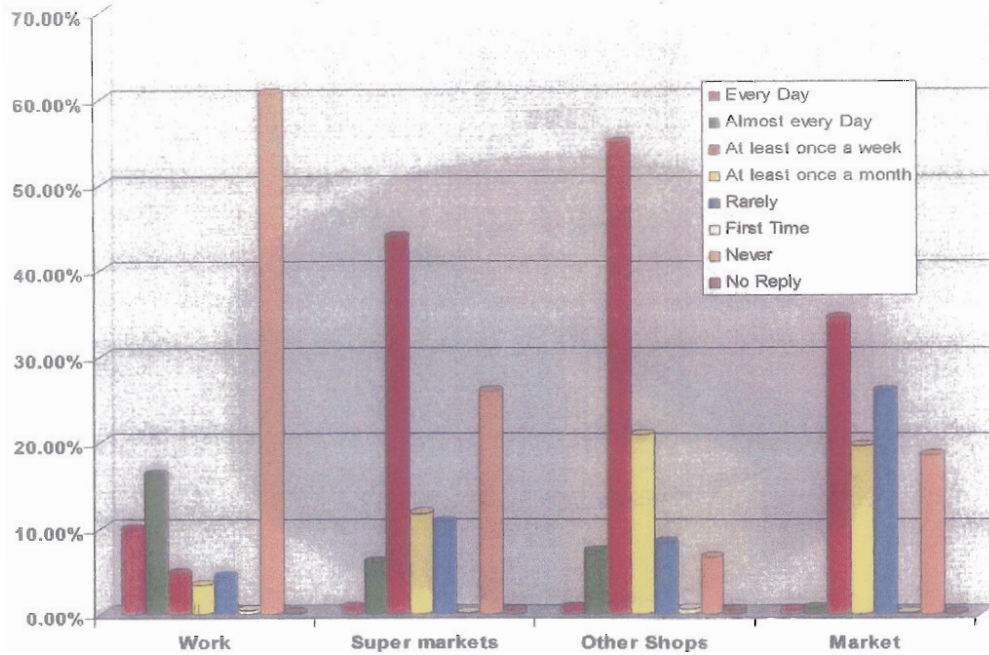


Q15 Purpose of Visit



- No reply
- Work
- Supermarket
- Other Shops
- Market
- Visiting Family / friends
- Leisure
- Other (please specify below)

Q16 Frequency of Visit for a Particular Purpose



Full Data

Q1 Name of car park where this questionnaire was completed:

No reply	0
Beehive Lane Multi-Storey	118 (22.4%)
Granby Street	98 (18.6%)
Pinfold Gate	89 (16.9%)
Macauley House Offices	28 (5.3%)
Southfields Office	20 (3.8%)
Southfields Rd	29 (5.5%)
Browns Lane	144 (27.4%)

Q2 How far have you travelled to get here?

No reply	0
1 - 5 miles	279 (53.0%)
6 - 10 miles	192 (36.5%)
11 - 15 miles	29 (5.5%)
20 - 30 miles	13 (2.5%)
More than 30 miles	13 (2.5%)

Q3 Why did you choose to park here?

No reply	1 (0.2%)
Closeness	335 (63.7%)
Convenience	267 (50.8%)
Safety & Security	13 (2.5%)
Cost of Parking	13 (2.5%)
Other (please specify)*	100 (19.0%)

Q4 Do you know what the opening times for this car park are?

No reply	1 (0.2%)
Yes	157 (29.8%)
No	295 (56.1%)
Not Sure	73 (13.9%)

Q5 Do you feel that the following charges are value for money?

Charge	Yes	No	Not Sure	No Reply
20 pence for Upto Half an Hour	90.7%	6.1%	3.0%	0.2%
50 pence for Upto 1 Hour	86.3%	9.7%	3.8%	0.2%
£1.30 for Upto 2 Hours	67.1%	27.2%	5.5%	0.2%
£2.10 for Upto 3 Hours	48.7%	42%	9.1%	0.2%

£2.90 for Upto 4 Hours	31.9%	56.5%	11.4%	0.2%
£4.50 for Upto 5 Hours	19%	67.9%	12.7%	0.4%
£5.50 for Upto 6 Hours	18.1%	70.2%	11.4%	0.4%
50 Pence between 6pm & midnight	56.1%	30.4%	12.5%	1%

Q6 How frequently are the car parks used?

