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Dalian House
350 St. Vincent Street
GLASGOW
G3 8YZ



Ms Wendy Alexander, MSP,
Abbey Mill Business Centre,
Mile End,
12 Seedhill Road,
Paisley, PA1 1JS

Date 21st June, 2010.
Your Ref
Our Ref RC/FEB

Enquiries to
Direct Line
E-mail

Dear Wendy,

My apologies for the delay in writing to you following our meeting on 25th May, 2010 at the Southern General Hospital. We have approached Scott Allan of Renfrewshire Council as you had suggested. However, he is unable to schedule a meeting until 29th June, 2010. In the interim we have sought an indication of the areas where he feels the Council could offer assistance to the Board. Mr. Allen has indicated that he believes the Royal Alexandra Hospital could potentially quantify the impact on car parking spaces if a different set of criteria was introduced to the allocation process namely the allocation of permits to staff based on their Post Code of residence i.e. to identify those staff living the furthest distances from the hospital who utilise a car as their daily mode of transport.

I think it is important to restate in context the Board's policy in relation to parking. From ratification of the policy in 2005 and in all subsequent reviews, whether local or national, the Board has been consistent in the view that criteria for allocation of staff permits must be based on the need to use their vehicle on NHS duty. To allocate permits on distance from home to work would reduce considerably the spaces allocated to permit holders who require to use their car in the performance of their duties during peak times.

When we undertook preparatory work with the Staff Partnership Forum and Staff Action Group representatives last year to introduce the car parking policies, a suggestion that some of the spaces in the first come first served staff parking areas be reserved for new/extended permit criteria e.g. carer responsibilities or distance from home to work was rejected by all parties. Unison provided comments on the operational procedures to be applied but addressing the issue of distance from home was not raised as a concern. Indeed the response on permit criteria was to ensure consistent application of the current criteria.

With reference to Scott Allan's suggestions, the Board with the support of a professional company undertook a travel plan framework review across all sites in 2008. That survey identified 21% of Royal Alexandra Hospital staff stayed 1¼ miles or less from the hospital, rising to 58% staying within 5 miles. This survey is being updated following our recent meeting and the results will be ready to share with you in the next two weeks.

The Board continues to commission travel mode surveys regularly at all our sites and Royal Alexandra Hospital will be included as part of that.

Delivering better health

As requested, I attach copies of the formal letters issued to individuals who receive our fixed penalty notices.

In conclusion, the priority for Royal Alexandra Hospital as with all our other sites, is to ensure that patients have ready access to the buildings and that our staff who require to use their vehicles for business purposes throughout the week have access to parking facilities close to their place of work. The concerns raised by staff at the Royal Alexandra Hospital are consistent with those raised earlier in the Car Parking regime introduction at our Glasgow sites and have been the subject of continuous discussion with staff-side partners over the years. The emphasis remains on ensuring that the application of the car parking criteria is applied consistently to all staff members and its introduction at the Royal Alexandra Hospital would be no different.

As I am sure you are aware there are chronic car parking difficulties within the site at the Royal Alexandra Hospital and the need for action to be taken from a Health & Safety perspective alone is a pressing issue for the Board. Against this background it would be our intention to continue with the permit application process based on the existing criteria within the Car Parking Policy. We already have in place staff-side representatives from all the major staff-side organisations prepared to participate in this exercise.

We will continue to look for opportunities to maximise the availability of car parking spaces on the Royal Alexandra Hospital campus.

Clearly I remain happy to have further conversations with you and your MSP colleagues as we progress matters.

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely,

R. Calderwood
Chief Executive

c.c. Mr. Hugh Henry, MSP
Ms. Trish Godman, MSP
Mr. Alex McIntyre