



## Cabinet 12 December 2012

### Response to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Review of Car Parking Charges throughout the Borough (Dec12/02)

#### 1. Summary and reasons for recommendations

- 1.1 In February 2012, in response to a petition regarding the 2012/2013 increase in car parking charges, the Leader of the Council requested the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to undertake a review of the impact of the changes. Considerable work followed, led by Councillor Nettleton, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, resulting in a report presented to Cabinet on 21 November 2012 (Report D190 refers) which made 17 recommendations about car parking in St Edmundsbury.
- 1.2 In light of the range and depth of recommendations, Cabinet tasked officers to bring back a full response for their consideration.
- 1.3 This report sets out the officer response for Cabinet's consideration.
- 1.4 Decisions will be fed through into the 2013/2014 budget, which will be presented to Full Council in February 2013.

#### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** that subject to the budget setting process, where applicable that, in response to Report D190, which contained 17 recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding car parking charges throughout the Borough:
  - (a) Recommendations (2), (3), (4), (5), (7), (9), (10), (12), (15), (16), (17) be accepted;
  - (b) Recommendations (1), (8), and (13) be accepted with modifications, as set out in Section 4.5 of Report D223;
  - (c) Recommendations (6), (11) and (14) be rejected, for the reasons set out in Section 4.6 of Report D223; and
- 2.2 Cabinet give consideration to the further options proposed by officers at Section 4.7 of Report D223 and make additional recommendations to Council if required.

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### 3. Corporate priorities

- 3.1 The recommendations meet the following council priorities, as contained within the Corporate Plan:

Priority 1: *Working together for strong, healthy and diverse communities;*

Priority 2: *Working together for prosperous and environmentally-responsible communities; and*

Priority 3: *Working together for an efficient council.*

### 4. Key issues

- 4.1 In February 2012 the Leader of the Council, in response to a petition regarding the 2012/2013 increase in car parking charges, requested the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to undertake a review of the impact of the changes. Considerable work followed, led by Councillor Nettleton, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, resulting in a report presented to Cabinet on 21 November 2012 (Report D190 refers and for ease of reference is attached as Appendix B to this report) which made 17 recommendations about car parking in St Edmundsbury.
- 4.2 The Cabinet welcomed the report, and extended their thanks to Councillor Nettleton and his Committee for the thorough and overarching review. In light of the range and depth of recommendations, they tasked officers to bring back a full response for its consideration. The response which the Cabinet adopts at this meeting will be referred to full Council in February 2013 as part of the budget-setting process.
- 4.3 Officers have discussed the proposals with the Portfolio Holder, and while it is clear that it will be impossible to satisfy all affected parties in every respect, feel that the following recommendations are a robust and considered response to the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Task and Finish Group (which carried out the car parking review) and the views expressed by customers, businesses and their representative bodies, town councils, Members, residents and council tax payers.
- 4.4 Recommendations **endorsed by Cabinet with no changes:**
- (2) *the Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive 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;***
  - (3) *a full review of car parking charges take place every three or four years, with the next full review commencing in May or June 2015;***
  - (4) *the Council promote the fact that charges for long stay parking are actually low compared to similar towns, and promote 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;***

- (5) *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;*
- (7) *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;*
- (9) *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 it be noted that the Committee advises that the two most obvious choices are Parkway Surface Car Park (265 spaces at present) and Ehringshausen Way Car Park (210 spaces);*
- (10) *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;*
- (12) *the Council work with Suffolk County Council to set on-street charges and parking restrictions as discussed at section 3.8 of Appendix A to Report D167;*
- (15) *the Council publicise and promote the 'Parky', and explore 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;*
- (16) *the Council review 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*
- (17) *the Council work in partnership with Suffolk County Council to resolve the issue of blue badge holders parking in Haverhill High Street.*

4.5 Recommendations **endorsed by Cabinet subject to modifications:**

- (1) *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;*

4.5.1 Commentary in respect of Recommendation (1) above

Some charges have been increased and some charges either frozen or reduced. Overall, the proposed charges have avoided 'across the board' increases and applied site by site rationales. The proposals to introduce new bands in most car parks will offer more flexibility to customers.

