

Environment Select Committee

EIT Review of Built and Natural Environment



16 December 2010

Select Committee – Membership

Councillor Rigg (Chair)
Councillor Smith (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Cains
Councillor Gardner
Councillor Rix
Councillor Stoker
Councillor Womphrey
Councillor Woodhead

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Committee thank the following contributors to this review:

Mike Chicken, Built and Natural Environment Manager
Nigel Gibb, Car Park Manager
Peter Shovlin, Urban Design Manager
Liz St Louis, Head of Customer Service and Development, Sunderland City Council
Bill Trewick, Traffic and Road Safety Manager

Foreword

This review was very wide ranging and offered the opportunity to improve or make more efficient a number of services within the council.

How the council handles applications for Blue Badges for disabled people will be a very visible change when implemented. Gone will be the need to wait for a doctor's letter and all the other potential delays which the present system can entail. Instead a simple, clear system will allow for the issue of badges almost immediately, bringing benefits to both the applicant and council staff.

Car parking is always a difficult and controversial subject. This review looked only at car parks in our Town Centres – parking in housing estates and outside schools has been the subject of other studies. Car parks in our town centres are a necessary part of keeping the centres busy and profitable but if the car parking is provided by the Borough Council it incurs costs to the Council Tax payer. We are recommending that Stockton Town Centre car parking charges be reviewed to ensure that we have the right balance between encouraging visitors who contribute to its regeneration and covering the costs involved.

There is a long standing problem in Yarm which has an acknowledged need for permanent long stay parking along with a desire for some flexible medium term parking and a need for reduced congestion in the High Street. This review gave the opportunity to look afresh at these issues, taking into account the wide public consultation which took place in 2009. The committee has recognised the cost of maintaining the car parking which exists as well as the need for long stay parking. We believe that by reconfiguring the parking it should be possible to reduce the congestion, though not remove it completely, provide a choice of length of parking ranging from 10 minutes to all day and to invest the income from charging in acquiring the necessary land to provide at least some of the much needed permanent long stay parking. The introduction of Residents' Parking would help the people who live on the High Street. Members of the committee firmly believe that this offers the best way forward for Yarm and look forward to seeing the improvements it will bring.

In summary, though this review has identified some financial savings they are not huge. The main benefit of the review is the opportunity to improve some of our services at no extra drain on Council Tax.



Original Brief

What services are included?

Urban Design Team
Environmental Policy
Parks and Countryside
Car Parking

The Thematic Select Committee's / EIT Project Team overall aim / objectives in doing this work is:

To identify options for future strategy / policy / service provision that will deliver efficiency savings and sustain / improve high quality outcomes for SBC residents.

Please give an initial indication how transformation will enable efficiencies and improvements to be delivered by this EIT review?

The review will impact on the quality of life and wellbeing for many residents.

This review will be looking at policies and services that are designed to protect the public's interest in the local area and general health and wellbeing by the provision of attractive, clean, green and safe surroundings.

Will contribute to the social, economic and environmental well being of the area through the provision and implementation of policies that contribute to the long-term sustainability of the area.

Key Responsibilities

Chair / Member Sponsor	Councillor Maureen Rigg
Scrutiny Officer	Graham Birtle
Lead Officer	Richard McGuckin, Head of Technical Services
Independent Officer	Janet Ballinger, Charging Policy Manager, CESC
Finance Officer	Andy Bryson, Senior Finance Manager

1.0 Executive Summary and Recommendations

Blue Badge Scheme

- 1.1 The National Regulations governing the Scheme give local authorities the discretion to charge an application fee, but this cannot exceed £2. In Stockton Council the staffing, stationary, and the purchase of badges has been calculated to cost £28 per badge. Some additional income can be realised by the Council providing the photo's required for the Blue Badges.
- 1.2 Sunderland City Council provided the Committee with evidence of 'Lean Processing' to improve the speed of providing Blue Badge assessments which in turn is improving customer satisfaction whilst providing expected savings of at least £85,800.

R1 The Committee recommend the introduction of a simplified model for applying for a Blue Badge similar to that operated by other local authorities.

R2 The Committee recommend that an additional charge (initially £3) for the production of a digital photograph to be used on a Blue Badge be added to the administration charge levied.

School Crossing Patrols

- 1.3 Currently 35 sites in the borough meet the numerical criteria and have no alternative crossing facility. The National Guidance states that School Crossing Patrols should not operate on a light controlled crossing unless there are exceptional circumstances. 17 sites meet the numerical criteria but operate on light controlled or zebra crossings and 6 sites no longer meet the criteria but currently are served by a School Crossing Patrol.
- 1.4 All sites are resurveyed every 3 years. Where a new development is to take place the Committee suggest that S106 agreements could be used to secure a puffin or pelican crossing rather than introduce a School Crossing Patrol.

R3 The Committee recommend that the seven School Crossing Patrol sites identified where a puffin or pelican crossing is available or where sites no longer meet the criteria are closed.