	Beehive	Granby	Pinfold	Macauley	Southfield Offices	Southfield Lane	Browns Lane
Total	118	98	89	28	20	29	144
Everyday	4					4	7
Almost every day	12	16	16	1	2	6	40
At least once a week	55	31	34	12	9	8	61
At least once a month	30	20	18	4	5	2	6
Rarely	12	16	10	4	2	6	13
First Time	2	8	2	1	1	1	7
Not Aware	2	7	8	6	1	2	10
No Reply	1		1				

Q7 How important to you are the following?

	Very Important	Fairly Important	Not Very Important	Not Important	No Opinion	No Reply
Level of Lighting	75.7%	16.5%	2.9%	0.8%	4.2%	
Security Patrol	75.7%	17.7%	3.6%	0.8%	2.3%	
CCTV Surveillance	74.7%	18.3%	3.4%	1.3%	2.3%	
Maintenance	42.2%	49.2%	5.7%	0.6%	2.3%	
Cleansing	32.1%	59.9%	5.3%	1.0%	1.7%	
Availability of Spaces	71.5%	21.7%	4.2%	1.0%	1.7%	
Availability of Disabled Spaces	28.9%	45.1%	7.6%	5.5%	12.9%	
Availability of Child & Parent	23.2%	46.0%	8.6%	7.2%	14.6%	0.4%

Spaces						
Size of Spaces	30.4%	55.9%	9.1%	2.3%	2.3%	
Accessibility	41.3%	52.5%	3.8%	0.8%	1.5%	0.2%
Signage	16.5%	73.8%	6.1%	0.8%	2.9%	
Payment Method	17.1%	50.2%	23.4%	4.9%	4.4%	

Q8 How do you rate the quality of the following?

	Very Good	Good	OK	Poor	Very Poor	Don't Know	No Reply
Level of Lighting	3.2%	33.5%	33.8%	9.9%	1.7%	17.9%	
Security Patrol	4.9%	43.9%	23.4%	4.4%	1.9%	21.5%	
CCTV Surveillance	2.9%	44.5%	22.4%	3.6%	1.9%	24.7%	
Maintenance	4.0%	56.3%	29.3%	5.5%	1.7%	3.0%	0.2%
Cleansing	0.2%	4.8%	58.0%	32.1%	2.1%	0.4%	2.5%
Availability of Spaces	15.6%	63.3%	13.9%	4.0%	0.6%	2.7%	
Availability of Disabled Spaces	14.1%	54.4%	8.7%	2.5%	0.2%	20.2%	
Availability of Child & Parent Spaces	4.4%	49.4%	10.5%	4.8%	3.2%	27.8%	
Size of Spaces	9.1%	63.1%	20.5%	3.0%	3.0%	1.0%	0.2%
Accessibility	6.7%	70.9%	16.5%	1.1%	4%	0.6%	0.2%
Signage	2.7%	66.2%	22.2%	4.4%	0.6%	4%	
Payment Method	2.1%	59.9%	28.7%	5.1%	1.5%	2.7%	

Q9 Would you be prepared to pay higher charges for the following?

	Yes	No	Don't Know	Fine as it is	No Reply
Better Lighting	9.1%	50.8%	5.5%	34.4%	0.2%
More Security Patrol	12.7%	50.2%	5.5%	31.2%	0.4%
More CCTV Surveillance	12%	50.0%	5.1%	32.7%	0.2%
Better Maintenance	4.8%	56.7%	3.0%	35.4%	0.2%
Better Cleansing	2.1%	57.4%	2.3%	38%	0.2%
Availability of More Spaces	5.3%	55.3%	2.3%	36.9%	0.2%
Availability of More Disabled Spaces	2.7%	56.8%	4.9%	35.4%	0.2%
Availability of More Parent & Child Spaces	5.9%	54.8%	5.1%	34%	0.2%
Increased Size of Spaces	4.9%	56.1%	2.1%	36.5%	0.4%
Better Accessibility	2.3%	55.9%	2.3%	39.4%	0.2%
Better Signage	2.1%	57.4%	2.1%	38.2%	0.2%
Different Payment Method	4.4%	57%	2.3%	36.1%	0.2%

Q11 What do you think of the idea of pay on exit?