Night charges have been reduced to £1 from £1.10 making an easy one coin payment. It is proposed that charges will only apply to a customer after 6pm and display of *a valid ticket at 6pm* will be accepted (which addresses retailer

concerns about staff having to return to the car park to buy a night charge). The recommendations to introduce night charges to some other sites create a consistent approach to traffic management in the town at night.

Season Ticket sales have declined in recent years and the recommendations to reduce the charges at Long Stay sites will offer savings to workers in the town.

#### 4.5.2 **Proposed modifications to Recommendation (1):**

- (i) It is felt that the only change required to what has been proposed by the Committee in Appendix A attached to this report, is the charge for St Andrews 1 – short stay, where a single jump to the proposed increases is too high. It is therefore suggested to charge £1.80 for 2 hours and £2.20 for 3 hours. See Appendix A for details.
- (ii) Robert Boby is not open in the evening, and an evening charge is therefore inapplicable.
- (iii) Resident Permit Holders should be exempt from any new night time charges proposed in Appendix A.

#### 4.5.3 **(8) *an interchangeable annual permit be offered for 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;***

#### 4.5.4 **Proposed modification to Recommendation (8) above**

4.5.5 An interchangeable permit is an excellent idea, but officers do not feel there is any need to restrict hours in Nowton Park at the current time. The concerns of the Committee are noted but, since there is currently no pressure on the car park's capacity during weekdays, it is suggested that this situation is, instead, kept under review, with the ability to introduce a time restriction at a future date if necessary.

#### 4.5.6 **(13) *the Council promote the offer of free parking at Olding Road Car Park at weekends;***

#### 4.5.7 **Proposed modification to Recommendation (13) above**

4.5.8 This is an excellent suggestion, which will hopefully be utilised by businesses with staff working in Bury St Edmunds. The only weekends when it would **not** be acceptable to offer free parking at Olding Road Car Park is during Park and Ride weekends.

#### 4.6 Recommendations which Cabinet suggest **should be rejected:**

- (6) *the option of low emission parking in School Yard West Car Park be offered, along with the existing tariff;***

#### 4.6.1 Commentary in respect of Recommendation (6) above

School Yard West Car Park currently has the same charges as Cattle market/arc and effectively acts as an overflow site during peak periods. There is a risk that this site will be 'flooded' with low emission car users. Offering different rates may be confusing in such a small site as the rate proposed also differs from the School Yard East Car Park offer with no clear rationale for this.

#### 4.6.2 **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the proposal detailed in Recommendation (6) above should be rejected.

#### 4.6.3 **(11) *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;***

#### 4.6.4 Commentary in respect of Recommendation (11) above

This may result in 'rounding up' of charges to achieve a three coin payment. It is hoped that by 2014 significant numbers of customers will have moved onto RingGO. It may therefore be too early to make such a commitment.

#### 4.6.5 **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the proposal detailed in Recommendation (11) above should be rejected at the moment.

#### 4.6.6 **(14) *the Council explore 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;***

#### 4.6.7 Commentary in respect of Recommendation (14) above

The Traffic Penalty Tribunal arbitrates fines issued under TMA(2004) legislation and not under RTRA(1984) legislation, the latter being the legislation that the Borough Council works under. There is also no clear rationale for reduction in fine level.

#### 4.6.8 **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the proposal detailed in Recommendation (14) above should be rejected.

#### 4.7 **Further Options proposed for consideration by Cabinet**

##### 4.7.1 Officers have reviewed all of the feedback from the extensive surveys carried out with residents in car parks, and with business and market trader focus groups. A number of areas not already addressed by the scrutiny review – or developed as a direct result of the review – are listed below for Cabinet's consideration.

#### 4.7.2 RingGo

4.7.3 There is clearly a lack of awareness about RingGo and the flexibility it offers to customers. In addition, and further to the comments above, RingGo has agreed to make a presentation to Bid4Bury members explaining the potential of rewarding customers' loyalty by offering reduced rate and free parking through RingGo's existing loyalty schemes.

4.7.4 Officers have also identified a RingGo service which *closely mirrors the Pay On Exit model* whereby a customer can arrive on site, identify themselves to RingGo through a mobile phone call or text without specifying a fixed parking period. On return, another call or text to RingGo will end the parking period and a payment for this period made. This creates complete flexibility (where the service is offered) without the capital investment of barrier and Pay On Foot systems. We will trial this system with immediate effect, and ensure it is properly publicised. The outcome of this will be fed into the feasibility study for Pay On Exit suggested in recommendation (9) of the scrutiny review.

#### 4.7.5 Parking Offers

4.7.6 One area that was proposed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was free parking in Lower Baxter Street from 8am to 10am on Wednesday mornings. Cabinet may wish to consider this. A further option (which might be easier to implement) is the option of a limited trial period of free parking, to support residents and businesses who may be struggling financially. Cabinet could therefore consider:

**(i) Free Thursday late night parking from 4pm at short stay car parks in Bury St Edmunds**

This would include suspending the night charge so that customers arriving between 4pm and 6pm would not need to return to the car park at 6pm to buy a night ticket. The offer builds on the Christmas late night shopping offer with a year-round scheme, and is intended to provide a boost to the night time economy.

Approximate loss of income per year would be £32,600.

**(ii) Free Friday 4pm to 6pm in all short stay Haverhill car parks**

As above, this offer builds on the Christmas late night offer. No suspension of night charges would be required as there are none in Haverhill.

Approximate loss of income per year would be £1,820.

#### 4.7.7 Weekly ticket to be made available at all sites that offer season tickets.

4.7.8 The decline in season ticket sales could be linked to the relatively high cash outlay for the current minimum purchase period of 8 weeks. It is therefore proposed to offer a weekly ticket, priced at £7.50 for 6 days, with the purchase being made at credit card enabled pay machines or through RingGo. There would be no administration costs, and the only charge the Council would incur is that of adapting a limited number of the machines to enable a credit/debit card reader.

Approximate costs of adapting machines would be £4,500.

## **5. Other options considered**

- 5.1 There is of course virtually no end of options that could be offered in terms of the pricing and service delivered in the Borough's car parks. Given the extensive work undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny committee, it is felt that there is no need for further options to be considered.

## **6. Community impact**

### **6.1 Crime and disorder impact** *(including Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998)*

- 6.1.1 N/A.

### **6.2 Diversity and equality impact** *(including the findings of the Equality Impact Assessment)*

- 6.2.1 The recommendations are in line with the Council's fees and charges policy, which has been the subject of an Equality Impact Assessment.

### **6.3 Sustainability impact** *(including completing a Sustainability Impact Assessment)*

- 6.3.1 A sustainability impact appraisal has been undertaken and the findings have been taken into account in the development of these proposals

## **7. Consultation** *(what consultation has been undertaken, and what were the outcomes?)*

- 7.1 Extensive consultation was carried out by Councillor Nettleton and staff from the car parks, which included:

- (a) five focus groups attended by a wide range of individual businesses and market traders, business representative groups, and town councillors; and
- (b) 1057 surveys of car park customers, at point of use.

## **8. Financial and resource implications** *(including asset management implications)*

- 8.1 Any of the options proposed in 4.7.5 would generate extra cost to the Council (the detail of which is set out alongside each offer). These costs and the wider impact of the other changes proposed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, if adopted, would be built into normal budget-setting.



**9. Risk/opportunity assessment** (potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)

<b>Risk area</b>	<b>Inherent level of risk</b> (before controls)	<b>Controls</b>	<b>Residual risk</b> (after controls)
	High/Medium/Low		High/Medium/Low
Car park prices are set incorrectly, resulting in either charges being too high or too low. Both scenarios could result in suboptimal performance in the car parks.	Medium	Extensive consultation has been carried out, and clear rationale provided by O&S for proposed changes.	Low
Town centres are adversely affected by any increases.	Low	Feedback from customers and benchmarking information provided to O&S demonstrates that increases are not excessive.	Low

**10. Legal and policy implications**

10.1 N/A

**11. Wards affected**

11.1 All.

**12. Background papers**

12.1 Report D167 - Final Report of the Car Parking Charges Review Group

**13. Documents attached**

13.1 Appendix A - amended version of that attached to Reports D167 and D190  
 Appendix B - Report D190: Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Final Report of the Task and Finish Group: Review of Car Parking Charges Throughout the Borough.

### Appendix A: 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	<del>£2.00</del> £1.80	£1.80	<del>£2.70</del> £2.20	£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	-	-	<del>£1.00</del>	
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



*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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