R4 The Committee recommend that six further sites identified be surveyed to assess their position against criteria and are closed if appropriate.

R5 The Committee recommend that a policy be developed to ensure S106 agreements can secure the establishment of a puffin or pelican crossing rather than introduce a School Crossing Patrol where necessary.

R6 The Committee recommend that annual surveys be conducted at all sites to determine if they meet national criteria.

R7 The Committee recommend that annual surveys determine the number of unaccompanied children using School Crossing Patrol sites.

Urban Design

- 1.5 The Urban Design team provide a co-ordinated input into the planning service on aspects ranging from transport to renewable energy funded partially from revenue budgets with other fees being generated via a Trading Account.

- 1.6 The Committee believe that reduced fees following a review of the trading account arrangements with a view to bringing the service into a revenue funding position could improve the competitiveness and provide a compliance service to Tees Valley Unlimited and other Local Authorities.

R8 The Committee recommend a review of the trading account arrangements with the intention of bringing the service into a revenue funding position.

R9 The Committee recommend a review of corporate and management overheads and requirement for operational surplus to reduce fee rates to make Urban Design even more competitive in its service delivery and compliance with Local Authority regulations for any services provided to Tees Valley Authorities.

R10 The Committee recommend a management review of staff roles to be undertaken where there are clear synergies with those of the Countryside Team, with a view to achieving further efficiency savings.

Car Parking

- 1.7 The car parking service is a non-statutory service. Maximum lengths of stay restrictions are generally structured to promote short-term parking and high turnover of spaces in town centres, but a degree of long-term commuter parking is permitted in the outer areas.

- 1.8 The Committee taking into consideration the requirements of the EIT process balanced with the Cabinet decisions following earlier consultation was keen to see parity across Stockton Borough wherever possible. With car parking charges payable in Stockton Town Centre it was considered inequitable not to charge in other town centres in the Borough. The Committee was keen to ensure that any introduction of charges could be 'ring-fenced' thereby guaranteeing the positive use of raised income.

R11 The Committee recommend that further work is undertaken in order to consider the structure of car parking charges in Stockton Town Centre which will also include Blue Badge users.

R12 The Committee recommends the introduction of long stay car parking charges at Yarm Rail Halt

R13 The Committee recommends the principle of charging for car parking in Yarm and that it is introduced as part of a wider review of car parking charges across the Borough.

R14 The Committee recommend that income generated by car parking charging in Yarm contribute towards the provision, maintenance and security of car parking facilities and other public transport measures.

2.0 Evidence

Blue Badge Scheme

- 2.1 The Disabled Persons' Parking Badge Scheme ('the Scheme') was introduced in 1971, under Section 21 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. The Scheme provides a national arrangement of on-street parking concessions for severely disabled people who are unable, or find it difficult, to use public transport. The disabled persons' Blue Badge is recognised throughout the European Union.
- 2.2 The Regulations governing the Scheme give local authorities the discretion to charge an application fee, but this cannot exceed £2. In Stockton Council the staffing, stationary, and the purchase of badges has been calculated to cost £28 per badge. The British Bankers' Association has estimated that the cost of processing the fee is between £12 and £25, figures accepted and adopted by the Department for Transport (DfT). Many local authorities subsequently have chosen not to continue its collection. The issue of whether to increase the fee or abolish it altogether was out for consultation during the time-frame of this review.
- 2.3 Each applicant should be asked to supply two passport-size photographs showing their face, with their name and signature on the back. The photograph is a key feature in minimising abuse of the Scheme. Local authorities can refuse to issue a badge if they have reason to believe that the applicant is not who they claim to be or that the applicant would permit another person to display the badge on a motor vehicle.
- 2.4 When a medical opinion is needed, the DfT strongly recommends that independent health professionals, such as physiotherapists and occupational therapists, should undertake these assessments. They may be best placed to assess eligibility due to their professional knowledge of mobility. Many local authorities have already adopted this 'Non-GP' approach by running assessment centres, sometimes using community physiotherapists. As well as reducing costs, this approach ensures that a fair and equitable service is being provided to all applicants who are required to have an assessment to determine their eligibility.
- 2.5 The use of independent health professionals can also be supported and minimised by enabling Blue Badge administrators to make their own informed decisions on assessed eligibility through the use of set criteria, decision trees and targeted training so that only borderline cases need to be referred to independent professionals. Research has shown that only about 5% of assessed applications required consultation from an independent health professional resulting in potential savings of around £70,000 per year (based on 3,000 assessed applications p.a.).
- 2.6 The Head of Customer Service and Development, Sunderland City Council provided the Committee with information regarding the introduction of 'Lean Processing' used to improve the speed of providing Blue Badge assessments which in turn is improving customer satisfaction. The five principles of Lean are:
 - Understanding and agreeing exactly what your customer wants

- Understanding all the processes
- Smoothing the production flow
- Responding to customer demand
- Continuing to reduce waste

2.7 As a result Sunderland City Council now operates as follows:

- No paper-based application forms – the vast majority of applications are made over the telephone
- Discretionary applications are assessed within the one phone call using a decision matrix to assess eligibility – developed with Occupational Therapists (OTs)
- Immediate decision given to the applicant
- OT duty-line – provides immediate advice to Customer Services
- £2 fee has been waived
- Eligibility / residency verified using other Council systems where consent is given Appeal rights are given when badges are refused and OT's assess

2.8 At the time of meeting the Committee the initial benefits for customers and their satisfaction were known for the new procedures but the overall savings could not yet be quantified although based on the estimated cost of processing the fee Sunderland were expecting savings of at least £85,800.

