



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

D190

Cabinet

21 November 2012

Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Final Report of the Task and Finish Group: Review of Car Parking Charges Throughout the Borough (Nov12/02)

1. This review was prompted by the presentation of a petition to full Council on 28 February 2012 by Mr Mark Cordell, Chief Executive of Bid4Bury, regarding the "across the board" increase in car parking charges proposed from April 2012. The petition suggested that a far more sophisticated, creative approach to gaining the additional income by the Borough Council was required. The Leader of the Council responded to the petition by advising Council that "a review would be undertaken by the appropriate Committee into car parking charges throughout the Borough to see if there were more entrepreneurial ways of charging, and that businesses and other organisations should be involved".
2. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was subsequently requested to carry out the review, and has undertaken research into the background to previous years' charging changes, and gathered evidence to support changes to the charges from 2013 onwards. After meeting with the Bury Society, Bid4Bury, the Bury St Edmunds Chamber of Commerce, Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill Town Councils and local businesses, plus public surveys carried out across the car parks in September and October 2012, as well as looking in detail at each of the car parks in the Borough individually, the conclusions of the Review Group are that some car parking charges should alter, but that many should remain the same.
3. A number of other issues with regard to car parking also arose during the course of the review, and these are covered in the extensive recommendations to Cabinet detailed in Section 5 overleaf. For ease of reference, the changes to car parking and season ticket charges proposed in Recommendation 1 are attached as Appendix A to this report.
4. The Review Group acknowledges that car parking charges arouse strong feelings around the country, and the Borough of St Edmundsbury is not immune from these sentiments. However, decisions should always be made after a careful study of all available evidence, and the Review

Group is confident that it has provided that evidence to inform future years' charges.

5. The Committee made some minor amendments to the recommendations of the Review Group, and **RECOMMENDS that:**
- (a) **changes to car parking and season ticket charges, as detailed in Annex A to Appendix A to Report D167, be considered for approval in the context of the 2013/2014 budget;**
 - (b) **the Overview and Scrutiny Committee receives a report each September outlining any recommendations from officers for the changing of tariffs in the car parks with supporting evidence and justification for changes, following which the recommendations be considered by the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee as part of the budget setting process;**
 - (c) **a full review of car parking charges takes place every three or four years, with the next full review commencing in May or June 2015;**
 - (d) **the Council promotes the fact that charges for long stay parking are actually low compared to similar towns, and promotes car parking charges on the website and with improved signage across the Borough, and more promotion of season tickets and the RingGo pay by phone system;**
 - (e) **greater publicity be given to the fact that School Yard East Car Park is the only dedicated low emissions car park in the country, to link in with the 'Greenest County' aspiration and the growing trend for 'green' transport;**
 - (f) **the option of low emission parking in School Yard West Car Park be offered, along with the existing tariff;**
 - (g) **low emission cars be allocated more spaces than at present, including exploration of low emissions car parking spaces in Haverhill, to match the increasing popularity of this type of vehicle, with tariffs set at levels which encourage the trend towards 'green' transport;**
 - (h) **an interchangeable annual permit be offered in Nowton Park and West Stow Country Park at £15 per annum, with a restriction of 3 hours maximum stay with no return within 2 hours at Nowton Park and no restriction at West Stow Country Park;**
 - (i) **an independent feasibility study be commissioned to investigate Pay on Exit for one or more of the car parks in both Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill, and that it be noted that the Committee has advised that the two most obvious**

choices are Parkway Surface (265 spaces at present) and Ehringshausen Way (210 spaces);

- (j) blue badge information displayed on signs in the car parks across the Borough be reviewed to ensure it is displayed in the most appropriate space, and highlighted to ensure it is visibly displayed;
- (k) from 2014 onwards, all tariffs should be capable of being paid for by using no more than three coins, the coins currently in use being 10p, 20p, 50p £1, and £2, but not applying to pay by phone or pay on exit options;
- (l) the Council works with Suffolk County Council to set on-street charges and parking restrictions as discussed at Section 3.8 of Appendix A to Report D167;
- (m) the Council promotes the offer of free parking at Olding Road car park at weekends;
- (n) the Council explores a policy for reviewing the Excess Charge Notice appeals, looking into the possibility of using the Traffic Penalty Tribunal as the final arbitrator or introducing an independent appeals panel, and that the current excess parking charges of £70 be reduced to £60;
- (o) the Council publicises and promotes the 'Parky', and explores the possibility of working in partnership with Bid4Bury, Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill Chambers of Commerce and Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill Town Councils on this;
- (p) the Council reviews the location and size of blue badge parking bays in all of the Borough's car parks to ensure they are in the most appropriate location and of a size convenient for users; and
- (q) the Council works in partnership with Suffolk County Council to resolve the issue of blue badge holders parking in Haverhill High Street.

