

Public

Key Decision: Yes

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

<b>Title/Subject Matter:</b>	Parking Charges - Implementation of Increase
<b>Meeting/Date:</b>	Cabinet - 16 <sup>th</sup> December 2025
<b>Executive Portfolio:</b>	Cllr Mickelburgh, Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources Cllr Kerr, Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene
<b>Report by:</b>	Head of Economy, Regeneration & Housing (PS)
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	All

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### Executive Summary:

The provision and operation of off-street car parks are non-statutory functions; however, they do provide an important community resource – in particular making a contribution to our town centres and other assets such as One Leisure and Hinchingbrooke Country Park and provide an income stream to the Council. That income is used to offset the costs of providing the service; with any surplus generated going in to the Councils revenue streams as part of overall budget provisions.

The MTFS contains an increase in parking income from 2025/26 linked to a 20p increase to parking charges. Charges were last increased in 2019 and implemented by 2020. The increase in parking income would be for a partial year (2025/26) post-implementation of Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) and fully realised for 2026 onwards. A commitment was also made to undertake an update to the Councils adopted Parking Strategy following the implementation of Civil Parking Enforcement.

CPE was approved by the Department for Transport at the end of July 2025, with enforcement commencing from the start of August. The Council has commenced work on reviewing the Parking Strategy.

This report will provide a summary on the impacts on car park usage following the implementation of Civil Parking Enforcement, and; seeks clarity on the implementation of the increase (as per agreed Budget), an alternative, or whether no increase is to be implemented within the 25/26 financial year. In all cases, there are budgetary implications.

The report also sets out the timescale implications in respect of implementation – noting the lead in time for practical implementation; and thereafter seeks appropriate delegations to implement whatever decision is reached.

It should be noted that this report includes information relating to financial years 26/27 and beyond in relation to the agreed MTFS from April 2025. It does not seek to bind any future decisions relating to budget setting and the future MTFS from April 2026 which will be made by Council in 2026.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Cabinet is recommended to:

- a) Note the agreed MTFS baseline position in relation to parking charges and in particular the 20p increase; along with the other financial information included in this report.

The Cabinet is further recommended to choose from either b), c), d) or e) below as the agreed way forward:

- b) Agree to implement the charge increase as set out in the MTFS and;
  - i. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Place) in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene to make and confirm necessary changes to Parking Orders in order to confirm and implement the agreed charges, and;
  - ii. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Place) to instruct the undertaking of any other activities necessary to implement and communicate the increase in charges.

OR

- c) Recommend to Council
  - i. That the 20p increase as set out in the MTFS should not be implemented and;
  - ii. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Finance and Resources) and Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources to make necessary changes to the Council's finances, including movements from Reserves, to ensure that a balanced MTFS position for 25/26 is maintained.

OR

- d) Recommend to Council
  - i. That an alternative increase in car parking fees for 25/26 be implemented, amending the agreed MTFS and;
  - ii. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Finance and Resources) and Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources to make necessary changes to the Council's finances, including movements from Reserves, to ensure that a balanced MTFS position for 25/26 is maintained, and;
  - iii. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Place) in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene to make and confirm necessary changes to Parking Orders in order to confirm and implement the agreed charges, and;

- iv. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Place) to instruct the undertaking of any other activities necessary to implement and communicate the increase in charges

OR

- e) Recommend to Council
  - i. That the 20p increase as set out in the MTFS should not be implemented in 2026/27. The detail of the charges will be considered and agreed in 2026/27 and will be considered against an updated Car Parking Strategy, and;
  - ii. 2025/26 - Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Finance and Resources) and Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources to make necessary changes to the Councils finances, including movements from Reserves, to ensure that a balanced MTFS position for 25/26 is maintained, and;
  - iii. 2026/27 (forecast) - Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Finance and Resources) and Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources to make necessary changes to the Councils finances, including movements from Reserves, to ensure that a balanced MTFS position for 26/27 is maintained notwithstanding the budget process for the 2026/27 MTFS, and;
  - iv. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Place) in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene to make and confirm necessary changes to Parking Orders in order to confirm and implement the agreed charges
  - v. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Place) to instruct the undertaking of any other activities necessary to implement and communicate the increase in charges.