No reply	1	(0.2%)
Welcome it	232	(44.1%)
Prefer to stay with current system	207	(39.4%)
Not Sure	86	(16.3%)

Q12 If you would welcome pay on exit would you feel different if a feasibility study showed that it would lead to higher charges?

No reply	6	(2.6%)
Yes	121	(51.9%)
No	91	(39.1%)
Don't Know	15	(6.4%)

Q13 Would you be interested in being able to pre-purchase parking time

No reply	3	(0.6%)
Yes	148	(28.1%)
No	349	(66.3%)
Don't Know	26	(4.9%)

Q14 Overall Satisfaction

No reply	2	(0.4%)
Very Satisfied	107	(20.3%)
Satisfied	348	(66.2%)
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	46	(8.7%)
Dissatisfied	17	(3.2%)
Very Dissatisfied	6	(1.1%)

Q15 What is the purpose of your visit to Loughborough Town Centre

No reply	5	1.0%
Work	59	11.2%
Supermarket	10	1.9%
Other Shops	237	45.1%
Market	64	12.2%
Visiting Family / friends	34	6.5%
Leisure	164	31.2%
Other	46	8.7%

Q16 How frequently do you visit Loughborough for the following reasons.

	Work	Super markets	Other Shops	Market	Friends / Family	Leisure	Other
Every Day	9.9%	0.8%	0.8%	0.4%	0.8%	1.5%	0.8%
Almost every Day	16.3%	6.1%	7.4%	0.8%	7.8%	12.7%	1.1%
At least once a week	4.8%	43.9%	54.9%	34.4%	30.4%	30.0%	1.0%
At least once a month	3.4%	11.8%	20.9%	19.6%	20.5%	12.9%	1.3%
Rarely	4.4%	10.8%	8.4%	25.9%	11.8%	16.3%	0.8%
First Time	0.4%	0.2%	0.6%	0.2%	0.8%	0.4%	0%
Never	60.6%	26.0%	6.7%	18.6%	27.2%	25.1%	14.6%
No Reply	0.2%	0.4%	0.4%	0.2%	0.8%	27.2%	80.4%

EXTRACT

INVESTIGATION & REVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
14TH SEPTEMBER 2005

19. INVESTIGATION & REVIEW SCRUTINY PANEL – PARKING ISSUES IN CHARNWOOD PANEL

In accordance with the Committee's Work Programme, a report of the Parking Issues in Charnwood Panel was submitted.

The Chair of the Panel, Councillor Slater stated that there had been considerable interest in the Panel from local residents and groups, together with the press, which was indicative of the importance of the issue to people of the Borough.

Extensive research had been undertaken through interviews with officers and key interest groups including representatives from the Loughborough Chamber of Trade, the Market Traders Federation, the Charnwood Disability Forum and Transport 2000. The Panel had visited Northampton Borough Council to view a pay on exit car parking system. Postal questionnaires to identify the views of parish and town councils and face to face surveys of car park users in Council owned car parks in Loughborough were also undertaken.

The report highlighted a major concern regarding the lack of effective enforcement in respect of on-street parking both in Loughborough and surrounding villages. The possibility of introducing various systems of payment had been identified. The Panel had noted the importance of the provision and management of parking for ensuring viable town and village centres. The need for convenient parking to assist people with mobility problems was highlighted, together with improvements to the parking regime in Loughborough for market traders.

11 responses had been received from the parish and town council questionnaire. The previous survey had been conducted in 1993 so it was of interest to receive a current view on issues and any problems being experienced in those areas. The issues of enforcement and lack of parking were highlighted, particularly in villages near to Bradgate Park or in areas where outside events were held such as car boot sales.

The meeting with the Chamber of Trade had identified issues concerning the possible introduction of pay on exit parking, the promotion of free parking for up to two hours and a review of the two hour payment period. The current payment regime was seen as a major disincentive to retaining shoppers in Loughborough town centre.

The face to face survey of car park users had identified that 44% of people surveyed would prefer a pay on exit system and of those, 40% would be willing to pay more.

The visit to Northampton Borough Council had been of considerable interest and had shown how positively a pay on exit system could work.

It was envisaged that the Panel's report would be fed into the Atkins report commissioned on town centre car parking, due to be completed as part of the overall Town Centre Master Plan in March 2006.

