

CAR PARKS CUSTOMER SURVEY - RESULTS

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 In accordance with the Revenue and Housing Management Division Service Plan, a Car Parks Customer Survey was undertaken towards the end 2001/2.
- 1.2 This report provides the results of the biennial survey together with the observations of the Head of Service for Members consideration and debate.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Customer surveys provide a mechanism for interface with customers and an opportunity for them to comment on the services we provide. The summarised results of the survey are shown on Appendix 1 to this report.
- 2.2 The survey was carried out by staff on various days of the week and included all the Council's fee-paying Car Parks. Forms were also enclosed with correspondence sent from the Transportation & Revenue Administration Office during the survey period.
- 2.3 Of the 1,000 survey forms distributed 515 were returned, an excellent response due in part to the more personal style adopted by staff of handing forms to drivers rather than just leaving forms under windscreen wipers.

3 SURVEY DETAILS

- 3.1 The survey form followed the same format as 1999 with just minor alterations to one or two questions at the request of Members. The survey asked a variety of questions about the services provided by the Car Park Section and the Head of Service makes the following observations.
 - 3.1.1 **Section A3** – Since the last survey, the Authority has completed its programme of ensuring that there is a minimum of two ticket machines in every car park. This is reflected in an improved result of nearly 82% of respondents who consider that the number of machines is sufficient.
 - 3.1.2 **Section A4** – The results reveal a significant increase in the number of motorists staying between 1 hour and 2 hours. The survey shows that these motorists were formerly staying for shorter periods of time. Since the last survey, the 1-hour charge has been deleted from the tariffs.

- 3.1.3 **Section A6** – More motorists now consider there are **insufficient** parking spaces available which probably reflects the steady increase in Pay & Display income and season ticket applications.
- 3.1.4 **Section A8** – 86.15% of those respondents who had contact with the Patrol Officers indicated that they found them professional and courteous. This is a 4% improvement on the previous figure.
- 3.1.5 **Section B1** – There is a marked decrease in the number of respondents who have received a penalty notice. This may be due to increased compliance through more effective patrolling measures.
- 3.1.6 **Section C2** – Customers who felt they were dealt with promptly and courteously by Transportation & Revenue Administration Staff remains high which is pleasing in view of the potentially confrontational nature of the Service.
- 3.1.7 **Section D6/7** – At Members request, this section has been divided into **a) vandalism of vehicle** and **b) theft from your vehicle**. The number of respondents who had experienced crime related incidents fell from 9.60% to 6.60% (11.46% in 1997)
- 3.2 The survey also gave customers the opportunity to make general comments and these are listed on Appendix 2 of this report. The most common issues raised by respondents of the survey are:
- The reintroduction of the 1-hour charge.
 - Pay on Exit parking.
 - CCTV/Lighting.
 - More parking spaces.
 - More ticket machines in selected car parks.

4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The results of the survey are a useful guide to customer satisfaction in a number of areas. Comparisons with the 1999 survey generally show improvements in the service which is pleasing. Respondents' comments in Appendix 2 are revealing particularly the top five topics mentioned in 3.2.
- 4.2 It also appears that a main concern of customers is actually being able to **locate** a parking space which suggests our car parks are well used and that paying for parking is an accepted part of the service we provide.

- 4.3 A comprehensive review of parking policy and charges takes place every year and the issues raised above will be discussed during the pre-budget process. However, action in response to some of the 'top five' topics has already taken place or is in progress and observations relating to each issue are provided below.
- 4.3.1 The 1-hour charge band was deleted in September 2000 with an aim to persuading motorists to stay longer in the town centres. The half-hour charge was retained and the 2-hour charge was actually reduced to 40p and is one of the lowest 2-hour tariffs in Essex.
- 4.3.2 Pay on Exit parking has been exhaustively investigated on a number of occasions over the last 5 years and has always proved to be too expensive to implement and maintain. Only Websters Way Car Park would come close to being suitable for this type of parking control.
- 4.3.3 Southend Road, The Approach and the Mill Hall/Bellingham Lane Car Parks have all benefited from improved lighting over the past six months. CCTV has been installed at Mill Hall/Bellingham Lane and Golden Cross Car Parks and the Community Safety Officer is hoping to identify funds within his budget to extend the project.
- 4.3.4 The parking spaces issue cannot be resolved without the Council acquiring land in and around Town Centres, particularly as the decision has now been taken to take no further action in respect of the development of Websters Way Car Park.
- 4.3.5 Some respondents consider that the Castle Road and Websters Way car parks would benefit from extra ticket machines. In accordance with the Authority's replacement programme, three new ticket machines were installed at Back Lane earlier this year and consideration is being given to installing two of the old machines at these locations.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The provision of a customer survey forms part of the divisional work plan.

6 RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**
- (1) That the report and survey be noted and a further survey be carried out during autumn 2003.

- (2) That the results of the survey are considered when the review of parking policy takes place as part of the budget cycle. (HRHM)

Steve Clarkson

Head of Revenue & Housing Management

Background Papers:

515 completed survey forms.

Analysis of survey results.

Both of the above will be placed in the Members Lounge during the week commencing 2nd September 2002.

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