## **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on a number of matters pertaining to parking, including summary of the impacts on car park usage following the implementation of Civil Parking Enforcement.
- 1.2 The report also seeks to confirm the approach to be taken in respect of the implementation of agreed parking increases within the 25/26 MTFS - a 20p increase except for the all day tariff. The report seeks confirmation and delegation to implement the agreed increase; or seek confirmation via Council of the agreement to a Budget Policy variation to remove the planned increase or proceed with an alternative scheme.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Council is required to prepare and approve a budget and Medium-Term Financial strategy (MTFS). The budget and MTFS were approved by Council 26<sup>th</sup> February 2025. This included increased parking charge related income and associated charge changes.
- 2.2 At the time of Full Council, commitments were given by the Administration that account would be taken of the impacts of Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE), along with a commitment to undertake an update of the Councils Parking Strategy – noting the current strategy is dated 2018 -2023.
- 2.3 Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) was introduced in August 2025 following approval granted by the Department for Transport at the end of July 2025. The introduction was the result of collaboration with Cambridgeshire County Council in the undertaking of a statutory process that unfortunately faced delays due to the availability of Parliamentary time required for designation of Huntingdonshire as both a Civil & Special Enforcement Area. CPE is the outcome of a process that decriminalises a number of on-street parking offences and enables them to be enforced as a civil matter by a local authority, instead of the Police. This change to enforcement may have led to an impact on car park usage.
- 2.4 The Council has committed to undertaking a review of its Parking Strategy with works having commenced in October 2025 that included on site occupancy surveys. A recent public user survey has recently been launched. The development of the parking strategy will continue during 2025/26 and is expected to be complete by April 2026. It will include principles for future fee setting, but of itself will not set the approach to fee increases, which are considered through the budget setting process.
- 2.5 Charges are included and set within the Fees and Charges schedule as part of the proposed Budget 2025/26 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). No further decision is required to implement the charges as detailed in the Fees and Charges schedule. Whilst there is a delegation to the relevant Head of Service and Executive Cllr '*To make and confirm Off-Street Parking Places Orders in future years involving any changes of minor significance and reviews of charges in line with inflation*', a change above a single year's inflationary value would be significant and require a decision by Cabinet. A variation to the approved MTFS would require a Council decision.

### 3. **BUDGET AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY**

3.1 The Council is required to prepare and approve a budget and Medium-Term Financial strategy (MTFS). A 2025/26 Revenue Budget & Medium-Term Financial Strategy (2026/27 to 2029/30) was prepared and brought before Council 26<sup>th</sup> February 2025.

3.2 The proposed budget and MTFS included items relating to parking income and charges. These are discussed below in sections 3.3 and 3.4

3.3 The Council resolved '*that the proposed overall Budget 2025/26 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2026/27 to 2029/30 (Appendix 1) to include the Revenue Budgets at Section 2, the Capital Programme at Section 3 and the 2025/26 Fees and Charges at Section 7, Annex A be approved*'.

#### 3.4 **MTFS PARKING INCOME POSITION**

3.4.1 In relation to parking pay & display income, and the approved budget and MTFS, a baseline income position was established with increases to parking income applied to determine the total budget figure. Note that parking income associated with Hinchingbrooke Country Park is not included within these figures; and the Council does not currently charge for parking at One Leisure sites.

**TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF PARKING INCOME BASELINE BUDGET AND AGREED INCOME INCREASES**

	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
<b>Baseline Budget</b>	£2,336,000	£2,336,000	£2,336,000	£2,336,000	£2,336,000
<b>Income Increase</b>	£136,000	£270,000	£270,000	£270,000	£270,000
<b>Agreed Budget</b>	<b>£2,472,000</b>	<b>£2,606,000</b>	<b>£2,606,000</b>	<b>£2,606,000</b>	<b>£2,606,000</b>

3.4.2 The pay & display income received in 2024/25 was ~£2,256,000. This does not include parking income associated with Hinchingbrooke Country Park.

#### 3.5 **MTFS PARKING CHARGES**

3.6 The 2025/26 Revenue Budget & Medium-Term Financial Strategy (2026/27 to 2029/30) contained the 'Fees and Charges schedule for 2025/26'. This included parking charges post-CPE implementation at a 20p increased level and was approved by Council in February 2025 – noting that fees were last increased in 2019.

3.7 The Council may continue to charge lower (retain current charge) which is an established charge. A fee other than either the current or the 20p variant would require taking this through the decision-making process – decision by Full Council.

**TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF PAY & DISPLAY CHARGES RELATING TO COUNCIL OPERATED CAR PARKS**

	Short Stay		Long Stay	
	Current	20p	Current	20p
1 Hour	£1.00	£1.20	-	-
2 Hours	£1.80	£2.00	£1.60	£1.80

<b>3 Hours</b>	<b>£2.60</b>	<b>£2.80</b>	<b>£2.00</b>	<b>£2.20</b>
<b>4 Hours</b>	<b>£3.40</b>	<b>£3.60</b>	<b>£2.40</b>	<b>£2.60</b>
<b>10 Hours</b>	-	-	<b>£3.00</b>	<b>£3.00</b>
<b>23 Hours</b>	-	-	<b>£4.00</b>	<b>£4.00</b>

3.7.1 This level of charges remains lower than the application of both the consumer and retail price index inflationary values. The last increase to parking charges was implemented in April 2020.

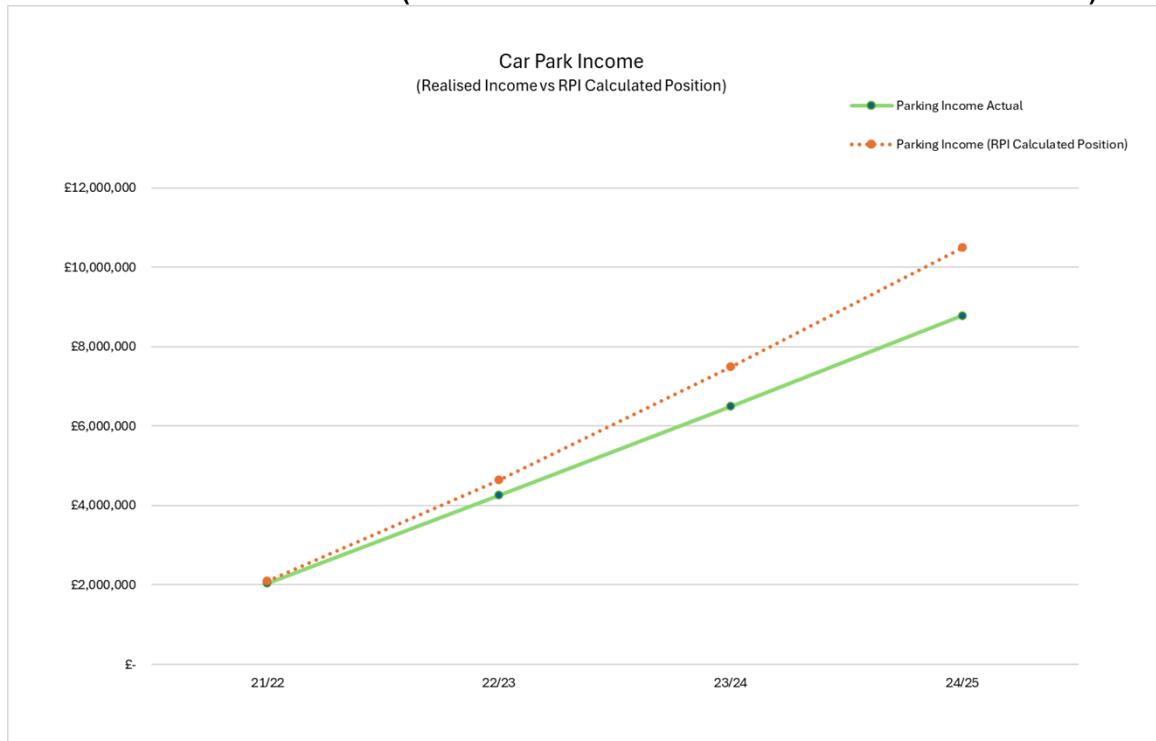
**TABLE 3: RPI & CPI APPLIED TO £1.00**

		Previously	Indexed
Application of index (Apr 20 to Oct 25)	RPI	£1.00	£1.39
	CPI	£1.00	£1.29

3.7.2 The retail price index is a measure of inflation published monthly by the Office for National Statistics. It measures the change in the cost of a representative sample of retail goods and services. Whilst increasing parking charges solely in accordance with this index may not be practicable due to the resultant change denominations, it serves to demonstrate the result of potential income received through the adoption of an annual system and the impact on the budget and MTFS.

3.7.3 The chart below applies the % change to the index value (April of year vs April 2020) to the actual income realised by the Council since the last charge changes implemented by April 2020. The cumulative impact over the 4 year period provides a calculated additional income figure in excess of £1,700,000. This figure assumes no other changes to usage and is therefore representative only.

**CHART 1: CAR PARK INCOME (RELEASED INCOME VS RPI CALCULATED POSITION)**



3.7.4 In February 2021, the Council agreed to the progression of Civil Parking Enforcement in Huntingdonshire. This implementation was noted to create an annual operating deficit in the region of £60,000 p/a. In an exempt report submitted, Cabinet agreed to the recommendations whereby the council undertook to incur costs associated with the remedial works required to establish Huntingdonshire as a Civil Enforcement Area.

3.7.5 Benchmarking information provided to the Council identified that the long and short stay charges in operation are within the lower quartile compared to the CIPFA neighbour average. It was noted in the information provided to the Council that 9 of the 16 CIPFA neighbours charge on a Sunday (either nominal fee c. £0.20 - £1.80, or normal charges).

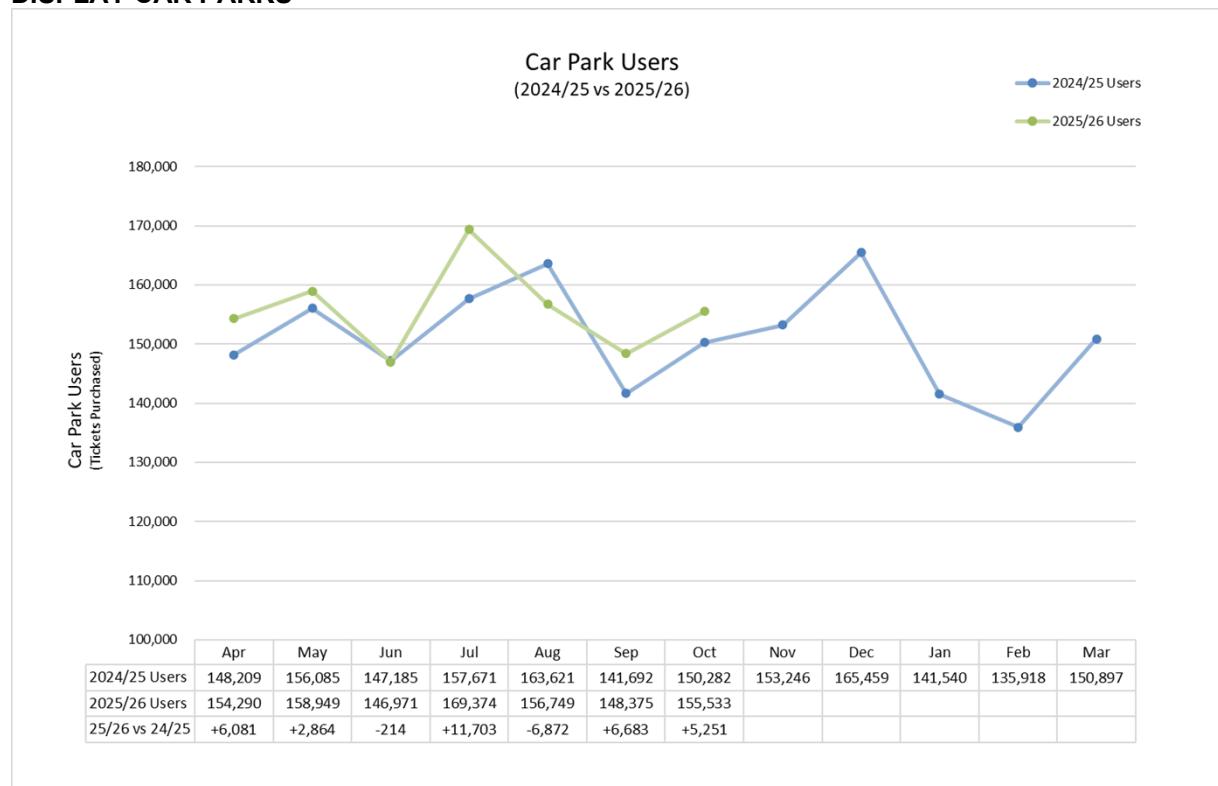
#### **4. CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT**

