

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT & PROPERTY SERVICES COMMITTEE – 12 OCTOBER 2005

TOWN CENTRE – CHRISTMAS PARKING ARRANGEMENTS

Report by Executive Director of Development and Property Services

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to request the Committee to approve the parking arrangements for the Council's off-street car parks in Kilmarnock Town Centre on the four Sundays leading up to Christmas 2005.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting on 16 December 2004 the Committee approved the introduction of parking charges in the short stay car parks in Kilmarnock Town Centre on the 4 Sundays leading up to Christmas 2004, with the inclusion of Nelson Street car park as a short stay car park.

The Committee also requested that the Executive Director of Development & Property Services to prepare a study on the impact that the charges may have on the Kilmarnock retail traders, consult 'Promoting Kilmarnock' on the findings and report back to a future meeting of Development and Property Services Committee.

- 2.2 The purpose of imposition of charges in short stay car parks was to ensure a regular turnover of available spaces throughout the day in the short stay car parks. These would otherwise be filled early in the day by people parking all day free of charge, resulting in queues at these car parks throughout the day, or forcing later shoppers to tour the town centre looking for a parking space. The long stay car parks in the town centre, including the multi-storey which was opened specially on the four Sundays, were all free of charge.

3. SURVEY OF TRADING AT CHRISTMAS 2004

- 3.1 As requested by the Committee East Ayrshire Council and Promoting Kilmarnock carried out a brief survey of a sample of traders within Kilmarnock Town Centre in the period immediately after the 2004 Christmas trading period. A report on the survey is attached to this report. However the main conclusions of the survey, relevant to the car parking issue, were:-

1. The 2004 Christmas trading results in Kilmarnock were generally better than would have been expected the types of comments which were circulating in the national media. There were variations from business to business, but overall there was a level of satisfaction.
2. Immediate post Christmas period (sales times) was good for some of the retailers and in fact out performed the pre Christmas trading.
3. There is general dissatisfaction with the car parking regime, with emphasis being put on the attractions of free parking most locally at Irvine and further a field at Braehead and East Kilbride.

4. IMPLICATIONS FOR PARKING AT CHRISTMAS 2005

- 4.1 The new on-street parking charges in Kilmarnock town centre came into force in April 2005. After some initial scepticism, traders reported in the local press that the on-street parking charges had resulted in a frequent turnover of short stay parking spaces, and had improved access to the town centre for their customers and clients. The on-street parking charges do not apply on Sundays.
- 4.2 However, with regard to the Council's off-street car parks, the clear opinion expressed by the retailers in the survey after Christmas last year was against the imposition of charges on the four Sundays leading up to Christmas.
- 4.3 In view of this, it is considered that charges should not be imposed this year, and that the Head of Roads and Transportation should carry out a survey of the parking pattern in Kilmarnock Town Centre on the four Sundays leading up to Christmas.

5. PROPOSALS FOR CHRISTMAS 2005

- 5.1 The proposals for Christmas 2005 would therefore be to allow free parking in all the Council's off-street car parks, including the multi storey which would be opened on the four Sundays leading up to Christmas.
- 5.2 On-street parking would also remain free of charge, on the Sundays, as at present.
- 5.3 The Head of Roads & Transportation also proposes to carry out parking surveys on the four Sundays leading up to Christmas, to determine the

pattern of parking, and the results will be reported to the Committee at a later date.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** None. The existing Order under which charges are proposed in the off-street car parks includes the provision for charges on Sundays. On normal Sundays this provision is not enforced. (The on-street parking Order does not permit charging on Sundays)

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1** Two attendants would be required to open and supervise the multi-storey car park. The cost of this, approximately £1,000, would be met from the general parking revenues.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1** The Committee is requested to approve the parking arrangements for the four Sundays leading up to Christmas 2005, as detailed in the Report

James Lavery
Executive Director of Development and Property Services

9 September 2005
SG /YK

BACKGROUND PAPERS

**KILMARNOCK TOWN CENTRE. SURVEY OF TRADING AT CHRISTMAS
2004**

**For further information on the contents of this report please contact Sandy
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Implementing Officer: Sandy Gillatt

KILMARNOCK TOWN CENTRE

SURVEY OF TRADING AT CHRISTMAS 2004

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Throughout the period of pre-Christmas trading in 2004, it was widely reported in the national media that across the country, retail businesses were not trading as well as they had hoped.
- 1.2 It was agreed that Promoting Kilmarnock should carry out a brief survey of a sample of retailers within Kilmarnock Town Centre, in the period immediately after the Christmas trading period. It was agreed both by the Board of Promoting Kilmarnock and at East Ayrshire Council that the survey should be brief and should focus on trends, not seeking confidential business information.
- 1.3 In consultation with this office (JRS & RP), the preparation of the survey was done by Tom Meikle of Promoting Kilmarnock and was distributed to the selected retailers immediately prior to Christmas. Due to the fact that Tom Meikle moved to another job at the beginning of January 2005, the survey interviews were carried out by John Spooner in early January 2005.