2.9 Officers raised concerns regarding changes to the application process of the Blue Badge scheme as introduced by Sunderland Council in particular with regard to misuse.

2.10 The most common forms of abuse known to DfT include:

- Misuse. This is the main offence and can involve family members or carers using a real Badge, with or without the knowledge of the Badge holder. These offences can also involve Badge holders (and others) using a real Badge but in contravention of local rules of operation, for example, parking in the wrong place or for too long, or displaying the Badge incorrectly.
- Multiple applications. There is anecdotal evidence that some people apply for Badges to more than one local authority, or to the same local authority using different variations of their name.
- Fraudulent applications. The Audit Commission has found an issue with Badges still being used by family members after the holder has died and, in some cases, applications being made using a deceased person's name and details. Applications are also made by people using false identities or who misrepresent themselves or who make false statements about their disability.
- Copying and forging Badges. Badges are frequently copied and forged, either on a small scale basis or more professionally. Real Badges are also often tampered with, for example, to alter the expiry date.
- Lost or stolen Badges. Badges are being falsely reported as 'lost', so that holders can be issued with replacements that are then used in more than one car or by family members. Real Badges are also being stolen from cars for illegal re-sale.
- Other offences. These are fewer, but there is anecdotal evidence of problems caused by insecure supply, distribution and storage of Badges that have not yet been personalised. At the moment, stocks of Badges are sent from the printers to each local authority, who store them on their own sites for individual personalisation.

- 2.11 Stockton Council's approach continues with little amendment since the assessment transferred to the Car Parking Section. As a result completed forms are received for determination of eligibility and the Blue Badges are issued 2-3 days from receipt of all required documentation.
- 2.12 Even though the DfT recommend using OTs Stockton Council continues to be reliant on GPs to provide medical opinion due to the arrangement of payments with the local Primary Care Trust. This means that Stockton Council is unable to benefit in the way that Sunderland Council has by reducing the number of OTs employed and the commensurate salary saving. The Committee received information published by the DfT that showed Sunderland Council as the only North East local authority to employ OTs which also resulted in the highest number of claimants failing to qualify for a Blue Badge (see appendix 1).

Blue Badge occupancy in Stockton town centre facilities.

- 2.13 No charge is made by the Council for parking in any bay in the Council's car parks. Information from patrol officers showed that the car parks close to the High Street in Stockton are popular with Blue Badge holders. Prince Regent Street is 'virtually full,' Bishop Street, West Row, and Tower Street 50% occupied and Bath Lane North 30% occupied with badge holders' vehicles.
- 2.14 A number of local authorities were contacted to ascertain whether car parking charges were applied to Blue Badge holders. The results are in the following table.

2010 'Round Robin' of local authority Car Park Managers:- <i>Can Blue Badge Holders park without charge in your surface and in your multi-storey car parks? – 40 replies</i>	Surface car parks free?	Multi-Storey free?
Mole Valley, Tandridge, Reigate and Banstead, Runnymede, Waverley, East Herts, Poole, Swindon, Burnley, Swansea City, Scarborough, Conway, Rugby, Wycombe. = 14	Yes	Yes
Kingston, Sutton, Croydon, Guildford, Surrey Heath, Woking, Stoke-on-Trent, Exeter, Southampton City, Surrey Heath, Bristol City, Eastleigh. = 12	Yes	No
Spelthorne, Elmbridge, City of Lincoln, Mid Devon, Doncaster, Watford, Wolverhampton, Oldham, Bury, Southhams, Canterbury, Wolverhampton, Walsall, Sheffield. = 14	No	No

- 2.15 As a number of local authorities charge Blue Badge holders for parking in car parks the Committee was interested to investigate further the possibility of introducing charges to Stockton Council run car parks. The Blue Badge holder would still have an identified space which tends to be closer to the amenities for which they are interested to use. It was recognised that as badge holders can park elsewhere, including on double yellow lines they may opt to avoid using car parks in future if they begin to be charged.
- 2.16 At the outset of the review the Committee was aware that possible amendments to the Blue Badge scheme were to be considered as the DfT began a consultation exercise in March 2010. A summary of the outcome was due to be published by September 2010 but due to a change in government

an announcement and publication of a consultation report was due at the beginning of 2011. When this is known further consideration will need to be given to assess the impact any changes will have on the operation of the scheme in Stockton Borough.

