

Appendix 2

Decision Book 638 - Provision of on and off-street parking for the Royal Berkshire NHS Trust.

- 1.1 Following the publication of the decision book, an enquiry was received from Councillor Rob White in respect of a number of issues he had identified, namely:
- Why the decision had been taken to use the Decision Book process.
 - On the basis that the off-street provision required more immediate action from the Council, why this was not separated from the on-street proposal.
 - Why residents had not been consulted on the use of the pay and display bays for use by the hospital as part of the agreement.
 - Whether the exclusion of financial data was necessary to protect commercial confidentiality.
 - Whether the report should have been more explicit in relation to the operational use of the pay and display bays.
- 1.2 In response to Councillor White's enquiries, the Assistant Car Parks Manager responded, setting out responses to the operational queries that had been raised.
- 1.3 The Interim Assistant Director for Planning, Transport & Regulatory Services then followed up with a further briefing to Councillor White. This note sets out a summary of the responses to the questions raised.
- 1.4 Why was the Decision Book process used?**

Consideration was given to the extent of the existing arrangements with the RBH to provide off street car parking at Queens Road car park. An arrangement existed pre-pandemic, but had been subject to discussion as it didn't fit the needs of the RBH. During the pandemic, use by the RBH had grown, but this was linked to the Government's guidance to provide free parking for the NHS. This free arrangement ended in July 2021 and therefore discussions had been restarted to find a solution which would meet the RBH's needs and that of the Council which took the approach that securing a stable income over the next few years would be beneficial given the change in the parking market arising from Covid. The end of the free arrangement and the lead in time to secure an agreement and the practical arrangements which needed to be delivered meant that there was an urgency to the decision, which could have been impacted by other providers undercutting the offer. The use of the decision book process was agreed upon with advice from Committee Services, Legal Services and with agreement with the Executive Director and the Lead Member.

- 1.5 On the basis that the off-street provision required more immediate action from the Council, why this was not separated from the on-street proposal.**

The discussions with RBH included linking the agreement to securing some on street provision around the hospital. A utilisation study had shown that there was an under usage of the designated pay and display bays in some areas and these were identified as meeting the needs of the RBH. It was therefore decided that a single linked agreement could be entered into and it was therefore appropriate to have a single decision book setting out this arrangement.

- 1.6 Why residents had not been consulted on the use of the pay and display bays for use by the hospital as part of the agreement.**

Officers advised that the pay and display bays had already been through public consultation when they were introduced. Their use was not changing, but it is recognised that their usage is being promoted and therefore it would have been appropriate to inform residents. Following comments received by a resident and subsequently Councillor White, a letter setting out clearly the proposal has been issued to those streets where usage by the RBH is being promoted.

1.7 Whether the exclusion of financial data was necessary to protect commercial confidentiality.

Options for how the financial data could be presented was considered, but based on knowledge of other commercial operators tariffs and the competition faced by all major car park providers it was determined that providing headline information could be manipulated to identify the tariffs. Officers accept that other options could have been explored, but the extent to which this would impact on the decision is questionable.

1.8 Whether the report should have been more explicit in relation to the operational use of the pay and display bays.

Officers accept that more detail could have been provided to clarify the way in which the pay and display bays were to be used by the RBH could have been provided. This will be taken into account in the future.

1.9 That the Decision of the Executive Director of Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services regarding the Provision of on-street and off-street Parking for the Royal Berkshire Hospital NHS Trust and the action taken by officers to address the issues raised in Councillor White's request for a review of the decision be noted.