

Cabinet



Forest Heath
District Council

Title of Report:	Car Parking Review	
Report No:	CAB/FH/15/063	
Report to and date:	Cabinet	22 December 2015
Portfolio holder:	David Bowman Portfolio Holder for Operations Tel: 07711 593737 Email: david.bowman@forest-heath.gov.uk	
Lead officer:	Darren Dixon Car Parking Services Manager Tel: 01284 757413 Email: darren.dixon@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Purpose of report:	To review the management and operation of car parking in Forest Heath.	
Recommendation:	It is <u>RECOMMENDED</u> that subject to the adoption of the budget by Council, it is recommended that Cabinet: (i) Approve the recommendations set out in Paragraph 2.4 and instruct Officers to issue a revised Traffic Road Order for public consultation. (ii) Note the investigation by Suffolk County Council into on-street parking and agree the next steps.	
Key Decision: <i>(Check the appropriate box and delete all those that do not apply.)</i>	<i>Is this a Key Decision and, if so, under which definition?</i> Yes, it is a Key Decision - <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No, it is not a Key Decision - <input type="checkbox"/> (a) A key decision means an executive decision which, pending any further guidance from the Secretary of State, is likely to: (i) result in any new expenditure, income or savings of more than £50,000 in relation to the Council's revenue budget or capital programme;	

<p><i>The decisions made as a result of this report will usually be published within 48 hours and cannot be actioned until five clear working days of the publication of the decision have elapsed. This item is included on the Decisions Plan.</i></p>			
Consultation:		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newmarket Vision Transport Group • Newmarket Vision Town Centre/Tourism Group • Newmarket Retailers Association • Suffolk County Council 	
Alternative option(s):		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To make no changes to car parking tariffs and car parking restrictions to address capacity issues in Newmarket • Introduction of charges across all market towns in the district. 	
Implications:			
<p><i>Are there any financial implications? If yes, please give details</i></p>		<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendations if agreed would generate net additional income for the car parking account. 	
<p><i>Are there any staffing implications? If yes, please give details</i></p>		<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any increase in the levels of enforcement would require additional staff resource 	
<p><i>Are there any ICT implications? If yes, please give details</i></p>		<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	
<p><i>Are there any legal and/or policy implications? If yes, please give details</i></p>		<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variation to the current Traffic Road Order will be required to adopt changes. 	
<p><i>Are there any equality implications? If yes, please give details</i></p>		<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	
Risk/opportunity assessment:		<i>(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)</i>	
Risk area	Inherent level of risk (before controls)	Controls	Residual risk (after controls)
Car parking tariffs are set incorrectly resulting in sub-optimal performance	Medium	Regular consultation should be carried out to provide clear rationale for proposed changes	Low
Town centres adversely affected by tariff changes	Low	Feedback from customers/ Stakeholders and benchmarking information	Low
Ward(s) affected:		All	
Background papers: <i>(all background papers are to be published on the website and a link included)</i>		None	

Documents attached:

(Please list any appendices.)

Appendix 1 – Existing Car Parking Tariffs

Appendix 2 – Car Parking Income 2014-15

Appendix 3 – Home of Horseracing Visitor Profile

Appendix 4 – Newmarket On-Street Parking Investigation (Suffolk County Council)

1. Key issues and reasons for recommendation(s)

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 The last review of car parks in Forest Heath was undertaken in 2012. The profile of car parking has since changed, operation costs have risen and future developments, particularly in Newmarket town centre, are on the horizon.
- 1.1.2 Across the 13 public parks, the District Council provides 1,199 car parking spaces in Forest Heath. This can be broken down as set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Location/ Car Park	Short Stay	Long Stay
Newmarket		
Guineas	238	105
Rouse Road	197	
Market Square	58	
All Saints		162
Grosvenor Yard		76
St Marys		40
George Lambton		40
Mildenhall		
Recreation		133
Carters Yard	20	
Brandon		
Bury Road		58
George St		40
Lakenheath		
Wings Road		32

In the towns of Mildenhall, Lakenheath and Brandon the vast majority of car parking is long stay provision and free to use by the general public. Newmarket car parks are chargeable and places restrictions on maximum length of stay.

