

CABINET

4 SEPTEMBER 2012

MEDWAY NHS FOUNDATION TRUST – BLUE BADGE HOLDER PARKING CHARGES

Portfolio Holder: Councillor David Brake, Adult Services
Report from: Neil Davies, Chief Executive
Author: Rosie Gunstone, Democratic Services Officer

Summary

This report contains a reference from Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 21 August 2012 in relation to the introduction of blue badge parking charges at Medway Maritime Hospital.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

1.1. Under Chapter 4 – Rules, paragraph 22.2 (c) terms of reference for Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee has powers to review and scrutinise matters relating to the health service in the area including NHS Scrutiny.

2. Background

2.1 The Medway NHS Foundation Trust has recently reviewed car parking concessions and in July a decision was taken to charge blue badge holders normal parking fees. The Trust stated that the purpose of the decision was to create fairness around concessions, which they consider are now based on affordability, rather than purely on entitlement to blue badges.

2.2 The changes were implemented on 2 July 2012.

3. Council Motion

3.1 At the Council meeting on 26 July the following motion was passed – The Council resolves to urge Medway Maritime Hospital to adopt the policy of Medway Council, which permits blue badge holders to park for free in all its car parks. The response to the motion has now been received and is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

4. Response from Medway NHS Foundation Trust

- 4.1 The Chairman of Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee wrote to the Trust's Chief Executive to invite him to attend the Committee meeting on 21 August 2012 to respond to the committee's questions and concerns. He also suggested that the Trust suspend this change in its parking charges policy until after the committee's meeting.
- 4.2 The Trust's Deputy Chief Executive responded to the Chairman of Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee to confirm that the Trust's Chief Executive and Director of Governance and Risk would attend this meeting to answer the committee's questions. The letter in response also confirmed that the Trust would go ahead with the revised concession arrangements as planned.
- 4.3 The Trust's response is attached at Appendix 2 of this report.

5. Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 21 August 2012

- 5.1. At a meeting on 21 August 2012 of Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Chief Executive of Medway NHS Foundation Trust, accompanied by the Director of Governance and Risk of the Trust, introduced an item on blue badge charging by explaining that the Trust had decided that its original approach to car parking was not as equitable as it could have been which is why the review was undertaken.
- 5.2. The aim had been for there to be a fairer system where the needs of the most vulnerable and those on low incomes were still protected but that those who were able to pay did so, and this included blue badge holders. The concessions for people in this category had been increased as part of this review and more publicity was being given to the fact that concessions were available, on the Trust's website and also by the production of information leaflets. A copy of the sample leaflet was handed round to the Committee. It was made clear that the Trust were willing to consider additional concessions and had already included further groups of people to the original list.
- 5.3. The Chief Executive of the Foundation Trust stated that while there had not been any specific public consultation the proposals had been discussed by the Board of Governors where there had been a mixed reception to the plans.
- 5.4. Members of the Committee then put forward their strong objections not only to the decision to charge blue badge holders parking at the hospital but that no thought had been given to consulting either with the public or the Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to the implementation of the new charges. The view was put forward that the decision had brought about a backlash of public objections, which had been directed at Councillors. In view of this, Members requested that in future the Trust should consider letting Members know in advance of similar changes to policy regardless of whether the Trust had a duty to consult. The Chief Executive of Medway NHS Foundation Trust acknowledged that lessons had been learned from the introduction of the charging but emphasised that the Trust had not considered consulting the

Council on the grounds that the policy for car parking charging did not affect clinical outcomes. This was later disputed by some Members who felt that the introduction of charges for blue badge holders may inhibit some people from attending the hospital to access services.

- 5.5. A number of small amendments to the leaflet were suggested at the meeting and the Chief Executive of Medway NHS Foundation Trust invited further comments, acknowledging that if there were to be a merger with Dartford and Gravesham Trust there would need to be a harmonisation of policy. He also acknowledged that Trusts across the county had taken very different approaches to car parking charges. Responding to a question the Director of Governance and Risk stated that the introduction of charges for blue badge holders had not increased the cost of administration as existing staff dealt with the concessions. There was also an acknowledgement by Medway NHS Foundation Trust that the car park at Medway Maritime Hospital did need to be extended and improved for which additional revenue was necessary. Reports of staff using parking spaces reserved for the disabled were being dealt with rigorously by the Trust.
- 5.6. The view was then put forward that Medway Council had taken the decision not to charge blue badge holders for car parking and that this should be adopted by the Trust as the 'Medway position'. The Chief Executive of Medway NHS Foundation Trust stated that there had been no agreed Medway-wide position on this and that the Trust had taken its own decision on the matter.
- 5.7. Questions were asked as to the amount of revenue, which would be generated by the introduction of the charges. An anticipated figure of between £100,000-£150,000 was put forward. It was stated that this would be dependent on the amount of additional take up of concessions from those people who were now eligible for concessions. An alternative suggestion was made at the meeting that there could have been a slight rise to the car parking fee charges for non blue-badge holders, which would have brought in similar revenue.
- 5.8. Reference was made to the fact that this was the 40th anniversary of blue badges and the view was put forward that this was one of the first measures for disabled people to achieve equity. The decision of the hospital trust to start charging disabled people was felt to be ill-thought through and did not bring about the equity the Trust was aiming for.
- 5.9. In response to a question, the Chief Executive of Medway NHS Foundation Trust stated that if it were found that the decision to charge blue badge holders was proven to inhibit disabled people accessing hospital services then it would be changed.
- 5.10. The Labour Group put forward the following proposal, which, upon being put to the vote, was lost:

'That the Cabinet, having been given the full list of answers and alternative proposals made at this meeting, and in the light of ideas coming forward from scrutiny should rescind its own administration charges for blue badge renewals and communicate formally with Medway NHS Foundation Trust to

ask them to reconsider removing their charge for car parking for blue badge holders'

(A request was made for this proposal to be formally minuted).

A counter proposal was then made and recommended to Cabinet as set out in paragraph 8 below.

6. Risk management

6.1. There may be knock on effects on parking in the vicinity of the hospital.

7. Financial and legal implications

7.1. There are no financial or legal implications for the Council at this stage.

8. Recommendations from Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

8.1. Members recommended the Cabinet to take into account the alternative suggestion put forward by the Committee as set out in paragraph 5.7 above, along with the views of scrutiny on this matter, and urge Medway NHS Foundation Trust to rescind its decision to charge blue badge holders for car parking and come back to the Committee with alternative proposals

9. Suggested reasons for decision(s)

9.1 In response to community concerns the Cabinet is requested to put pressure on Medway NHS Foundation Trust to rescind its decision to charge for blue badge holder car parking at Medway Maritime Hospital.

Lead officer contact

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Background papers

None

We are a smoke free organisation and to improve public health, smoking is not permitted anywhere on the hospital site. Thank you for your co-operation.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE

Direct Line 01634 833944
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Our ref: MD/MJ

1 August 2012

Medway Maritime Hospital
Windmill Road
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Kent
ME7 5NY

Tel: 01634 830000

Julie Keith
Head of Democratic Services
Democratic Services
Gun Wharf
Dock Road
Chatham
Kent
ME4 4TR

Dear Ms Keith

RE: Meeting of the Full Council – Thursday 26 July 2012

Thank you for your letter of 27 July 2012, setting out the motion passed by the full Council on 27 July.

The Council's position on this matter is noted, and, I can assure you, is considered with respect by the Trust and its Board. However, the Trust reached its decision on the subject of parking fee concessions only after considerable deliberation, and is satisfied that the position is equitable and reasonable.

The current range of concessions addresses affordability for all hospital users and visitors, regardless of their entitlement to a Blue Badge – a full list of the concessions now offered (which exceed the concessions the Trust is required to offer under the NHS Constitution) is attached to this letter for Members' information and can be viewed on the Trust's website at www.medway.nhs.uk

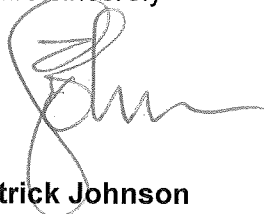
In line with good practice guidance, the Trust has 65 disabled car parking spaces and is committed to ensuring there are sufficient spaces near the entrance to the hospital. Access to these spaces continues to be limited to blue badge holders.

Unlimited free parking for blue badge holders is not available at any of Kent's hospitals. At Darent Valley Hospital, a flat rate of £1 is currently charged, Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust charges Blue Badge holders full car parking fees and the East Kent University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust allows free parking only for the first three hours at its hospitals.

Continued.....

Surplus income from car parking fees, after running costs of the car park have been met, is put directly back into patient care to improve services for local people.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John', written over a circular stamp or mark.

Patrick Johnson
Director of Operations / Deputy Chief Executive
(On behalf of the Chief Executive in his absence)

Enc.....

Car parking concession information for patients and visitors

Please find below a list of current car parking concessions, with instructions for those wishing to claim them. Concessions are available in the main car park (car park one), and those requiring concessions should ensure that they park in the main car park.