Review Options proposed:

1. The Sunderland City Council model for the issue of blue badges is adopted with some adjustments to meet local needs and circumstances.

Savings are in the order of £59K for not requiring a medical certificate but this is to be attributed to the PCT (However with the demise of the PCT this may ultimately fall to SBC).

Further savings on administration of the scheme are to be calculated as part of a wider review of administration within both the car parking service and the needs of the Contact Centre.

2. The blue badge scheme is to be delivered by the Contact Centre when that is fully operational in 2011. The issue of the blue badge is to be charged at £2 with an additional £3 for the photograph to be taken digitally at the centre, making the total charge £5 and raising revenue income to around £17,500.

Additional income is to be in the order of £10,500.

R1 The Committee recommend the introduction of a simplified model for applying for a Blue Badge similar to that introduced by other local authorities.

R2 The Committee recommend that an additional charge (initially £3) for the production of a digital photograph to be used on a Blue Badge be added to the administration charge levied.

School Crossing Patrols

2.17 Stockton Borough Council has responsibility for the School Crossing Patrol service which consists of; 1 Road Safety Officer, 3 Senior Patrollers, 2 Mobile Patrollers and 54 Static Patrollers at annual cost of £350,000.

2.18 During the review the Committee was informed that 58 sites operated in the Borough of which four were vacant. The number of sites has already been significantly reduced from approximately 80 sites in recent years. Previously sites were only disestablished following school closure or when the patroller left and the site no longer met criteria. This helped meet the increased service costs, brought about by single status agreement.

2.19 The School Crossing Patrol service is operated to assist children to be able to get to and from school safely on foot. It is an integral part of Road Safety and although most authorities provide School Crossing Patrols across the country,

it is a non-statutory Service. The responsibility for ensuring the safety of children travelling to and from school is a parental one. The service can also assist members of the public to cross a road (in 2001 the law was changed to allow this).

- 2.20 The service is operated in accordance with the adopted National Guidelines for the operation of School Crossing Patrols. The National Guidelines provide a clear procedure for determining whether a School Crossing Patrol site is justified. The process involves a survey comparing the flow of child pedestrians crossing the road and vehicle flow. The criteria for establishing a new or maintaining an existing site is when the average number of vehicles squared and average number of pedestrians over a 30 minute period is in excess of 4 million ($PV^2 > 4 \times 10^6$) or sites below this figure where environmental considerations increase the potential risk at the site (adjustment factors) such as speed, visibility, age of pupils crossing.
- 2.21 The National Guidance also states that School Crossing Patrols should not operate on a light controlled crossing unless there are exceptional circumstances. All sites are resurveyed every 3 years. Where a new development is to take place it was suggested that S106 agreements could be used to secure a puffin or pelican crossing is established rather than introduce a School Crossing Patrol. The Committee was eager for a policy to be developed that would ensure that this occurred in the future.
- 2.22 Currently 35 sites meet the numerical criteria and have no alternative crossing facility. 17 sites meet the numerical criteria but operate on light controlled or zebra crossings and 6 sites no longer meet the criteria but currently are served by a School Crossing Patrol.
- 2.23 Three options were considered by Members:
- (a) all current School Crossing Patrol sites are closed.
 - (b) School Crossing Patrols on light controlled crossings, zebra crossing or which no longer meet the criteria are closed.
 - (c) School Crossing Patrols operating on puffins, pelican crossings or which no longer meet the criteria are closed.
- 2.24 Whilst the responsibility for ensuring the safety of children travelling to school rests with parents it was felt that the Council should ensure that safe routes are available for children to follow. The Committee places the utmost importance on the safety of children in the borough so did not wish to pursue the option of closing all School Crossing Patrol sites.
- 2.25 The patrollers operating on sites that would be disestablished would, where possible, be relocated to a suitable alternative site. It is suggested that suitable alternative site would be within 1 mile of the patrollers address. The Committee was informed that 5 patrollers can be relocated to vacant sites (due to retirement), 2 patrollers are retiring and 6 patrollers cannot be relocated at present and as a result may be made redundant.
- 2.26 The Committee agreed with officers that schools currently served by the proposed disestablished sites be offered additional education and training before sites are closed to assist them in continuing to walk to school safely.

Review Options proposed:

1. Seven sites closed where a puffin, pelican crossing are available or where the sites no longer meet the criteria (see appendix 2) Savings £23,000.
2. Six further sites to be surveyed to assess their position against criteria. Potential maximum savings if all six fail to meet the criteria and are closed, £30,000.
3. Annual surveys are to be conducted at all sites to determine if they meet national criteria. Those that do not will be closed.

R3 The Committee recommend that the seven School Crossing Patrol sites identified where a puffin or pelican crossing is available or where sites no longer meet the criteria are closed.

R4 The Committee recommend that six further sites identified be surveyed to assess their position against criteria and are closed if appropriate.

R5 The Committee recommend that a policy be developed to ensure S106 agreements can secure the establishment of a puffin or pelican crossing rather than introduce a School Crossing Patrol where necessary.

