

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

LOCAL JOINT PANEL – 26 SEPTEMBER 2005

REPORT BY THE SECRETARY TO THE STAFF SIDE

7 GRANGE PADDOCKS CAR PARK

RECOMMENDATION – that (A) expenditure for resurfacing Grange Paddocks overspill car park with permeable paving be included in East Hert's capital programme for 2006/2007, and

(B) estimates be obtained by East Herts Council in partnership with the owner of the land on which the riverside walk is sited for an all weather surface for the footpath between Grange Paddocks and the town centre.

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1.0 Background

1.1 Staff have been required to use Grange Paddocks car park since March 2005.

1.2 The number one concern expressed at the time by the vast majority of staff about use of the car park was that of the additional time it would take to walk to and from the car park. This was followed closely by worries about personal and vehicle safety.

1.3 It has now been established that provision has been made in the capital programme for the current financial year for installation of CCTV cameras at Grange Paddocks. This will help alleviate some of the above concerns and is welcomed by the staff side.

1.4 The issue of the additional time taken to walk to and from the car park has not been addressed and is still regarded as a serious inconvenience to many staff.

1.5 The surface of the overspill car park, which staff are required to use, is also of concern. It is generally recognised that whereas the car park may be adequate for use as an overspill car park, it is unsuitable for regular use. This affects not only staff but also users of Grange Paddocks, whose vehicles require constant washing to remove dust

in dry weather and to remove mud in wet weather. This is not to mention the potential damage to the suspension of the vehicle from the deep and many potholes. It is also evident that no sooner have potholes been filled in than new holes appear so that constant maintenance is required. This cannot be a cost effective use of council tax payers' money.

1.6 It was agreed at the last Local Joint Panel meeting that use of Grange Paddocks car park would be constantly monitored and reviewed.

## 2.0 Issues

2.1 The staff side recognises that parking in Bishop's Stortford is currently a politically sensitive issue, which requires careful handling.

2.2 Resurfacing the overspill car park would not only benefit staff, it would benefit all the users of Grange Paddocks leisure centre and may also encourage other employees within the town to use Grange Paddocks as an alternative to the long stay town centre car parks, which are in short supply. The poor surface of the car park must at present deter people from using it.

2.3 Grange Paddocks is sited in a flood plain and use of permeable paving is a requirement of the Environment Agency for any development within a flood plain containing a large surface area. This inevitably adds to the cost of resurfacing the overspill car park.

2.4 The issue of the additional time it takes to travel to and from work will only be completely resolved by allowing staff to use the town centre car parks. In the meantime, the problem could be partially alleviated by improving walking conditions for staff who choose to use the riverside walk, thereby cutting the travel time by ten minutes per day.

2.4 This could be done by seeking permission from the landowner to provide a footpath on a joint funding basis with East Herts between Grange Paddocks and the town centre. It would need to be an all weather surface in keeping with the rural nature of the area. This would enable staff to use the footpath all the year round as opposed to summer months only. Again, this would not only benefit East Herts staff but the general public also.

### 3.0 Conclusions

- 3.1 It is hoped that the Local Joint Panel will agree to recommend the two measures suggested in this report by the staff side. There would be long-term benefits for all local residents as well as for staff. Resurfacing the overspill car park would enable users of Grange Paddocks and other members of the public to park without risk of damage to their cars. Providing a suitable all weather footpath between Grange Paddocks and the town centre would enable more people, including the disabled to use and enjoy the walk all the year round without risk of slipping on the mud or without the need for a change in clothing or footwear. Improving accessibility to Grange Paddocks may also encourage more people who do not drive to use the facility.

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