- 1.1.3 Newmarket has 874 off street car parking spaces in the town centre; short stay provision accounts for 56% (491 spaces) and long stay 44% (383 spaces). The current car park tariffs for Newmarket are set out in Appendix 1
- 1.1.4 The use of car parks varies by location and across different times of the week. Usage is measured by the number of car parking events in each car park which is recorded when a ticket is purchased from a Pay and Display machine and therefore, only accurate data is available for Newmarket. Data from our systems suggest car parking events in Newmarket has dipped in recent years (as illustrated below) but has shown an increase over the past nine months and predicted to return to 2012 levels by the end of 2015.

2012	657,996 car parking acts
2013	652,867 car parking acts
2014	626, 867 car parking acts

Year to date: Jan to Oct 2015 – 467,063 car parking acts (Jan to Oct 2014 – 430,898)

- 1.1.5 The car parking operation in the towns of Mildenhall, Lakenheath and Brandon is more self-regulatory in the absence of charging or restrictions on permitted length of stay parking. The Council’s team of Car Parking Attendants have audited the car parks by counting of parked cars and report the following:

	Average Occupancy
Mildenhall – Recreation CP	60%
Mildenhall – Carters Yard	75%
Brandon – George St	85%
Brandon – Bury Road	80%
Lakenheath	60%

- 1.1.6 The industry standard for an efficient car park is an occupancy rate of 95%. The recorded use of the Mildenhall, Lakenheath and Brandon car parks suggest they operate well below this rate and can accommodate significant growth in the medium to long term.

- 1.1.7 A more comprehensive survey has been conducted in Newmarket to measure the capacity of the car parks. Over a period of one week in November, December, January, March, April and May, a count of available spaces between 9am and 4pm was undertaken on an hourly basis.

- 1.1.8 The results of this survey are set out in Table 2, which illustrates the peak levels of occupancy across the short stay car parks at peak times (Saturdays and Market day 11am – 2pm). December has the highest levels of occupancy at which time the car parks are working at near optimal efficiency.

Table 2 - Peak time short stay car parking is between 11am- 2pm

Car Park	Nov	Dec	Jan	March	Apr	May
Guineas	88%	93%	74%	78%	81%	80%
Rouse	80%	90%	73%	70%	72%	70%
Market	95%	96%	90%	92%	94%	95%

- 1.1.9 Occupancy decreases significantly outside peak times with the exception of Market Square, as set out in Table 3.

Table 3 - Off peak short stay car parking 9-11am and 2-5pm

Car Park	Nov	Dec	Jan	March	Apr	May
Guineas	58%	66%	50%	54%	54%	58%
Rouse	51%	65%	45%	55%	52%	50%
Market	90%	92%	88%	85%	90%	90%

- 1.1.10 The survey results found that Long stay car parking has approximately 30-35% available capacity (Table 4) which marginally decreases in December. On average 110 long stay spaces across the town are available at most times.

Table 4 – Long- stay car parking

Car Park	Nov	Dec	Jan	March	Apr	May
Guineas	77%	81%	73%	75%	72%	75%
All Saints	58%	61%	56%	57%	58%	58%
Grosv.	70%	72%	68%	72%	70%	70%
St Marys	90%	94%	88%	90%	85%	88%

1.2 **Financials**

- 1.2.1 Income into the car parking account was £546,274 in 2014-15 (as set out in Appendix 2) with total expenditure accounting for £484,008.
- 1.2.2 Income increased by £45,668 in 2014-15 from £500,606 in 2013-14. This is largely due to the new lease arrangement with Premier Inn for car parking spaces on the Guineas Car Park and an increase in car parking events over the last six months of the 2014-15 financial year, a trend that has continued this year.
- 1.2.3 Assuming the visitor projections to the Home of Horse Racing is correct and an additional 20,000 parking events in the town over the first year of operation is achieved, it is estimated that an additional £30,000 based on existing charges will be derived from car parking income in 2016/17.

