

Executive

Review of Parking Arrangements over Christmas and New Year Period

5 November 2012

Report of Head of Community Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek approval for a Christmas and New Year Parking promotion.

This report is public

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To consider the options and approve a Christmas and New Year Parking promotion in Council operated car parks.
- (2) To note that the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has agreed to waive call-in as any delay to implement the decision would seriously prejudice the public interest.

Executive Summary

Introduction

As a way to support local business, attract more visitors into Banbury and Bicester and to reduce costs of parking to visitors, a Christmas and New Year Parking promotion has been suggested.

Proposals

- 1.1 There are a number of different options for such a promotion including reduced cost parking; a fixed period free e.g. first 2 hours; or specified days on which a parking promotion could operate.
- 1.2 Whichever option is promoted there are significant financial implications through reduced car parking income. In addition, the proposal has to be a simple message to promote otherwise there will be confusion for customers.
- 1.3 Proposals also need to be formally advertised as they will be a variation from the legal Parking Orders. Specified procedures are required to vary the charges which are required in order that the Council can correctly enforce

arrangements.

Conclusion

- 1.4 Having considered a range of options, a six week promotion offering free parking to all customers on Saturday, Sunday and Monday from 1 December 2012 to 7 January 2013 is proposed.

Background Information

- 2.1 Variation of parking charges be they permanent or temporary, need to be implemented with the approval of the Highway Authority (Oxfordshire County Council) and be formally advertised in the local press before changes can be introduced.
- 2.2 A range of options are available to the Council, some of which are summarised at paragraph 1.2 above. These have been considered by the Head of Community Services with the Deputy Leader and the Lead Member for Financial Management.
- 2.3 Detailed financial implications have been considered with the Head of Finance and, whilst figures can only be projections based on historical information, it has been estimated that the total cost in terms of lost income from parking fees; reduced enforcement activity; costs of advertising and making the changes will be in the region of £100,000 if the proposal for a six weeks promotion as set out at paragraph 1.4 is approved.
- 2.4 The reasons for suggesting this option include:
 - It will be relatively simple to promote the changes to car park users through on site notices and press information.
 - It minimises the costs and complexity around programming the ticket machines which would be the case if tariffs were amended or an initial period of free parking was offered.
 - Saturday and Sundays tend to be the principal retail shopping days on the run up to Christmas and for the sales after.
 - Mondays are traditionally quieter days of the week so free parking on a Monday might act as stimulus to attract visitors into Banbury and Bicester.
 - It enables the Tuesday to Fridays that are not in the promotion to operate as normal with little affect and it will be relatively simple to come out of the promotion and return to normal charging arrangements after the six week period.
- 2.5 It is hoped that the private car park operators will join into the scheme and all operators have been contacted. Any decision about their Christmas charges is entirely down to them.

- 2.6 Not all car parks operated by the Council will be included in the promotion. Kidlington car parks are already free of charge. The drop off area in Bridge Street will be excluded as this is for drop off and collection only. In addition Compton Road car park is expected to be excluded as, whilst it operates under the Council's Parking Order, the Council simply collect the income for a third party who, at the time of writing have not agreed to drop charges on the specified days.
- 2.7 Spiceball Leisure Centre car park may also be excluded as this is operated by Parkwood.

Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options

- 3.1 Costs arising from reduced income from parking charges are estimated at £100,000. If the proposal is agreed, some of the costs will be funded from the Portas Plus funding, announced earlier in the year by local government minister, Grant Shapps. The rest will be found through expected revenue underspends and a predicted investment income surplus.
- 3.2 There is need for a simple and clear message about the promotion to avoid car park users being confused as to what arrangements are in place. This will be achieved by notices on car park entrances where this is possible; notices in the car park areas and displayed on the information boards and ticket machines as well as being advertised and promoted through the press and on the Council's website.
- 3.3 Ticket machines will be placed 'Out of Order' on the days the promotion operates so that if customers try to pay for parking their payment will be returned via the coin return facility.
- 3.4 This promotion may affect season ticket holders/purchases. A refund will be offered on a pro rata basis for any full month of annual or quarterly season tickets for which a refund is sought and no admin charge will be levied.

The following options have been identified. The approach in the conclusion is believed to be the best way forward

- Option One** Change to tariffs
- Option Two** A specified initial free parking period
- Option Three** Alternative days/weeks on which to run the promotion.

Consultations

- Oxfordshire County Council** Have been consulted and have no objection

Implications

Financial: Estimate of income that will be foregone was prepared based on actual takings on weekends over the period in question. The current year's budget was reduced from last year's and income is currently slightly up on profiled budget. Therefore, the impact on the bottom line may be less than calculated as the budget target is lower and is currently being overachieved.

Comments checked by Joanne Kaye, Service Account, 01295 221545

Legal: Any variation of parking charges would need to follow the usual legal process of advertisement and public consultation.

Comments checked by Nigel Bell, Team Leader – Planning & Litigation, 01295 221687

Risk Management: Provided the necessary precautions described in this report are followed through completely with appropriate signage and advertising, the bulk of the risk should be mitigated”

Comments checked by Gavin Halligan-Davis, Interim Corporate Performance Manager 01295 221563.

Wards Affected

All Banbury and Bicester Wards

Corporate Plan Themes

Value for Money
District of Opportunity

Executive Lead Member

Councillor George Reynolds
Deputy Leader

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
None	
Background Papers	
Parking Orders	
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