R6 The Committee recommend that annual surveys be conducted at all sites to determine if they meet national criteria.

R7 The Committee recommend that annual surveys determine the number of unaccompanied children using School Crossing Patrol sites.

Urban Design

2.27 The Urban Design team was formed in 2006 as part of a re-organisation bringing together engineering and landscape architects professionals. The team provide a co-ordinated input into the planning service on aspects ranging from transport to renewable energy. Nine staff operate as part of the Technical Services Division providing a range of professional disciplines, including:

- Landscape Architecture;
- Highways Development Control;
- Small Environmental Improvements and
- Urban Design.

2.28 The key functions of the team include:

- Development Control (Planning) Advice;
- Strategic Design Advice;
- Landscape and Urban Design;
- Contract Procurement;
- Contract Site Supervision.

- 2.29 The team also design and deliver a range of projects that include high profile strategic projects such as the town centre public realm improvements as well as the alleygates programme (a crime prevention measure to reduce dwelling burglaries, where access is gained from the rear, arson, and anti-social behaviour); community participation budget schemes; and the playbuilder programme (to transform local areas into innovative and adventurous play spaces). There are linkages to other service areas within the Authority such as parks and countryside which can be perceived as overlap and need to be examined and clarified to ensure efficiencies are in place.
- 2.30 Urban Design is funded partially from revenue budgets with other fees being generated via a Trading Account. The main areas of fee generation supporting the Trading Account come from Planning Services, Regeneration, plus Countryside & Green Space within Direct Services. Other fees are generated from individual appointments as part of new build projects lead by Technical Services Consultancy Team (mainly Architects and Civil Engineers) and other development and divisions of the Council.
- 2.31 Urban Design's corporate work includes servicing council wide activities and responding to Elected Member/Planning Committee. Although such activities are not fee earning they must be absorbed within the overheads which form part of the hourly rate for fees. Management Structure and Corporate overheads also have to be included in the total fee recovery which further increases the hourly rate. The trading activity requires that Urban Design not only covers its costs including overheads but also returns an operational surplus to the Council.
- 2.32 Reduced fees could improve the competitiveness and provide a compliance service to Tees Valley Unlimited and other Local Authorities. Currently both TVU and other Tees Valley Authorities use a mix of temporary staff, private practices or other external agencies to assist in the delivery of their design services.
- 2.33 Recently fees have been gained from Darlington Borough Council who lacked skills to carry out a particular project. The appointment was won on competitive terms from other potential service providers, including those in the Private Sector. The Committee was impressed that this had been achieved even though the financial arrangements of the Trading Account could mean that the team appear less financially competitive. Members were keen to increase the competitiveness of the team where possible.
- 2.34 Urban Design also benefits from the Technical Services Framework Partnerships e.g. ARUP (an independent firm of designers, planners, engineers, consultants and technical specialists offering a broad range of professional services) and can draw on their expertise and assistance in service delivery, for which a fee is payable.

Review Options proposed:

1. Review the trading account arrangements with a view to bringing the service into a revenue funding position.
Potential savings are to be identified through the ability to deliver more schemes from capital allocation of funding.
2. A management review of staff roles will be undertaken where there are clear synergies with those of the Countryside Team, with a view to achieving further efficiency savings.

R8 The Committee recommend a review of the trading account arrangements with the intention of bringing the service into a revenue funding position.

R9 The Committee recommend a review of corporate and management overheads and requirement for operational surplus to reduce fee rates to make Urban Design even more competitive in its service delivery and compliance with Local Authority regulations for any services provided to Tees Valley Authorities.

R10 The Committee recommend a management review of staff roles to be undertaken where there are clear synergies with those of the Countryside Team, with a view to achieving further efficiency savings.

Car Parking

2.35 The car parking service is a non-statutory service. The 1059 off-street charged spaces are all within the Safer Parking Scheme, an initiative of the Associations of Chief Police Officers aimed at reducing crime and the fear of crime in parking facilities. For customers using a Park Mark Safer Parking facility means that the area has been vetted by the Police and has measures in place to create a safe environment. There are also 87 on-street charged spaces.

2.36 Management of public parking facilities assists with traffic management and environmental improvements. The on-street facilities (typically those located by the kerbside) and off-street facilities (within our car parks) are distributed throughout the Borough. The facilities are paid for completely by the motorist with cross subsidy of non-charging car parking spaces by charging ones currently entirely located in Stockton Town Centre. Maximum lengths of stay restrictions are generally structured to promote short-term parking and high turnover of spaces in town centres, but a degree of long-term commuter parking is permitted in the outer areas.

2.37 Private operators of car parks include two large facilities in Stockton Town Centre, one at Castlegate shopping centre and one at Wellington Square. Both these car parks have adopted a charging tariff similar to the Council run car parks. The town centres of Billingham and Thornaby have, in the main, privately operated car parks. They are currently free although Thornaby Town centre owners have imposed a 3-hour maximum stay.

- 2.38 'Out-of-town' supermarkets, retail units and Teesside Retail Park also provide free parking although at some stores parking is restricted to 2 or 3 hours.
- 2.39 Yarm town centre's wide cobbled margins are maintained as public highway with the majority of the space given over to parking provision. Parking duration within the central section of the High Street is limited to 2-hours with patrons displaying a clock disc set to display their arrival time. North and south extremities of the street provide spaces for all day parking.
- 2.40 The options for purchasing time to remain in Stockton Borough car parks include the following:

Ticket purchase from a nearby pay machine.

The usual means of collecting payments. A machine in the car park dispenses a ticket to accord with the customer requirements. When the selected duration has been paid for a ticket is dispensed for the driver to place on the windscreen as payment evidence. All the Council's charging car parks have these machines. Change is not made available to avoid having to stock up machines with cash in vulnerable areas.

Token obtained for payment at the end of the parking session.

Not in use by the Council but proprietors of Castlegate Centre and Wellington Square have a token or readable card in place. Motorists do not have to pre-select their likely duration, the payment calculation is made at the end.

Advance purchase of a period season ticket.

These are available for the Council's long-stay car parks for periods of 1, 3, 6, or 12 months. Popularity has declined during the economic down-turn.

Initial, and top up payment by mobile telephone.

Patrons register with the system supplier, "RingGo" in Stockton. For the first and subsequent parking sessions they specify location and duration with the cost put against a customer credit card. Voice recognition and repeat parking habits speed up the transaction. Stockton-on-Tees worked together with Middlesbrough, Hartlepool, and Redcar & Cleveland, when procuring a system.

- 2.41 Within Stockton centre there are 19 car parks where payment is required. Generally the short stay parks, 8 in total, are close to the High Street and the 11 long stay further away. Short stay tariff is £1 for the first two hours then £1 each hour afterwards. Long stay parks are mostly £2.40 all day. Exceptions to the foregoing are the 80 pence for half an hour at Prince Regent Street and the two £1.50 all day parking sites at Alberto and Thompson Streets. Norton Road area and Bridge Road area provide locations for fee paying parking within street bays.

Review Options proposed:

- Introduce free for two hours car parking in all short stay car parks on Saturdays with the income cost from this proposal being met by increases to the long stay car parking charges. Savings from this proposal are zero but it does support the regeneration of the town centres.
- As for action proposed above but increase the long stay car parking charges to achieve an overall 5% revenue increase.
- Additional revenue of around £6,000 will be achieved based on 2010/11 position.

R11 The Committee recommend that further work is undertaken in order to consider the structure of car parking charges in Stockton Town Centre which will also include Blue Badge users.

2.42 At Billingham the majority of town centre car parks are run by the town centre development company. A notable exception is that at the Forum leisure centre which will revert to the Council upon completion of the refurbishment. Thornaby, likewise with the town centre, has private management in place.

2.43 Parking in Yarm High Street is limited to 2-hours with patrons displaying a clock disc set to display their arrival time. North and south extremities of the street provide spaces for all day parking. To encourage a turn over of vehicles the central length of High Street is a limited stay area for parking. Shoppers and business visitors have two hours available to park. For longer durations then parking has to be away from the very centre of town. Unlimited time parking occurs at the north and south ends of High Street and quite a number of smaller pockets around the peninsular area. The Borough Council have two off-street sites with spaces at Castle Dyke Wynd to the east side and at The Old Market to the west.

2.44 Stockton Council carried out a consultation exercise in 2009 asking for opinions on a range of options for the potential of improving parking in Yarm Town Centre.

2.45 The objective of the consultation exercise was to stimulate debate and capture ideas based around four key principles:

- **Long-stay parking** - should a new separate facility be provided for free long stay parking? There was widespread clear support for an additional long stay car parking facility needed in Yarm.
- **Charging for short-stay parking** - to fund this would need charging to be introduced (suggested charges - 20p for first 30 minutes, 50p for first 2 hours and then £1 for each hour thereafter. A Resident's Permit Parking Scheme would also be introduced. The support for charging for short stay car parking in Yarm was mixed but in order to be able to deliver a new long stay car park and a residents permit parking scheme, charging in the High Street would be necessary. However, there was no intention to introduce charging in the short term. A high proportion of people were in favour of a residents permit parking scheme. This was particularly the case from responses from those

living or working in the Central Yarm area, who are directly affected by on-street commuter parking.

- **Locations for a new long-stay facility** - some suitable sites were identified as initial ideas. These were: Land behind Yarm Health Centre (Brickyard Allotments), Worsall Road Allotments and Land East of Yarm Cemetery Access Road (partly Brickyard Allotments). The consultation also invited views on other suitable sites. The land behind the Medical Centre (Brickyard Allotments) was the most popular choice (see appendix 3). However, the Council was keen to pursue all options available, particularly other potential central Yarm sites.
- **Extended disc parking** - should the current disc parking be extended in the short-stay parking spaces from a maximum of 2 hours to 3 hours? In addition, the restrictions could begin from 10am and end at 4pm. Only a small proportion of respondents saw the need to extend the current disc parking from 2 hours to 3 hours maximum.

2.46 On the 26th November 2009 the Cabinet resolved that:

- The Council will work to develop ideas for an additional long stay car parking facility in Yarm.
- The resources to support the development of car parking sites, when identified, be funded from developer contributions as a result of planning approvals and the introduction of charging for short stay car parking in Yarm High Street. However in the short term, there is no intention to introduce charging.
- The introduction of a residents permit parking scheme if charging for short stay car parking were introduced.
- The existing disc parking zone currently used to control car parking durations on Yarm High Street be retained at its current 2 hour maximum.
- Authority be delegated to the Head of Technical Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport to pursue the investigation and development of suitable sites for long stay car parking.

2.47 The Committee taking into consideration the requirements of the EIT process balanced with the above Cabinet decision record was keen to see parity across Stockton Borough wherever possible. With car parking charges payable in Stockton Town Centre it was considered inequitable not to charge in other town centres in the Borough. Further work is therefore required to determine the introduction of charging for flexible short, medium and long stay car parking.

2.48 The Committee was keen to ensure that any introduction of charges could be 'ring-fenced' thereby guaranteeing the positive use of raised income. Members wanted to see monies used to improve car parking services and public transport investment so as not to negatively impact on Yarm High Street.

2.49 The car park at Yarm Railway Station currently provides free all-day parking which is an anomaly as most railway station car parks operate a pay and display scheme. The Committee was keen to close this anomaly by introducing long stay car parking charges and recognised that other traffic enforcement measures may be required to ensure that parking is not transferred to the main road (B1264).

Review Options proposed:

- Introduce medium stay car parking charges in two sites in Yarm and long stay at Yarm Rail Halt.
- Additional income from this proposal would be in the order of £60,000.

R12 The Committee recommends the introduction of long stay car parking charges at Yarm Rail Halt

R13 The Committee recommends the principle of charging for car parking in Yarm and that it is introduced as part of a wider review of car parking charges across the Borough.

R14 The Committee recommend that income generated by car parking charging in Yarm contribute towards the provision, maintenance and security of car parking facilities and other public transport measures.

3.0 Conclusion

3.1 The disparate services under review show the breadth of work undertaken by the Council within the Built and Natural Environment agenda. Ultimately the Committee wanted to support the work of the services whilst at the same time providing the best value for money possible. It is with this in mind that the recommendations contained in this report are made.

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Valid Blue Badges held, England by Local Authority 2010

Local Authority	Valid Blue Badges held without further assessment	Valid Blue Badges held subject to further assessment	Valid Blue Badges held by organisations	Total valid Blue Badges held by organisations and individuals	Number of organisations holding Blue Badges
Darlington	1,899	4,577	86	6,562	42
Durham	10,575	25,230	138	35,943	127
Gateshead	3,746	6,357	52	10,155	52
Hartlepool	2,377	1,808	52	4,237	37
Middlesbrough	3,322	3,682	97	7,101	37
Newcastle	5,334	5,727	46	11,107	..
North Tyneside	4,192	6,051	48	10,291	38
Northumberland	6,391	10,406	238	17,035	107
Redcar & Cleveland	4,352	6,653	64	11,069	30
South Tyneside	4,518	3,729	42	8,289	23
Stockton	4,282	5,608	82	9,972	38
Sunderland	7,194	7,368	213	14,775	72

Valid Blue Badges held: population measures, England, by Local Authority 2010

Thousands/percentage

Local Authority	Number of valid parking badges on issue at 31 March	Retired population	Ratio of retired people to badge holders	Badge holders as a percentage of the population	Retired people as a percentage of the population	Total population
Darlington	6.6	21	3.2 : 1	6.5	20.7	100
Durham	..	106	..	..	21.0	506
Gateshead	10.2	40	3.9 : 1	5.3	21.0	191
Hartlepool	4.2	18	4.2 : 1	4.7	19.5	91
Middlesbrough	7.1	25	3.5 : 1	5.1	17.6	141
Newcastle	11.1	48	4.3 : 1	3.9	16.8	284
North Tyneside	10.3	41	4.0 : 1	5.2	20.7	197
Northumberland	17.0	73	4.3 : 1	5.5	23.6	311
Redcar & Cleveland	11.1	31	2.8 : 1	8.1	22.3	138
South Tyneside	8.3	32	3.8 : 1	5.4	20.9	152
Stockton	10.0	35	3.5 : 1	5.2	18.4	191
Sunderland	14.8	55	3.7 : 1	5.2	19.6	282

Valid Blue Badges held without assessment by disabled people: population measures, England by Local Authority 2010