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Annex A to Appendix A to Report D167 – recommendations on a car park by car park basis

The evidence gathered by the Review Group has suggested that, whilst “across the board” increases in car parking charges have not had a negative impact on the number of car parking events, and that charges were still lower than those in comparative towns, further increases should only be considered following a car park by car park analysis of charges, to ensure we start from a sturdy base.

Historically, charges were set following a 2003 review by the then Budget Panel aimed to bring about a situation whereby the closer you were to the town centre, the higher the charges would be. This was the usual situation in many towns.

The table on page 17 is a summary of recommended changes to tariffs followed by consideration of each car park including season ticket proposals.

Recommended tariffs from Monday 8 April 2013

Prices in blue are the recommended changes, black indicates no change:

	Tariffs													
	30 mins		1 hour		2 hours		3 hours		4 hours		All day	Night Charge		
Cattle Market/ arc	-		£2.00		£2.80	£3.00	£3.30		£3.90	£4.00	-	£1.10	£1.00	
St Andrews 1 – Short Stay	£0.60		£1.10		£1.40	£2.00	£1.80	£2.70	£2.20	N/A	-	-	£1.00	
St Andrews 2 – Long Stay											£3.00			
Ram Meadow	-		-		-	£1.50	-	£1.80	£1.70	N/A	£2.20			
Parkway Multi - Deck	-		-		-	£1.50	-	£1.80	£1.70	N/A	£2.20			
Parkway Surface (current charges are for Saturday)	-		£1.10	N/A	£1.40	£1.60	£1.80	£2.00	£2.20		-			
Robert Boby	-		£0.20*		£2.20		£2.80	£3.00	£3.30	N/A	-		-	£1.00
Lower Baxter	£0.60	£0.80	£1.70	£1.50	£2.20		-		-		-		£1.10	£1.00
School Yard East – Low Emissions only	-		-		-		-	£1.80	-		£1.70	N/A	-	£1.00
School Yard West	-		£2.00		£2.80	£3.00	£3.30		£3.90	N/A	-		-	£1.00
School Yard West – Low Emissions							-	£2.20						
Manor House	-		-		-		£1.70	£1.80	-		£4.40	£4.00	-	£1.00
Ehringshausen Way	-		£0.30	£0.40			-	£1.00	£1.10	N/A	£2.20			
Lower Downs Slade	-		£0.30	£0.40	-		£0.90	£1.00	-		-			
Town Hall	-		£0.30	£0.40	-		-	£1.00	-		£1.70	£2.00		
Leisure Centre									£1.10	N/A	£2.20			
Meadows	-		£0.30	£0.40	-		-	£1.00	£1.10	N/A	£2.20			

* Charge not set by St Edmundsbury Borough Council

Bury St Edmunds

There are 11 Borough Council car parks in or near Bury St Edmunds town centre: Cattle Market/arc (862 spaces) Robert Boby (111) Lower Baxter (38) School Yard East (24) School Yard West (38) Manor House (40) Ram Meadow (800) Parkway Decked (600) Parkway Surface (265) St Andrews 2 (224) and St Andrews 1 (322 spaces), totalling 3324 spaces.

Cattle Market/arc (medium stay) (862 spaces)

The recommendation is that one hour tariff remains unaltered but that the two hour tariff rises by 20p to £3, the three hour tariff remains unchanged, and the four hour tariff increases by 10p to £4.

After 6pm a charge of £1 should apply but anyone with a valid ticket at this time can stay all evening free of charge. In 2014 the 3hr tariff should rise by 20p to £3.50. There should be no increase in 2015.

St Andrews 1 (short/medium stay) (322 spaces)

The short stay half of St Andrews currently offers 5 tariffs ranging from 30 minutes to 4 hours. A short stay car park is defined as 3 hours or less so the recommendation is to remove the 4 hour option.

The tariff for 30 minutes and one hour remain unaltered, with a recommendation to remove the 4 hour tariff, and increase the 2 hour tariff from £1.40 to £2.00 and the 3 hour tariff from £1.80 to £2.70.

Even with these recommendations for increasing the 2 and 3 hour changes, this is still cheaper compared to the other two town centre car parks.

Those not wishing to pay £2.00 for 2 hours could alternatively use Ram Meadow or Parkway Decked for £1.50 or Parkway Surface for £1.60. For the £2.70 for 3 hour alternative, customers could use the cheaper option of Ram Meadow, Parkway Decked, or Manor House for £1.80.

This is the second most used car park in Bury St Edmunds with 280,000 events a year. There are only 322 spaces, and Saturday mornings are a particularly busy time in this car park.

As this car park is now open 24 hours a day, the recommendation is to introduce an evening charge of £1.00.

St Andrews 2 (long stay) (224 spaces)

This is already a long stay car park with a daily charge of £3. We recommend that this remains unaltered. This tariff is 80p higher than at Ram Meadow or Parkway Decked so not as well-used. We recommend that to encourage greater use of this car park, season tickets are introduced, which may increase the usage.

With the changes recommended to make School Yard East a short stay car park, there will be a need to provide a long stay option for low emission cars. We recommend that an 8 week Green Season Ticket for low emission cars is introduced at a charge of £72. This is £12 more than a season ticket in Ram Meadow or Parkway Decked but still

represents excellent value and helps promote Bury St Edmunds as the Greenest Town in the Greenest County. To reinforce this message an ordinary season ticket should be offered at £84 for 8 weeks. This would still be good value as the 5 day a week user would be effectively paying £2.10 a day compared to the £3 daily charge. A 6 day user would pay £1.75 and a 7 day user £1.50.

If this car park is 'flooded' with low emission cars or ordinary season ticket holders at a rate of £2.10 a day, the daily charge should rise to £3.20 in 2014 and up to £3.50 in 2015 if necessary. The need to promote season tickets generally is discussed elsewhere in this report.

Ram Meadow (long stay) (800 spaces)

This car park is situated on the eastern edge of the town centre and there is evidence that shoppers prefer other car parks with higher tariffs. So, we recommend the introduction of a 2 hour tariff of £1.50 to encourage greater use.

The average walking time from the far side of this car park to the Post Office on Cornhill is 8 minutes. We recommend that the current 4 hour charge be reduced to 3 hours and rises by 10p to £1.80, and that the daily charge remains at £2.20.

An entry barrier is lowered here at 22.30 at the request of the Suffolk Constabulary. However, a small section of this car park remains open 24 hours a day.

Season Tickets are currently available at £61.60 for 8 weeks minimum. We recommend this falls to £60. For someone using this car park 5 days a week this is £1.50 a day. For 6 or 7 day users the average daily cost is even lower. Partner organisations such as the Chamber of Commerce and Bid4Bury will be invited to jointly promote this offer, as it will be of advantage to town centre shops and office workers.

Parkway Multi-Decked (600 spaces)

Usage of this car park is lower than Ram Meadow despite its close proximity to the main retail area.

At the Focus Group meetings with businesses, the need to encourage greater use of this car park was raised. Therefore we recommend the introduction of a new 2 hour tariff at £1.50, the current 4 hour charge be reduced to 3 hours and rises by 10p to £1.80, with the daily tariff and the Sunday charge of £1.00 remaining unaltered.

Since 2004, the charging regime has been identical to Ram Meadow except for evenings and Sundays. We want to keep this link so the recommendation for Ram Meadow above is identical.

Parkway Surface (265 spaces)

It is recommended in 3.4.2 in this report that Parkway Surface is to be the subject of an independent feasibility study to consider converting to a Pay on Exit car park. If the study recommends against or there is delay in implementation beyond April 2013, we recommend that the following simplified charging regime applies from Monday 08 April 2013.

There are currently 8 different tariffs in operation in a normal week and we want to reduce this to just 3. They are: 2hr £1.60; 3hr £2; 4hr £2.20. There is no evening charge as the entry barrier is lowered at 18.00 as a planning condition imposed in December 2003. Conversion to Pay on Exit would not affect this condition.

Season tickets should be discontinued.

