

Joint meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board

Car Parking Provisions and Charges

12 July 2011

Report of Strategic Director Environment and Community

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider range of parking issues raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 14 June 2011 and parking charges

This report is public

Recommendations

The meeting is recommended to consider:

- (1) The further information provided on the range of issues identified; and
- (2) The range of alternative car park charging options for recommendation to the Executive.

Details

Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting on 14 June 2011, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the following
 - (i) The balance and location of long stay/short stay parking in Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington.
 - (ii) The cost benefit analysis of alternative management arrangements for the car parks, including 'Pay on Exit'.

- (iii) An initial review of the impact of the new Parking Order and plans for further evaluation.
- (iv) The findings of the Bicester Chamber of Commerce and Bicester Vision traffic survey.

A copy of the briefing pack is attached at Appendix 1.

- 1.2 Arising from the meeting, the Committee agreed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Resources and Performance Panel should engage on joint scrutiny on 12 July in relation to parking charges, to explore the issues discussed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.3 In the course of the debate on 14 June; the following areas for further investigation were highlighted by members:
 - The use of Bicester town centre rental income to replace lost parking fees if the charges were stopped
 - Ticket machines, the availability of change and pay on exit
 - Motorcycle parking
 - Future of Shopmobility scheme
 - Lessons learnt regarding advertising and signage for parking charge changes
 - The suggestion of possible trial sites for different parking systems
 - The issues of parking fines for low income families and repayment options
 - The need to look at first quarter data
 - The future of Multi-storey car park at Bolton Road, Banbury
 - The consideration of escalating rates to prevent all day commuter parking
- 1.4 This report contains information gathered since the last Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on all the points raised. It provides a basis on which the joint meeting can consider a range of proposals in relation to parking provisions and charging.

Proposals

- 2.1 A range of issues were raised at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 14 June 2011. These are itemised and commented on below.

The use of Bicester town centre rental income to replace lost parking

fees if the charges were stopped.

- 2.2 The loss of car parking revenue from the closure of Crown and Crown Walk and the balancing new income stream from rental from retail units have already been taken into account in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, as has the additional income from new parking measures introduced in April. Any change to these measures will need to be funded from elsewhere or further savings /reductions in services made.

Ticket machines, the availability of change and pay on exit

- 2.3 The Councils pay and display machines do not offer this functionality. Alternative machines can offer a range of additional options but require investment in new machines. The Council currently operate 46 pay and display machines across its car parks. Individual machines cost approximately £3,000 depending on the functionality required, plus installation costs.
- 2.4 New machines could offer the additional opportunities in delivering a car park service:
- Solar powered
 - Chip and Pin
 - Waive and Pay
 - 'Top-Up' payment from any machine in the district (as an alternative to pay on exit)
 - Free session with ticket display
 - Payment by notes
 - Linear pricing structure e.g. 1p per minute
 - Improved machine design enabling access for able and less able users.
- 2.5 Machines that give change have not been recommended previously as they will need to be larger and will add to costs of the service due to the need to continually check and stock with change. However, as the current machines will require replacements in the next 3 years at a cost of up to £200k, there could be an opportunity to consider a range of other payment and technical options to overcome the public frustration about machines not giving change.

Motorcycle parking

- 2.6 Information was included in the report to 14 June Scrutiny Committee. Parking Services receive only very occasional enquiries/queries about motorcycle parking in the District (1 or 2 a year). It is not considered to be an issue and sufficient parking is available although provision in Bicester will need to be kept under review as the 6 spaces are in Franklins Yard car park which is scheduled to close at some point in future. There are 4 bays in Banbury and 2 in Kidlington.

Future of Shopmobility scheme in Bicester

- 2.7 The planning agreement with Sainsbury's is for the provision of replacement facilities for the Shopmobility Scheme. Disabled parking will be provided in the new Sainsbury's multi storey car park with lift access. This parking will be chargeable and pay on exit.
- 2.8 The current operator is Banbury Community Transport Association and the Council funds this by grant of £26,000 per year. In Banbury the shopmobility scheme is operated by Castle Quay with no subsidy from the Council.
- 2.9 In negotiating leases for the new Bicester units the service charge will include a proportion of the Council's costs and thereby help to subsidise the service. Members should be aware that there is concern from shopmobility users around the interim plans for the location of the service during the redevelopment works.

Lessons learnt regarding advertising and signage for parking charge changes

- 2.10 The legal requirements when changing Parking Orders are set out in the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and require publication of Notice of Order proposals and consultation with statutory agencies. Any objections have to be considered and once dealt with a public notice publicising the new Order made.
- 2.11 The Council went much further than this statutory minimum in undertaking the following;
- Scrutiny and Executive reports
 - Draft Order Notice in Public Notices section of local papers
 - Consultation with Disability Groups and interested parties (including Age Concern) as part of the formal Order process
 - Presentation to Cherwell Disability Forum-17 November and set up access to online consultation and feedback on queries.
 - Presentation to Seniors Forum- 10 December 2010
 - Updated Website information
 - Various press releases through Jan-March 2011 covered in all local printed press and on local radio
 - Produced and published on web FAQ's for blue badge holders
 - Item in spring edition of Cherwell Link-Distributed March 2011
 - A4 poster notices on all car park information boards on 5 week run up to 4 April and in libraries and one stop shops.
 - Advisory notices on blue badge holder cars for the week of 28 March
 - Warning Notices on blue badge holder cars for the first week of implementation
 - Presentations to Kidlington Village Centre Management Board
 - Presentations to Banbury Town Centre Partnership
 - Presentation to Banbury Chamber of Commerce

- Presentations to Bicester Chamber of Commerce
- Standing item on Bicester Town Centre Project Team
- Letter to the 7000 blue badge holders in Cherwell-arranged to go out early/mid April via OCC database-delayed to mid April due to OCC limited ability to action and lack of accuracy over numbers.
- Additional 'A' board signage on entrance to all car parks where possible from mid April
- Vehicle Park wardens providing increased customer information
- Additional temporary signage where possible adjacent to designated disabled parking bays-from late April
- All car parks have permanent signage stating that they are Pay and Display.