2. SURVEY SAMPLE

- 2.1 The survey sample was agreed by the Board of Promoting Kilmarnock and was chosen to reflect the range of retailers in Kilmarnock, both national companies and local businesses. The list comprised :

➤ Marks & Spencer	national	clothes / food	PKTC Board
➤ Boots the Chemist	national	Chemist etc	PKTC Board
➤ WH Smith	national	book / stationery	PKTC Board
➤ J H Donald	local	electrical goods	PKTC Board
➤ Burns Mall	local	shopping mall	PKTC Board
➤ Wm Tannahill	local	furniture	
➤ James G Young	local	gent's outfitters	
➤ H Samuel	national	jewellers	
➤ The Coffee Club	local	restaurant	
➤ Argos	national	catalogue retailer	
➤ Chesters	local	jewellers	
➤ JJB Sports	national	sportswear	
➤ Woolworths	national	department store	

With the exception of Woolworths, (from whom no information was obtained) all the above companies were happy to participate in the survey.

3. SURVEY QUESTIONS

3.1 The following questions were agreed and were issued to the selected retailers before Christmas :

- How are your current trading figures when compared with last year (significantly down / slightly down / about the same, slightly better / significantly better) ?
- The national trend is that retail trading up to the week prior to Christmas was down around 5% overall – what is your experience in comparison with national trends, both within your own company and generally ?
- What has been the impact on you business of additional late night and Sunday opening over the Christmas trading period ? Is this a practice which you plan to continue ?
- East Ayrshire Council operates a car-parking management policy, through the levying of charges for the car-parks in Kilmarnock, which includes free parking in the Multi-Storey Car Park on Sundays. Do you think that the parking regime encourages shoppers to Kilmarnock and would you be happy to see the same system operated next year ?

4. SURVEY RESULTS

4.1 As noted above, responses were willingly given by 12 businesses and a perspective from the Manager of the Burns Mall. Woolworths seemed very unwilling to participate and did not honour commitments to obtain permission for area management level – hence no input from that company.

4.2 The results of the survey have been compiled and present the following broad picture, with more detailed information being shown in the appendices :

- **2004 Christmas trading compared with 2003 position**
Broadly a mixed picture in the town – some traders better than previous year, other similar and some slightly better – also some evidence of improved trading immediately after Christmas.
- **Local trends against national / group trends**
Kilmarnock has been OK comparatively, with some evidence of better store performance than in other locations.

- **Extended trading hours**
Where store opening hours were extended, either in evenings or on Sundays, there was unanimity that it was not a worthwhile exercise from the point of view of additional turnover, set against cost.
- **Car parking issues**
Unanimous view is that although it is well intentioned, the parking policy does not benefit the retail community in the Kilmarnock Town Centre.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND COMMENTS

- 5.1** The 2004 Christmas trading results in Kilmarnock were generally better than would have been expected from the types of comments which were circulating in the national media. There were variations from business to business, but overall, there was a level of satisfaction.
- 5.2** The immediate post - Christmas period (sales-time) was good for some of the retailers and in fact out-performed the pre-Christmas trading.
- 5.3** There is general dissatisfaction with the car-parking regime, with emphasis being put on the attractions of free parking most locally at Irvine and further afield at Braehead and East Kilbride.
- 5.4** General comments were also offered about the retailing mix in Kilmarnock – the predominance of charity / card / discount retailers and the lack of some of the national names (e.g. NEXT), the need for a department store in the town (regret the loss of the House of Fraser).

JOHN R SPOONER
Business Development Manager
3 February 2005

APPENDIX 1

QUESTION	
How are your current trading figures when compared with last year (significantly down / slightly down / about the same, slightly better / significantly better) ?	
Retailer	Comments
Marks & Spencer	Same as last year before Christmas – trading fantastic since Christmas, mainly due to excess stock being brought in from other stores
Boots the Chemist	Definitely down on a week by week basis
W H Smith	Slightly down on last year
J H Donald	Slightly down before Christmas – shops done well since Christmas –people spending “Christmas gift money – sales of TV’s not up to usual Christmas levels – due to people having bought TV’s last summer for the football
Burns Mall	Indication of footfall in the Mall is down, but expenditure is up
Wm Tannahill	Improvement on Christmas 2003 – upturn since the beginning of January 2005
James G Young	Broadly same as 2003 but perhaps slightly down – trade tailed off towards Christmas
H Samuel	Slightly better than last year – slow to start then increased
The Coffee Club	Well ahead of last year – approximately 10% increase
Argos	Christmas turnover up about 3% on 2003, but down about 8% - 9% on forecast
Chesters	Did well in Christmas trading - significantly
JJB Sports	Sales started earlier in the year and before Christmas, which helped overall turnover, but trade could have been better.

APPENDIX 2

QUESTION	
The national trend is that retail trading up to the week prior to Christmas was down around 5% overall – what is your experience in comparison with national trends, both within your own company and generally ?	
Retailer	Comments
Marks & Spencer	Trading ahead of national trends and doing OK within local trading group of stores
Boots the Chemist	Finished the Christmas period better than Ayr and comparable with Irvine
W H Smith	Turnover down by about 4% overall, but profit increased by 1% - due to repackaging of “offers” – e.g. “buy 1 get 1 @half price” is better than “2 for £20”
J H Donald	Slightly ahead – the Euronics trading group did better than the Multiples (e.g. Comet)
Burns Mall	No comment
Wm Tannahill	Not relevant
James G Young	Trade understood to be better than other similar businesses in other towns.
H Samuel	Trading was OK at Christmas – in all the shops as a whole
The Coffee Club	This business benefits from other retailers having sales and other promotional events.
Argos	Kilmarnock store has done better than most of the Argos stores in the management grouping
Chesters	The company has another shop in Irvine which has significant pulling power, due to free parking and proximity of supermarkets
JJB Sports	Not known by local manager

APPENDIX 3

QUESTION	
What has been the impact on you business of additional late night and Sunday opening over the Christmas trading period ? Is this a practice which you plan to continue ?	
Retailer	Comments
Marks & Spencer	Additional trading hours not been worth it – big “sale days” held on national basis have been very successful
Boots the Chemist	No late night trading – didn’t loose out – open on Sundays anyway
W H Smith	No additional hours at Christmas – usually open late on Thursday and open on Sunday
J H Donald	Additional hours of opening not justified in this trade
Burns Mall	No comment
Wm Tannahill	No additional hours
James G Young	Opened on Sundays – not worth it
H Samuel	Open last 2 Thursday evenings before Christmas – not successful as the town dies at 5.00 – the draw of Braehead is strong
The Coffee Club	N/A for this business
Argos	Additional opening hours on a Thursday evening and a Sunday – was a waste of time
Chesters	Late night opening was not worth doing Sunday opening was not a great success
JJB Sports	Late opening on a Thursday evening – was a waste of time

APPENDIX 4

QUESTION	
East Ayrshire Council operates a car-parking management policy, through the levying of charges for the car-parks in Kilmarnock, which includes free parking in the Multi-Storey Car Park on Sundays. Do you think that the parking regime encourages shoppers to Kilmarnock and would you be happy to see the same system operated next year ?	
Retailer	Comments
Marks & Spencer	Parking in Kilmarnock does not encourage shoppers – shopping is a leisure activity – range of other accessible shopping options
Boots the Chemist	Parking policy doesn't work, but no alternative suggestions
W H Smith	Current parking regime has little benefit – competing with shopping places with free parking
J H Donald	People go to shopping centres – parking policy discourages shoppers
Burns Mall	Understand Council's policy – not convinced it works
Wm Tannahill	Parking restrictions do not help this business – customers are mainly older folk who are less mobile
James G Young	Customers complain about parking – many customers are older folk who can't walk far – traffic wardens are very understanding
H Samuel	Resistance to paying for parking on Sundays – free parking on the upper floor of the multi is OK but does not suit "quick in and out" to town
The Coffee Club	Parking policy understood and principles agreed - but it is not policed properly and penalties enforced The multi would be more attractive if a lift was installed Weekend shoppers attracted to Braehead etc as shopping is now a leisure activity
Argos	Parking policy doesn't work
Chesters	There should be free parking, especially on a Sunday
JJB Sports	No particular comments