Prior to the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) high levels of non-compliant parking in the town centres were observed. The introduction of CPE has provided an increased on-street enforcement presence which would likely deter and lead to changed behaviours with those drivers opting to park legally elsewhere, including within/to Council operated car parks.

##### **4.1 CAR PARK USAGE**

4.1.1 A comparison of the total number of tickets purchases within Council operated pay & display car parks has been undertaken. Note that the count of tickets purchased does not include Hinchingbrooke Country Park.

**CHART 2: CAR PARK USERS (TICKETS PURCHASED) IN COUNCIL OPERATED PAY & DISPLAY CAR PARKS**

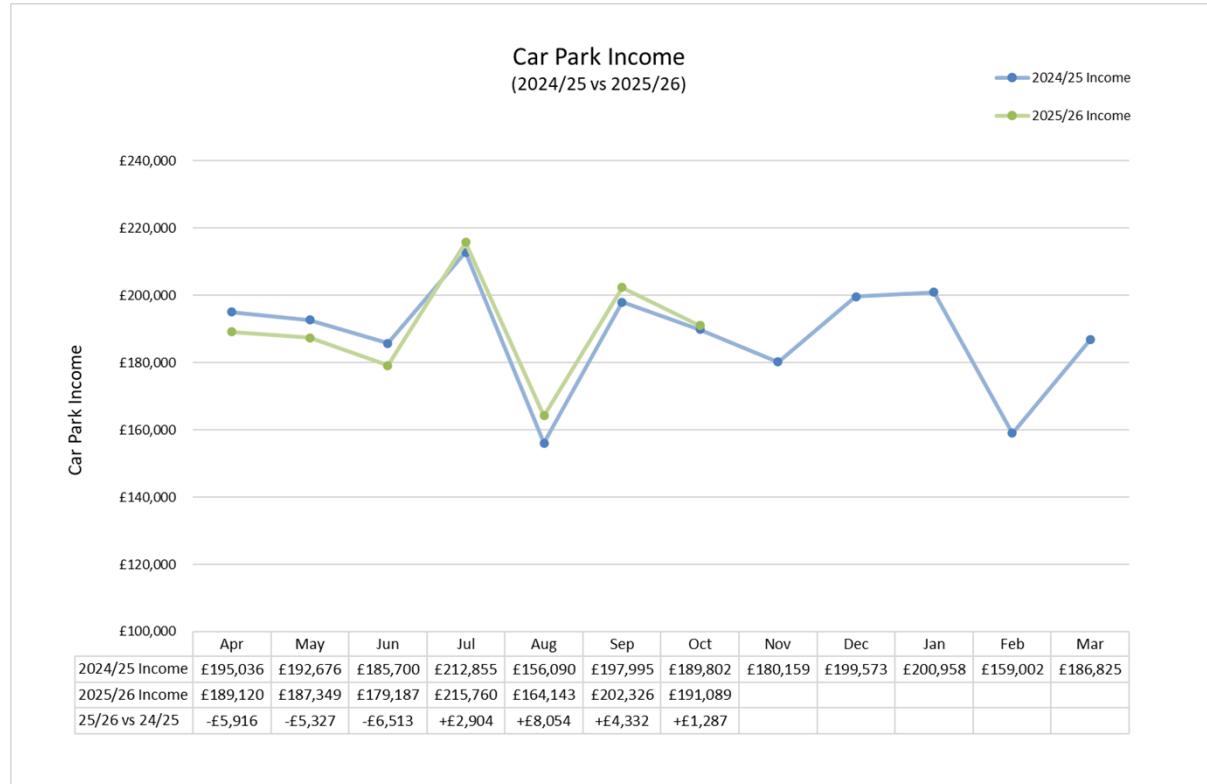


4.1.2 The comparison shows that the year to date usage (2025/26) is broadly similar to that of the year prior (2024/25), noting an uplift of 2.34%. Whilst this represents an increase in car park users, income remains similar to the year prior therefore usage increase alone is unlikely to have a significant impact on parking income.

## 4.2 CAR PARK INCOME

4.2.1 A comparison of the income from Council operated pay & display car parks has been undertaken. Note that the income does not include Hinchingbrooke Country Park.

**CHART 3: CAR PARK INCOME IN COUNCIL OPERATED PAY & DISPLAY CAR PARKS**



4.2.2 The comparison shows that the year to date income (2025/26) is broadly similar to that of the year prior (2024/25). No significant increase in usage has been noted.

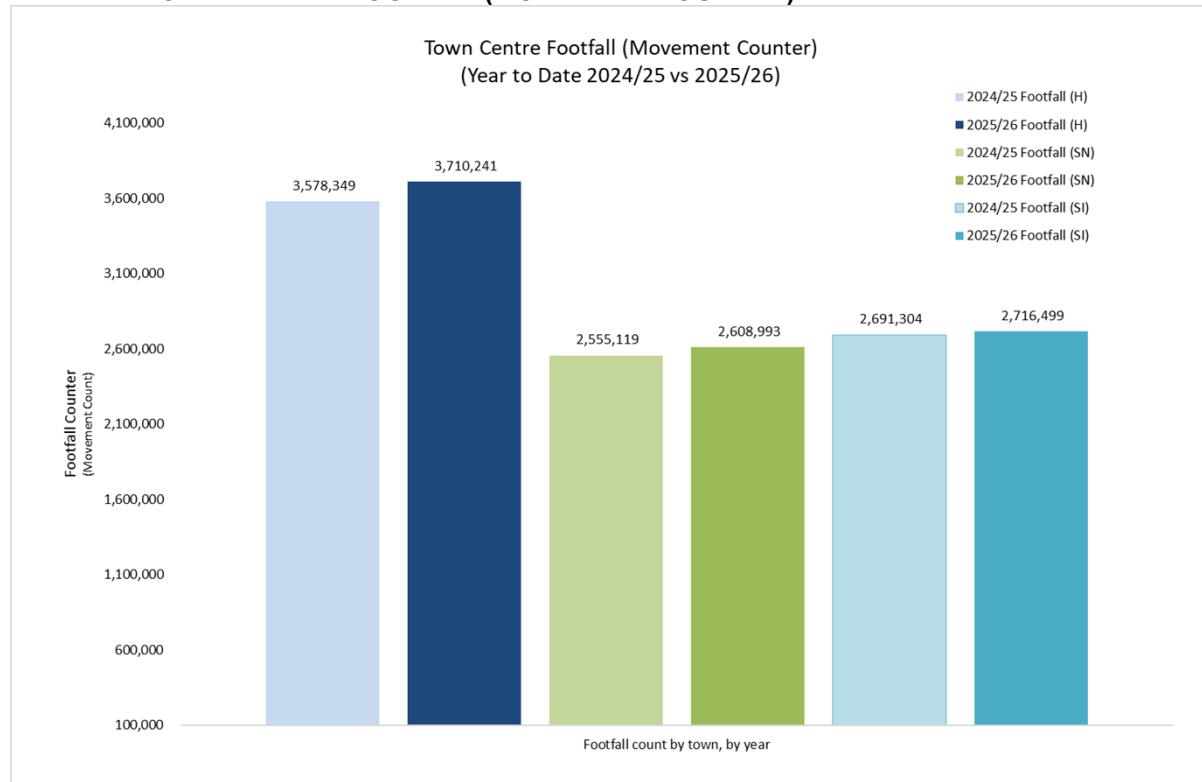
## 4.3 FOOTFALL AND TOWN CENTRE USAGE

4.3.1 Huntington, St Neots & St Ives have footfall counters deployed within the town centre. These counters record pedestrian movement within the counters field of capture. The information presented is the year-to-date totals for each Huntington, St Neots & St Ives.

4.3.2 This data is not a true representation of the number of visitors to the area; however, it can be used to determine footfall trends when considered against itself.

4.3.3 The information shown here indicates an overall increase in the movements captured by the counters in each location ranging from 0.94 - 3.69% representing an average increase of 2.24% year-to-date. This increase closely reflects that seen in the number of car park uses for the same period.

#### CHART 4: TOWN CENTRE FOOTFALL (MOVEMENT COUNTER)



#### 5. BUDGET AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY IMPACT SUMMARY

5.1 The comparison works undertaken show that no significant changes to the income and tickets purchased in Council operated pay & display car parks has occurred following the introduction of civil Parking Enforcement.

5.2 The Council has an established budget and MTFS position in relation to parking income. This was based upon a partial, in-year implementation of the increase. Noting the lead in times for amendment of the relevant Parking Orders and practical implementation, a decision is now required either to proceed with that increase or not.

5.3 The pressures associated with a decision to *not increase charges* are:

- in-year pressure (2025/26) of £136,000. Due to the timescales associated with implementation of charge increase this is non-recoverable this year.
- Pressure of £270,000 p/a for the remainder of the MTFS. Prompt implementation of the charge changes increase the likelihood of this being achieved from April 2026.

5.4 To not increase the charges (*continue with the current level of charges*) impacts the income received by the Council. It is unlikely that the income received without increasing charges will meet the budget and MTFS requirements. Officers would also advise that determining to not increase the charges would in effect see the costs of car parking provision and operation being subsidised by other services and other council income; or require the council to consider what activity may have to cease. This is due to the increased costs in car park operation as a result of inflation; utilities increase; business rates increase and staffing costs.

5.5 In order to manage pressures to the surplus generated by the service (*revenue stream as part of overall budget provision*) which were not accounted for at the time of setting the budget over the MTFS period will require political choices over where funding comes from to fill the resultant gap. This could include money from reserves, stopping or reducing services, or reallocating money from other objectives such as the Community Health and Wealth Building Strategy (CHAWS) fund - thus resulting in less money being available for those objectives.

## 6. **PARKING CHARGE IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS**

6.1 The options available to the Council relating to the implementation of charge changes are presented below. Option A sets out the progression of the charge change in line with the approved budget. Should Option B or C be progressed, then there will be a requirement for a Budget BID to adjust the baseline income.

### 6.2 **IMPLEMENTATION OF CHARGE CHANGES**

6.2.1 On 26<sup>th</sup> February 2025, the Council resolved 'that the proposed overall Budget 2025/26 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2026/27 to 2029/30 (Appendix 1) to include the Revenue Budgets at Section 2, the Capital Programme at Section 3 and the 2025/26 Fees and Charges at Section 7, Annex A be approved'.

6.2.2 The Off-Street Parking Places Orders established to support Civil Parking Enforcement specifies the level of charges within Schedules (*likened to appendices*). Implementation of the agreed Council charges is by way of a Notice of Variation. This notice details the current and the new (varied) charges and confirms the date of commencement by providing notice of 28 days.

6.2.3 The implementation process normally requires a window of 10-12 weeks. Actions that are to be undertaken include:

- Preparation and undertaking of the Notice of Variation process;
- Co-ordination with external suppliers for system configuration changes required;
- Signage updates required to ensure correct advertisement of charges in car parks.

6.2.4 Note that a normal external supplier timescale of 10-12 weeks applies to the implementation of system charge changes. This timescale can vary due to the demand on the supplier which increases between January and April as many Councils' look to bring in charge changes for the start of the financial year.

6.2.5 Members expressed a desire to take account of CPE, and data pertaining to behavioural change (as opposed to assumption), before taking a decision to implement the approved fees set out in the budget. This report includes that data both in usage and income terms, as well as other variables. This report comes forward at the last responsible opportunity to enable the implementation to occur; enabling consideration of the initial data from CPE and the timescales likely for the review of the Parking Strategy. In the alternative this report enables an informed view can be taken in light of the wider financial position of the Council if an alternative proposal is to be pursued, as opposed to a high-level budget which is based on prudent assumptions and budget principles.