- Liverpool Care Pathway patients receive free parking. Please report to the security and car parking reception desk, in the hospital main entrance, with the appropriate authorisation letter for ticket validation.
- Official volunteers who work for Medway NHS Foundation Trust receive free parking. Please report to the security and car parking reception desk, in the hospital main entrance, with the appropriate Trust identification badge for ticket validation.

- **Travel cost assistance**

Patients who are in receipt of the support below will receive assistance with parking fees. Please report to General Office located at the main entrance Monday - Friday 9am to 4pm to claim assistance. Please ensure that receipt of parking is retained and that you have all documentation demonstrating entitlement under one of the categories listed above when making a claim:

- Pension credits
- Income support
- NHS exemption certificate
- Job seekers allowance
- Holders of HC2 and HC3 forms

Reimbursement of travel is paid to those in receipt of:

- 1) Income Support
- 2) ESA (Income related and/or Income based)
- 3) JSA (Income related and/or Income based)
- 4) Working Tax Credits
- 5) Child Tax Credits
- 6) Pension credit (guaranteed credit only)

We always need to see all relevant documents i.e.: benefit details, appointment letter and travel ticket/ car park ticket.

We do not pay travel cost to those on Disability Allowance or Incapacity Benefit.

When a patient with the correct benefit comes to General Office we pay rail/bus fares and mileage. We do not pay taxi fares unless the patient is in receipt of a letter from their consultant stating that they are physically unable to use public transport.

If an escort is needed the patient should have a letter from the consultant to say they are unable to travel unaided/alone.

We will exchange a parking ticket for a one shot to get out of the car park or if the patient has a pay and display ticket, we will reimburse the price of ticket.

- Oncology patients who are attending the hospital for treatment receive free parking. A claim form will be supplied and completed by the relevant ward or department and should then be taken to the security and car parking reception desk, in the hospital main entrance, for ticket validation.
- Relatives or carers of a patient accessing oncology services can claim a concessionary rate of £10.50 per seven days. A claim form is to be supplied and completed by the relevant ward or department and should then be taken to the General Office located at the main entrance Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm, or, outside of these hours, to the security and car parking reception desk, in the hospital's main entrance. Please note that only one concessionary ticket will be issued per patient.
- Visitors or carers of ICU, HDU, SCBU, Dolphin Ward and Penguin Ward can claim a concessionary rate of £10.50 per seven days. A claim form is to be supplied and completed by the relevant ward or department and should then be taken to the General Office located at the main entrance Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm, or, outside of these hours, to the security and car parking reception desk, in the hospital main entrance. Please note only one concessionary ticket will be issued per patient.
- Outpatient clinics
The parking fee will be reduced to £1.50 when the Trust is responsible for clinics over-running. Authorisation slips will be issued by senior outpatient staff and should then be taken to the security and car parking reception desk, in the hospital main entrance, for ticket validation.
- Dermatology patients who are required to attend the hospital to undertake a course of treatment – requiring repeated visits over a defined number of weeks – will have their car parking charges reduced to £1.50 per visit. A claim form will be supplied and completed by the dermatology department and should then be taken to the security and car parking reception desk, in the hospital main entrance, for ticket validation.
- Paediatric red badge holders are entitled to the reduced charge of £1.50 per visit, when accessing red badge paediatric services. A claim form will be supplied and completed by the relevant ward or department and should then be taken to the security and car parking reception desk, in the hospital main entrance, for ticket validation.
- Visitors of patients who have been in hospital over seven days and are assisting ward staff with the care or treatment of their relative, may apply for a concessionary rate of £10.50 per seven days. All requests must be made

through senior ward staff in writing to the car parking manager. Please note only one concessionary ticket will be issued per patient.

Car parking at Medway Maritime Hospital

July 2012

The Trust has recently reviewed car parking concessions and earlier this month a decision was taken to charge blue badge holders normal parking fees. The decision to implement this change was not taken lightly, but its purpose was to create fairness around concessions, which are now based on affordability, rather than purely on entitlement to blue badges.

The Trust offers a range of concessions to make car parking accessible for all patients and visitors and two new concessions have been introduced to support this commitment; dermatology patients who are required to attend the hospital to undertake a course of treatment requiring repeated visits over a defined number of weeks will have their car parking charges reduced to £1.50 per visit, and paediatric red badge holders (ie, people who need regular and frequent access to the paediatric assessment units) will have their car parking charges reduced to £1.50 per visit, when accessing red badge paediatric services. A full list of concessions is attached to this statement as an appendix and can be viewed on the Trust's website at **www.medway.nhs.uk**

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Surplus income from car parking fees, after running costs of the car park have been met, is put directly back into patient care to improve services for local people.

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2.3

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