Robert Bobby (111 spaces)

There is a restriction in the Robert Bobby car park that the first hour has to be set in agreement with the developer, and Sundays are free to park. The Borough has not to date been able to influence these restrictions.

This is essentially a short stay car park so the recommendation is that the two hour tariff remains unaltered, the three hour tariff rises by 20p to £3, and to reflect this car park as short stay the 4 hour tariff be discontinued.

As this car park is open in the evenings a £1.00 night charge is also recommended.

Increased inspection is essential to prevent users overstaying their limit.

Lower Baxter (short stay) (38 spaces)

This is a short-stay car park with a limit of 2 hours per visit. Our recommendation is that the 30 minute tariff rises by 20p to 80p, the 1 hour tariff falls by 20p to £1.50 and the 2 hour charge of £2.20 remains unaltered.

The evening charge of £1.10 should be reduced to £1, but as with the Cattle Market anyone with a valid ticket at this time can stay all evening free of charge.

In addition, charging on Wednesday mornings should not start until 10.00am as opposed to 08.00am on the other weekdays. This would allow shoppers on the street market a free parking slot until that time. However, a ticket must be obtained at 10.00am or just before. A leaflet campaign would be needed to advertise this concession.

School Yard East (low emissions only) (24 spaces)

This is a dedicated low emissions car park which currently offers an all day tariff for £1.70 and is quite often full by 9.00am.

We recommend a change to this by introducing a short stay tariff only option of 3 hours for £1.80. If demand is so high that spaces are not available, the tariff should increase to £2 in 2014.

See also School Yard West and St Andrews 2 to gain a full picture of our low emissions strategy.

The barrier at both School Yard car parks should not be lowered until 22.30pm on any evening, including Sundays. A £1 evening charge should apply from 18.00pm Monday to Friday and from 16.00pm on Sundays at both School Yard car parks.

School Yard West (38 spaces)

The current charging structure mirrors the Cattle Market/arc car park. We recommend that this continues but that the 4 hour tariff is deleted.

In 2014 the 3 hour charge should rise to £3.50. In addition, we recommend that low emission cars can park here for 3 hours for £2.20.

If School Yard East needs to rise in 2014, the differential of 40p should be maintained and the charge rise to £2.40.

There was little interest in the weekly ticket offer of £24.20, so this should be discontinued.

Manor House (40 spaces)

This car park is the subject of a planning consent to build homes, however use of a similar size car park at Shire Hall has been agreed.

The current tariffs are 3 hours for £1.70 and all day for £4.40. We recommend that the 3 hour tariff rises by 10p to £1.80 and the daily tariff falls by 40p to £4.

An evening charge of £1 is recommended.

Haverhill

There are currently five car parks in Haverhill: Ehringshausen Way (210 spaces) Lower Downs Slade (100 spaces) Town Hall (283 spaces) and Leisure Centre/Meadows.

Community and business leaders advise us that none of these car parks ever become so full that cars queue to enter any of the sites.

With the exception of the 3 hour charge in the short-stay only Lower Downs Slade car park, there is no interim tariff of 2 or 3 hours anywhere at our four sites. In Ehringshausen Way and Meadows the only options are 1 hour, 4 hours or all day. In the Town Hall car park it is either 1 hour or all day.

When the 10% increase was applied in April 2012, the 1 hour charge in Haverhill went from 30p to 33p, and as the Borough raises charges in units of 10p, it dropped back down to 30p. The recommended 3 hour charge of £1 has a value of 33.3p an hour. The 1 hour charge should be higher than the hourly rate for a longer stay. We therefore recommend that the 1 hour charge in all four car parks is 40p, fixed for 3 years.

Ehringshausen Way (210 spaces)

The recommendation is that the short stay options rises by 10p, the 4 hour tariff is replaced by a 3 hour tariff at 10p less, and the daily charge remains unaltered and fixed for three years starting on Monday 8 April 2013. This is the most popular car park in Haverhill in respect of events and income generated.

This car park is recommended for a feasibility study for Pay on Exit.

Lower Downs Slade (100 spaces)

This is the only car park in Haverhill without a long stay option, the recommendations are that both tariffs rise by 10p.

Town Hall (283 spaces)

The recommendation is to introduce a three hour charge at £1.00, which gives a third option for users of this car park. The one hour charge rises by 10p and the daily charge by 30p.

Leisure Centre (138 spaces)

The recommendation is that the daily charge remains unaltered and fixed for three years as with Ehringshausen Way, and removing the 4 hour option, making this a long stay only car park.

Meadows (250 spaces)

As with Ehringshausen Way, the recommendation is that the short stay options rises by 10p, the 4 hour tariff is replaced by a 3 hour tariff at 10p less, and the daily charge remains unaltered and fixed for three years starting on Monday 8 April 2013

Season Tickets

From the consultation it was suggested that a greater take-up of season tickets would follow if the price structure was more tempting.

While each space sold Monday to Friday by season ticket is likely to generate income, this may not be the case on Saturdays due to an increased number of shoppers.

We therefore recommend that a 5-day Monday to Friday season ticket be offered and that a 6-day Monday to Saturday season ticket at a higher rate is also offered. This replaces all existing season ticket schemes.

An 8-week Monday to Friday permit at the Town Hall car park would cost £40 (£1 a day as suggested in the consultation) and the 6-day ticket £52.

In Ehringshausen Way, where the events are higher in number and there are 73 fewer spaces than at the Town Hall, the Monday to Friday charge should be £60 (a saving of £1.60 on the current season ticket) and the 6-day season ticket £72 (a saving of £1.44).

Although the savings at Ehringshausen Way are small, the discount in the Town Hall car park is greater. The current charge for a 5-day season ticket is £46.16 and £55.36 for 6 days. The savings are £6.16 for Monday to Friday users and £3.36 for those who add Saturdays.

We hope that the Chamber of Commerce and the Town Council will want to work with the Borough Council to promote these new season ticket initiatives as a bargain for shop and office workers in Haverhill.

Low Emissions Car Parks

One of the questions raised as a result of the consultation was why there are no low emissions car parks in Haverhill. This needs to be explored further by the Haverhill Area Working Party or similar local sub-committee of the Borough Council.

Parks and Country Parks

Hardwick Heath

(Current tariffs: £0.30 - 1 hour, £2.20 - 2 hours, £4.50 – 3 hours, £10.50 over 3 hours)

The recommendation is to change this car park to a maximum stay of 3 hours, on the basis that there is little use of the over 3 hour tariff, and increase the 1 hour charge by 10p.

Permits are currently offered to football leagues for their teams for weekends during football season only.

Nowton Park

(Current tariffs: £1 - 2 hours, £2 over two hours)

Charges were introduced from April 2012. There is also the option to purchase an annual permit for £15, and there is no recommendation to change these tariffs as a result of this review.

A Nowton Park petition was presented to the Council on behalf of the Bury Town Branch Labour Party on Tuesday 19 June 2012. As mentioned by Councillor Griffiths at full Council regarding Nowton Park:

1. the net costs of running the Park in 2012/2013 was estimated at £195,000;
2. the Council had recently invested £525,000 in the new Visitors' Centre, incorporating enhanced changing rooms, toilets and a café;
3. the Council had also earmarked £30,000 towards improvements to the play area;
4. consultation had taken place during the budget setting process;
5. car parking charges were levied not only at Nowton Park but other equivalent country parks within the area; and
6. the Council purchased Nowton Park in September 1985 for £425,000.

He concluded that it was too early to review the impact of the parking charges, not least because the poor weather had affected visit numbers to all parks, and any new charging system needed to 'settle down'.

With only four months further on, and further investment planned at Nowton Park in terms of installing modern bicycle stores, the review group is of the opinion that this is still the case and recommends no change to the charges introduced in April 2012.

West Stow Country Park

(Current charges: £1 up to an hour, £2 all day)

Currently a yearly pass is available at £10 with a Heritage Ticket or £15 without.

The review group are recommending that an interchangeable annual permit be offered in Nowton Park, and West Stow Country Park, at £15 per annum, with a restriction of 3 hours maximum stay with no return within 2 hours at Nowton Park and no restriction at West Stow Country Park.

Clare Castle Country Park

The Council currently manages this site on a one year contract, with no guarantee that this arrangement will continue post March 2013. The group felt it was not appropriate to amend these charges at the moment.

Vinery Road Car Park

It was approved at Cabinet on 16 March 2011 that this car park should offer 2 hours' free parking and annual season tickets for stays in excess of 2 hours between 9:00am and 5:00pm Monday to Saturdays (Report B466 refers). There are no recommendations to change these arrangements.