Thousands/percentage

Local Authority	Valid Blue Badges issued without further assessment	Population automatically entitled to a Blue Badge	Percentage of those automatically entitled to a Blue Badge who hold one
Darlington	1.9	3.7	51
Durham	..	27.4	..
Gateshead	3.7	8.5	44
Hartlepool	2.4	4.4	54
Middlesbrough	3.3	6.0	55
Newcastle	5.3	9.8	54
North Tyneside	4.2	7.9	53
Northumberland	6.4	11.6	55
Redcar & Cleveland	4.4	6.1	71
South Tyneside	4.5	7.4	61
Stockton	4.3	6.8	63
Sunderland	7.2	15.3	47

Applications for Blue Badges, England by Local Authority, during 2009/10

Local Authority	Total new applications received	Of which were successful at first application	Of which were appeals made by unsuccessful applicants	Of which were issued following an appeal	Total renewal applications received	Of which were successful	Total Unsuccessful Renewal applications	Of which badges which were not renewed because the applicant was no longer eligible	Of which badges which were not renewed due to improper use	Badges which were not renewed due to other reasons
Darlington	608	544	60	4	1,951	1,519	432	-	-	432
Durham	2,485	1,953	532	266	10,472	8,617	1,855	-	-	1,855
Gateshead	1,152	1,097	28	-	2,588	2,568	20	20	-	-
Hartlepool	536	443	41	31	1,295	1,256	39	39	-	-
Middlesbrough	853	815	12	7	1,840	1,762	78	7	-	71
Newcastle	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
North Tyneside	1,605	1,534	30	22	2,281	1,936	345	341	-	4
Northumberland	2,343	2,260	..	..	2,854	2,834	20	20	..	..
Redcar & Cleveland	2,442	2,439	-	-	1,003	994	9	-	-	9
South Tyneside	1,191	1,046	22	17	2,188	2,102	86	2	-	84
Stockton	1,424	1,307	-	-	2,696	2,616	80	47	-	33
Sunderland	2,104	1,498	46	26	5,190	4,142	1,048	7	-	1,041



Medical assessments, England by Local Authority, during 2009/10

Local Authority	Total medical assessments conducted	Medical assessments conducted made by the applicant's GP	Of which resulted in the applicant receiving a badge	Medical assessments conducted made by an independent medical professional	Of which resulted in the applicant receiving a badge
Darlington	684	684	684	0	..
Durham	1778	1778	1706	0	..
Gateshead	2471	2471	2459	0	..
Hartlepool	1129	1114	997	15	15
Middlesbrough	1503	1503	1491	0	..
Newcastle	2285	2285	1991	0	..
North Tyneside	1955	1955	1955	0	..
Northumberland	650	650	650	0	..
Redcar & Cleveland	2230	2230	..	0	..
South Tyneside	1513	1513	1379	0	..
Stockton	2377	2377	2253	0	..
Sunderland	896	0	..	896	620

Withdrawals, prosecutions, lost and stolen badges, England by Local Authority, during 2009-10

Local Authority	All badges withdrawn	Badges withdrawn due to misuse	Badges withdrawn because the holder ceased to be eligible	All prosecutions for abuse of blue badge system	Prosecutions targeted at the actual blue badge holder	Prosecutions targeted at a non-badge holder using another persons blue badge	All lost and stolen badges	Lost badges	Stolen badges	Replacement badges issued
Darlington	..	0	0	..	..	..	55	46	9	55
Durham	..	0	0	..	0	0	381	315	66	381
Gateshead	4	2	2	..	0	0	122	122	0	122
Hartlepool	..	0	0	..	0	0	32	30	2	32
Middlesbrough	108	0	108	..	..	..	61	53	8	61
Newcastle	..	0	..	..	..	..	255	153	102	255
North Tyneside	..	0	0	..	0	0	8	8	0	95
Northumberland	..	..	..	..	0	0	100	90	10	100
Redcar & Cleveland	..	0	0	..	0	0	28	26	2	28
South Tyneside	5	0	5	..	0	0	49	39	10	49
Stockton	..	0	0	..	0	0	31	31	0	31
Sunderland	8	0	8	..	..	..	121	109	12	152

Appendix 2

School Crossing Patrol sites operating on light controlled, zebra crossing or no longer meet criteria

Location	Hours	Reason for closure	Primary schools served
Oxbridge Lane/Marlborough Road (Oxbridge)	9.58	Operating on pelican crossing	Oxbridge Lane
Yarm Road/St Peters Road (Oxbridge)	10	Operating on pelican crossing	Bowesfield
The Green/Duckpond (Norton)	12.72	Operating on pelican crossing	Crooksbar and St Joseph RC (Norton)
Yarm Road/Butts Lane (Yarm)	8.33	Operating on pelican crossing	Eaglescliffe
Thornaby Road/Windsor Road (Thornaby)	12.08	Operating on pelican crossing	Thornaby Village
Thorntree Road/Humber Road (Thornaby)	14.17	Operating on pelican crossing	Thornaby Village and Mandale Mill
Norton Ave/Recreation Ground Entrance (Norton Grange)	12.92	Latest survey fails to meet criteria	Fredrick Natrass and St Joseph (Norton)