1.3 **Key Issues**

1.3.1 Home of Horse Racing (HOHR), Newmarket

The Home of Horse Racing (HOHR) is due to open in Summer 2016. It is estimated that the total number of visitors in the first year of business will be in the region of 52,000 people. The project team has assumed that 1 in every 3 admissions will have to park a car and that the average duration of stay will be between 3-4 hrs. A profile of visitor parking in the town has been developed by the HOHR and is set out in Appendix 3.

1.3.2 The capacity of Newmarket car parks to accommodate the increase in parking events arising from the HOHR has been assessed as part of this review. Visitors to the Home of Horse Racing will be directed to Rouse Road and All Saints Car parks which are the nearest car parks and have the greatest capacity to accommodate visitors. Minded of the profiling in Appendix 3 and that existing visitors to the current National Horse Racing Museum account for approximately 5,000 parking events per year, the following impact on car occupancy has been calculated in Table 5.

1.3.3 This table sets out the anticipated change in use of the car parks arising from these assumptions, with the most significant changes in bold. The revised occupancy figures assume the maximum number of daily visitors to the HOHR by month, and therefore is the worst case scenario.

Table 5 – Occupancy post HOHR opening

Car Park	Nov	Dec	Jan	March	April	May
Peak Short Stay						
Guineas	90%	95%	75%	78%	81%	80%
Rouse	87%	94%	78%	87%	91%	91%
Market	95%	96%	90%	92%	94%	95%
Long Stay						
Guineas	80%	85%	75%	78%	75%	78%
All Saints	65%	68%	63%	85%	90%	90%
Grosv	74%	75%	70%	74%	74%	70%
St Marys	90%	94%	88%	90%	85%	88%

1.3.4 The predicted occupancy forecast does retain an element of capacity within the car parks for natural growth of the local economy and housing, and future review of the Residential Permit Zone. It is estimated that even at the busiest times of the year, approximately 100 long and short stay spaces will be available across the town. This will be the case on Newmarket Race Days as baseline occupancy testing was conducted over the Guineas weekend.

1.3.5 Due to the number of unknowns regarding visitor numbers and profiling of the HOHR, action will be needed to monitor usage and capacity trends over 2016/17 to understand changes to car parking demand.

On Street Parking

1.3.6 Forest Heath DC appointed Suffolk County Council to investigate the feasibility of Residents Parking Zones in Newmarket in October 2013. The two areas identified were labelled the All Saints Road area to the south-east of the High Street and the Rowley Drive area to the north-west. Set out in Appendix 4 is the final report provided by Suffolk County Council on the investigations.

In summary, 1650 letters were hand delivered to all residents within the targeted areas in January 2014. There was a total of 310 questionnaires returned from the 1128 delivered in the All Saints Road area (an overall

response rate of 27.5%); and there were a total of 101 questionnaires returned from the 536 delivered in the Rowley Drive target area (an 18% response rate).

Key issues identified from the questionnaires was:

- 1.3.7
- Strong emphasis on problems resulting from the introduction of charges for the public car parks.
 - Town workers/shoppers avoiding charges and parking in residential areas (too expensive for daily use).
 - Public car parks are not being utilised (they should be cheaper or free for residents)
 - Private car parks too expensive (currently £300 per annum)
 - Problems can be at any time; Workers/Shoppers (daytime), Residents (evenings)
 - Migration of residential parking from neighbouring streets
 - Elderly/Disabled/Young families can be forced to park a distance from home
 - Divided opinion on a neighbourhood parking scheme - usually with a strong emphasis on cost
 - If residents do approve of a neighbourhood parking scheme they expect permits at a reasonable fee (some expect free permits).
 - Limited Spaces - even if the scheme was introduced there are too many cars for the number of spaces available.
 - Dangerous parking - junctions, bends, pavement, both sides of the road (narrow streets), potentially blocking emergencies.
 - Unsociable/Disrespectful parking - blocking driveways & entrances, inefficient parking, parking in turning bays, no space for deliveries or tradesmen.
 - No enforcement of current restrictions
 - Excessive existing restrictions (at specific locations) - suggests single yellows after 6pm etc.
 - New housing developments with no new designated parking
 - Residents are conscious of and wish to support the local economy.

A follow up public drop-in session was held on 25th November 2014 attended by 75 separate residential addresses and several local councillors, who reiterated the comments above.

- 1.3.8
- Suffolk County Council presented the draft findings of the review to the Newmarket Vision Transport Group in July 2015 and the group noted the recommendation by Suffolk County Council that in the knowledge that FHDC parking services are proposing changes as set out in this report, any future impact of these changes will need to be reviewed prior to any actions to alleviate the on-street parking issues.

1.3.9 Stakeholder Consultation

The Newmarket Vision group has reviewed car parking provision in the town and a workshop was held with representatives of the Newmarket Vision Transport and Town Centre / Tourism groups, the County Council, the Police Authority, Newmarket Town Council and the Home of Horse Racing.

Key outcomes from the workshop were:

- Off-Street Car parking provision in the Town was considered as good
- Signage to the car parks is poor
- Parking charges are not expensive
- More on and off street parking enforcement is required
- The most important factor for a good car park was in order of preference (i) easy to find; (ii) availability of car parking spaces; (iii) close to destination; (iv) safety; (v) flexibility of payment method and (vi) lowest tariff.

1.3.10 The group considered what changes would most improve car parking in Newmarket and the clear recommendations were (i) Improved signage to the car parks; (ii) the review of High Street parking restrictions; (iii) introduction of weekly long stay tickets; and increased enforcement of the car parks.

1.3.11 The issue of enforcement was a reoccurring theme by all. Concerns were expressed that the District Council had too few parking attendants patrolling the car parks, that not enough Excess Charge Notices are being issued and that on street restrictions (particularly in the High Street) were not being enforced. The group made clear recommendations that a review of parking arrangements on the High Street should be undertaken by Suffolk County Council with a view to the implementation of a short stay Pay and Display scheme; that at least one additional Parking Attendant should be employed to enforce off-street car parking provision; and the District Council should increase the fine for Excess Parking Notices from £20 to £35 if paid within 14 day and from £40 to £70 within 28 days (in line with our partner authority, St Edmundsbury BC). Views were expressed that the increase in fine income should avoid the need for any substantial increases in car parking tariffs, with specific reference to short stay parking.

1.3.12 On the issue of tariffs, the level of short stay charges was considered to be at an appropriate level to support the vitality of the 'retail and services offer' in the town centre. Nevertheless recognition was made to the cost of delivering the car parking service and the need to make improvements to it (as highlighted above).

1.3.13 The group were minded that the opening of the Home of Horse Racing attraction would generate considerably more foot-fall in the town centre on a Sunday and Bank Holiday, and supported the implementation of charges at these times to ensure that visitors contributed to overall costs of the service

and provide resources for the car parks to be managed and enforced.

- 1.3.14 It was also felt that the tariff for long stay parking was very good value and that this should be maintained for those working in the town. However the view was that long stay tariff should be increased for casual usage and that the introduction of a weekly ticket offering discounted parking should be introduced to ensure the daily cost of parking for regular users remained unchanged.
- 1.3.15 The conclusions from the workshop has been considered and endorsed by the full membership of the Newmarket Vision Transport Group at its meeting on 16 October 2015.
- 1.3.16 Consultation has also been undertaken with the Newmarket Retailers Association and they would support the package of proposals as recommended by the Newmarket Vision Transport Group.