The Panel considered that due to the continuing negotiations between the County and district councils on an agreed approach to the decriminalisation of parking it had not been in a position to fully address that element of its terms of reference. If in the future Charnwood Borough Council had a direct involvement in managing decriminalisation of parking then a further Panel should be established, when required, to review those arrangements.

The Panel had identified that public expectations in respect of parking were continually changing. The user survey had shown that a high percentage of the public were satisfied with current arrangements in Loughborough but improvements could be made. Improvements in the levels of cleanliness, better signage, including a more proactive approach to marketing the town centre were identified. The Council was striving to reach the "Park Mark" in respect of security standards in all its facilities. The use of more innovative charging regimes, including free parking for late night shopping and special events, together with a review of the current two hour parking tariff were highlighted as possible ways of improving service to the public. The Panel had also noted the general support for a move to pay on exit parking and suggested that a feasibility study be undertaken to identify the cost, benefits and practical implications of introducing that system using Beehive Lane and Browns Lane car parks as pilot sites.

Representations had been received from the Market Traders Federation in respect of two particular issues relating to the possibility of having convenient, reserved

parking for traders vehicles and some form of discounted parking fee to support and encourage traders attendance.

The Panel had made seven recommendations, details of which were outlined in the report. The evidence gathered by the Panel confirmed that the public and local businesses had clear ideas as to how parking in Charnwood could be improved. Although the Panel accepted that parking was an important factor in ensuring viable town and village centres, it was concerned that expectations remained realistic about how changes in parking provision or policy alone might have a wider effect on commerce.

The following issues were raised and comments made by members of the Committee:

- (i) The report of the Panel was excellent, councillors and officers should be commended. The evidence gathered was extensive and the recommendations thorough and it was hoped that Cabinet would consider those recommendations without delay.
- (ii) The issue of linking parking and public transport services was of considerable importance. People were generally unwilling to use public transport if bus stops were some distance away from car parks, particularly in poor weather or if they had heavy shopping to carry.
- (iii) Although the possibility of increasing the two hour tariff to three hours should be considered it was important to remember that in certain short stay car parks including Granby Street the problems of congestion could be exacerbated as people would be staying for longer periods, reducing the number of spaces available.
- (iv) It would be of interest to know why there was a higher percentage of disabled parking spaces available in Granby Street compared to other car parks in the town centre, particularly as those spaces were frequently not used to capacity.
- (v) There was a higher percentage of disabled spaces allocated to the Granby Street car park due to its central location as a higher proportion of people with mobility problems wished to use that facility. The car park had easy access and was within close walking distance to the shopping centre.

- (vi) Traders in the town centre have indicated that two hours is too short a period to allow shoppers the opportunity to browse and to increase trade a three hour tariff should be implemented. The Atkins study was looking specifically at the number and types of spaces available in the town centre, including disabled and parent and child spaces and this report would be fed into that.
- (vii) The report did not appear to have any background information in respect of the parish and town council questionnaire. It would be of interest to know the questions asked and the responses received. Of considerable concern was the issue of decriminalised car parking, negotiations were still underway between the County and district councils and once an agreement had been reached it was envisaged that it would be a further 12 months before implementation. It was therefore unlikely that the situation would improve in the near future.
- (viii) The responses received from the questionnaire had been individually collated and were available in a pack of supporting documents. Individual responses which came within the remit of the County Council's Director of Highways, Transportation and Waste Management had been forwarded to that service. The issue of enforcement was of great concern, however the Police had agreed to continue to deal with enforcement issues until the relevant body was ready to take over that responsibility.
- (ix) A critical problem remained the lack of enforcement in respect of residential preference parking areas. Areas had been designated but people were now parking in those areas and not being penalised and it was essential that the problem was addressed. Unfortunately the Panel had been unable to address that issue due to current constraints and on-going negotiations.
- (x) Although it was conceded that town centres nationally had experienced problems with a general economic downturn, it was essential that the economic structure of Loughborough and surrounding areas was enhanced and improvements to parking were an important factor in that. A parking regime should not act as a barrier to economic prosperity for towns and villages, particularly as people have the opportunity to park in out of town shopping centres free of charge.

RESOLVED

1. that the Parking Issue in Charnwood Panel report be recommended to the Cabinet for consideration;
2. the Cabinet be informed that the Investigation and Review Scrutiny Committee would welcome a response to the report within three months.