2.12 The main criticism of the Council's approach is that there were not notices on entrance to car parks (this was rectified with large yellow signage in place the week after implementation), and that the letter to 7,000 blue badge holders did not go out until late April. As the blue badge scheme is administered by Oxfordshire County Council, their permission had to be secured and they were unable to do this until mid April.

2.13 A key point arises from the fact that Banbury and Bicester town centre users attract a large number of people from beyond the District. Whilst some advertising and communication initiatives did extend beyond the District boundaries, most were targeted at local residents and therefore there have been many car park users from outside the District who have claimed they did not know of the changes.

2.14 Lessons have been learned and these have been recorded in the Project file for future use. In summary, they are

1. Signage: Where there is a major change in information it might be more cost effective for the whole board to be replaced.
2. Checking of the ticket machine tariffs in advance worked, but also need to ensure they have been cleared of the old tariffs.
3. Significant advance publicity and awareness raising undertaken but main criticism was that not enough done with temporary signage on entrances and by disabled spaces. Ensure in place before implementation and for a lengthy period past implementation.
4. Complaints that honey moon period was not long enough. We ran this only for blue badge holders a week before with info under windscreens then first week of implementation with warning notices. This should have been extended to evening users and for a longer period past implementation.
5. Database of blue badge holders from OCC. This was initially thought to be 1,000 then revised upwards to 7,000 by OCC and letters should have been issued prior to the changes being implemented.
6. Website updating. Ensure links on electronic applications are also

- updated.
7. Ringgo website was not correct - need to double check all external body information

The suggestion of possible trial sites for different parking systems

- 2.15 Opportunities for some of the items presented in the options paper could be considered here, as could placing on trial new pay and display machine/s in order to monitor and assess customer feedback to alternative payment arrangements.

Parking fines for low income families and repayment options

- 2.16 Options for review of the Excess Charge Notice Regime are still being considered. The Council already offer payment plans for individuals that are suffering financial hardship and this can be tailored to specific circumstances.

The need to look at first quarter data

- 2.17 Information on the first 3 months of operation is being reviewed and will be tabled at the meeting given that there was only one full working day available to assemble and publish between the end of June and the issue of this report. As an overview, based on first two months, it indicates that income in Banbury held up well against the expected income reflected in the approved budget, but Bicester is below budget. Further analysis of this data and from this, costed options for change will be prepared and tabled at the meeting.

The future of Multi-storey car park at Bolton Road, Banbury

- 2.18 This is part of the Bolton Road redevelopment project and is included in the development brief.

Consideration of escalating rates to prevent all day commuter parking

- 2.19 This proposal was raised at the meeting when the suggestion for lower cost parking was challenged by members who considered that this would only lead to car parks being log jammed by commuter parking. The counter suggestion was made that long stay parking should be at a considerable premium to the normal hourly rates.

At the moment all day parking (0800-1800hrs) is £3.50 in Banbury; £3.00 in Bicester; and Kidlington it remains free. The most costly parking in Banbury is NCP (Matalan) at £6.80 for 2 to 24 hours. Castle Quay is £6.50 for over 5 hours. Bolton Road is in line with Council charges. NCP (Marlborough Road) is £2.50 for up to 2 hours and £3.00 for up to 12 hours.

None of the options being considered have looked at increasing further

the costs of parking in light of the current negative press, but these more expensive car parks appear to be fairly well used so members may wish to consider this further.

Conclusion

- 3.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee have indicated that the concern expressed by the public regarding the Council's car parking Policy and in particular its charging regime, warrants review and in some cases change. This report provides the parking information requested which will be supplemented at the meeting with costed options for change based on the analysis of the first quarter data.

Implications

- Financial:** The car parking arrangements and charging structure incur costs and attract income which form part of the Council's approved budget. Any changes which increase costs or reduce income will need a corresponding change to other parts of the budget. Therefore, if this was to be the case, the joint meeting is asked to advise the Executive of how these are to be funded.
- Comments checked by Karen Curtin, Head of Finance, 01295 221551
- Legal:** There is a formal and statutory legal process to undertake to change the parking order. Depending on the changes agreed, temporary suspension of parts of it may be possible for early implementation but this would depend on the changes proposed.
- Comments checked by Nigel Bell, Team Leader, Planning and Litigation and Interim Monitoring Officer, 01295 221687
- Risk Management:** There is the risk that further change relatively soon after the April 4 2011 changes could lead to some confusion but this could be mitigated in part by effective communication and the fact that if the Council is minded, the changes would be favourable to the majority of car park users.
- Comments checked by Claire Taylor, Community Planning, Performance and Partnerships Manager, 01295 221563

Wards Affected

All wards

Corporate Plan Themes

A District of Opportunity

Executive Portfolio

Councillor George Reynolds
Deputy Leader

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
Appendix 1	Briefing pack for Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 14 June 2011
Appendix 2	April to June Data – to follow
Appendix 3	Draft Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 14 June 2011
Background Papers	
None	
Report Author	Ian Davies, Strategic Director Environment and Community
Contact Information	01295 221573 ian.davies@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk