

C. Receipt was noted of a letter concerning the Stroud District Council **Car Park Review 2011**.

The meeting considered the issues raised in the consultation and the Clerk was instructed to respond accordingly.

The Council considered that parking was very important to the local economy. Priorities for parking in car parks in the town varied according to the time of day, the season, and the location of the car park to meet differing needs for business people, residents and shoppers. The Chipping Car Park was the main shoppers car park, the Potters Pond car park was mainly residential in use. Priority in the Chipping Car Park should be for use by visitors and shoppers first, then by business people and traders and thirdly by residents though this should be mainly at night.

It was not possible to comment on how parking affected other towns as each place was unique and this Council did not have the requisite local knowledge to comment on the situation in other towns.

Members considered that it was right that parking should be provided by the community as the whole community benefitted from adequate parking and a thriving town centre. If adequate parking was not provided people who must park - such as local business people - would find parking spaces elsewhere nearby, often in less suitable places where they could cause an obstruction to other traffic. Shoppers might simply decide to shop in towns nearby where no charges were made. However more enforcement was required by Stroud District Council of the current time restrictions imposed in both the Chipping Car Park and the main street in order to prevent overstaying and keep a reasonable number of parking spaces available for casual use. The introduction of parking charges was not the answer to the local shortage of parking provision and enforcement of existing time restrictions would have the same effect if properly enforced.

It was noted that the whole report appeared to be based on the false presumption that Wotton-under-Edge competed for shopping with other towns in the Stroud District, particularly those in the North of the District. It was pointed out that in practice the town competed far more directly with towns such as Yate and Thornbury in South Gloucestershire for supermarket shopping, and that many commuters to Bristol would be more likely to shop at larger supermarkets on their way home from work. Parking in the South Gloucestershire towns was free of charge as it was at all supermarkets and larger centres such as Cribbs Causeway which offered opportunities for supermarket, comparison shopping and entertainments such as cinemas. It was further noted that the enlarged Tesco due to open in Yate in October would be one of the largest supermarkets in Europe so that it was as yet unknown how many local people would choose to shop there. Small towns had to make the most of their strengths, such as the variety of independent shops and also to make it easy for people to park to enable them to visit a number of shops without worrying about how much parking to pay for.

Charging for parking in only some of the town car parks was likely to increase pressure on the other car parks such as those at the Civic Centre and the Co-op. No reference had been made to charging for on-street car parking which could place additional pressure on this.

It was noted that the running costs to Stroud District Council of the Chipping car park were listed as £8,000pa. Members were unclear how this was arrived at as there had not been any substantial expenditure on maintenance in recent times. The Town Council was strongly opposed to the imposition of parking charges in the town which would be damaging to the viability of the traders in the town and likely to deter shoppers who would take their trade to nearby towns where no parking charges were made.