

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No. 9

meeting date: 12 JANUARY 2016
title: DOWNHAM CAR PARK
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1 PURPOSE

1.1 This is in accordance with the Committee's recommendation of 13 October 2015, to approve the work to the entrance to the car park at Downham, but not renew the lease.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Corporate Priorities - to ensure best use of council resources in the provision of parking

2 BACKGROUND

At your last meeting, on 13 October 2015, Committee was recommended to agree to some work to be carried out to Downham car park, but not to renew the lease.

Committee resolved, however, that a further attempt should be made to reach agreement with the landowner, the Downham Estate, for the Council to continue to operate the car park.

3 ISSUES

Following that resolution, officers met with the Hon Ralph Assheton, and his representative, to review the position.

The main point at issue was the Council's policy that, going forward, charges for car parking be introduced at the point of the renewal of the lease.

The policy has been challenged by the lessors on a number of sites over the years, including Sabden, Dunsop Bridge, Slaidburn, Ribchester, and others. In each case, it was feared that the introduction of charges would lead to indiscriminate parking on the roadsides in the villages.

In each case, the effect of the charge has been monitored closely, and the feared effect has not materialised. However, the same concerns have been raised in Downham, and we cannot guarantee in advance that no problem will arise from the charge.

As part of the discussion, it emerged that it had been assumed that, if the Council decided to forego the car park lease because no charges could be applied, the lease on the public toilets would also be terminated.

When your officers explained that such was not the case, some of the concerns around the matter were eased.

During discussions, it was considered whether a twelve month trial of charges, with a discreetly-placed ticket machine, would be appropriate. However, on reflection,

Downham Estate concluded that the risk of cars parking – and causing access problems – through the village was unacceptable.

It is possible that the Estate will introduce an honesty-box system to generate some contribution towards the cost of upkeep. However, your officers assured the Estate that - given that the car park will continue to be available for public and community use – it would be reasonable to request Council support through the Culture, Recreation and Leisure Grants scheme if work is needed. In the meantime, necessary maintenance work has been carried out to the car park to return it to a fit state to be handed over.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- **Resources** – None. The non-renewal of the lease for the car park will ease the demand on the car park maintenance budget. It is anticipated that any increase in leasing cost for the toilets will be modest and in line with inflation.
- **Technical, Environmental, and Legal** – Downham car park has been returned to a good state of repair, and officers will be available, if needed, to offer any technical advice to the Estate.
- **Political** – although the lease will not be renewed, we will continue to work in partnership with the Estate to maintain the public facilities in Downham.
- **Reputation** – whilst it would have been preferable to be able to reach an agreement that continued the Council's operating role in relation to the car park, our dialogue with the Estate was constructive and respectful, and it was clear that each party understood the concerns of the other.

5 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

Approves the renewal of the toilet block lease for the next 5 years but allows the car park lease to expire.

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