Pocket Car Parks

- 1.3.17 Forest Heath District Council has six Pocket Car Parks located in All Saints Road, Grandy Street and Queen Street. They provide 67 spaces which are available for lease to local residents. The number of residents leasing spaces on Pocket Car Parks has fallen in recent years to approximately 36 spaces occupied. This has caused a number of issues for the authority and the town:
- i. Unoccupied spaces in the Pocket Car Parks puts more pressure on parking on-street for local residents
 - ii. Displacement of cars from on-street residential areas into the public car parks at times of high occupancy
 - iii. Income from Pocket Car Parks has fallen and is putting financial pressures on the car parking budget
 - iv. Feedback from residents is that the charges have been set high and does not reflect standard of living rises in recent years.
- 1.3.18 As a result, the cost of renting a Pocket Car parking space has been reduced from £300 to £150 plus VAT per annum. A total of 48 spaces are now occupied with capacity of 6 spaces available for Granby Street Friendship House and 13 spaces on the All Saints/Snooker Hall Pocket car parks, which has traditionally had a low level of popularity. Members may wish to consider releasing these spaces to the general public mind-full of the potential car parking pressures arising from the Home of Horse Racing in this area of the town.

2.0 **Recommendations and Conclusions**

- 2.1 The review has focused on the ability of the District's car parks to manage capacity, to provide a high quality of service, provide affordable car parking and meet the challenges of the Mid Term Financial Strategy.
- 2.2 This report does not conclude that the District has a shortfall in car parking either now or in the short to medium term. Clearly a review of capacity will be

required on a regular basis to monitor the impact of the Home of Horse Racing, changes in the local economy of our market towns and housing growth across the district.

2.3 The report makes no proposals to change parking provision or introduction of tariffs in Brandon, Lakenheath or Mildenhall at this time but have engaged the Town Council for comment.

2.4 Across all car parks, it is recommended to increase the Excess Parking Notice fines from £20 to £35 if paid within 14 days; and from £40 to £70 within 28 days of issue. The additional income will fund an additional Parking Attendant in District.

With regard to Newmarket Car Parks, the following changes are recommended:

- i. Increase Long Stay Charges and 'up to 8hrs charge' to £2.50
- ii. Increase 'up to 4 hrs' charge in All Saints car park to £1.80
- iii. Implementation of a weekly ticket at a charge of £10.00
- iv. Implementation of Sunday (11am to 4pm) and Bank Holiday (10am to 4pm) charges in line with tariffs for any other days of the week
- v. Implement an 'up to 4hrs' charge on Rouse Road of £2.00
- vi. Car parking regulations and charging in off street car parks to commence at 9.00am rather than 8.00am
- vii. Introduction of charges for Disabled Bays (with an allowance for users to be given twice as much time to use the at no additional charge)
- viii. To upgrade directional highway signage to the Car Parks
- ix. To instruct Suffolk County Council Highways to review car parking restrictions on Newmarket High Street with a view to implementing Pay and Display scheme
- x. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive a report each October outlining any changing of tariffs or the Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's)
- xi. Review the occupancy of Pocket Car Park spaces in light of the recent price reduction in rent

2.5 The recommendations will generate an estimated additional income from tariffs of £66,500 (less VAT) in 2016-17 (Sunday/Bank Holiday charges - £45,000; Long Stay charges £8,500; and new short stay tariff in Rouse Road £13,000). An increase in Excess Charge Notice fee will generate additional income of £17,000 that will off-set any cost for additional resources for enforcement.

- 2.6 Members will note that an application to the Suffolk County Council On Street Car Parking Account fund to upgrade highway signage to the car parks has been successful and will be implemented in the new year.
- 2.7 The investigation by Suffolk County Council into on-street parking is attached in Appendix 4 and Members are asked to note the outcomes and agree the next steps.