### 6.3 OPTION A: DO NOTHING

6.3.1 Given the financial implications, doing nothing is not an available option as a decision other than that in line with the budget and MTFS requires a corresponding financial change to provide a balanced budget as the Council has a duty to set a balanced budget.

### 6.4 OPTION B: PROGRESS A CHARGE INCREASE AS BUDGET AND MTFS

6.4.1 This option represents the implementation of a charge change in line with the approved budget and MTFS.

*This option is reflected by recommendation 'b) Agree to implement the charge increase as set out in the MTFS'.*

**TABLE 4: OPTION B - IMPACT ON BUDGET AND MTFS**

	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	Total Impact
<b>Agreed Budget</b>	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	
<b>Option Impact</b>	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	<b>£0</b>
<b>Option Budget</b>	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	

6.4.2 The implementation process normally requires 10-12 weeks due to the actions required to support charge changes; however, timescales can vary.

6.4.3 Prompt confirmation to pursue will enable the process of enactment of the charge changes to commence with a view to timely implementation, reducing the likely impact on the agreed 2026/27 budget.

6.4.4 To proceed with this, whilst there is a Council decision in place, further delegations are required to make and amend the Parking Orders and undertake practical implementation. In short, in order to proceed with an increase in the financial year, a decision on this needs to be taken before the end of the calendar year.

### 6.5 OPTION C: DO NOT PROGRESS ANY CHARGE INCREASE

6.5.1 Should the Council not wish to implement an increase to parking charges, a decision will be required by Council to vary the approved budget and MTFS. The impact of this on the budget and MTFS is:

- £136,000 in the current year (2025/26)
- £270,000 p/a for the remainder of the MTFS

*This option is reflected by recommendation 'c) Recommend to Council That the 20p increase as set out in the MTFS should not be implemented'.*

**TABLE 5: OPTION C - IMPACT ON BUDGET AND MTFS**

	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	Total Impact
<b>Agreed Budget</b>	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	
<b>Option Impact</b>	- £270,000	- £270,000	- £270,000	- £270,000	- £270,000	- £1,350,000
<b>Option Budget</b>	£2,336,000	£2,336,000	£2,336,000	£2,336,000	£2,336,000	

6.5.2 The Council will be required to make a decision in relation to the budget and MTFS. This could include money from reserves, stopping or reducing services, or reallocating money from other objectives such as the Community Health and Wealth Building Strategy (CHAWS) fund - thus resulting in less money being available for those objectives.

6.5.3 Taking out the full budget within the MTFS relating to a parking income increase will prejudice the outcome of the parking strategy.

## 6.6 **OPTION D: PROGRESS AN ALTERNATE CHARGE INCREASE (2025/26)**

6.6.1 The Council may consider the implementation of an alternate increase within 2025/26. The basis of this option are assumptions that:

- the charges are agreed in 2025/26 and implemented as soon as practicable.

*This option is reflected by recommendation 'd) Recommend to Council that an alternative increase in car parking fees for 25/26 be implemented, amending the agreed MTFS'*

6.6.2 If this option is progressed there will be a variation to the agreed MTFS for years 2-5. This will necessitate a starting position of inclusion within the budget for the 5-year MTFS period from 2026/27. The scale of this impact will be dependent on the charges agreed.

**TABLE 6: OPTION D - IMPACT ON BUDGET AND MTFS**

	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	Total Impact
<b>Agreed Budget</b>	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	
<b>Option Impact</b>	- £270,000 (up to)	- £1,350,000 (up to)				
<b>Option Budget</b>	£2,336,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	

6.6.3 The implementation process normally requires 10-12 weeks due to the actions required to support charge changes; however, timescales can vary.

6.6.4 Prompt confirmation of the charges is required to enable the process of enactment of the charge changes, reducing the impact to a revised 2026/27 budget.

6.6.5 An appropriate recommendation had been made to support the implementation of this option.

## 6.7 OPTION E: DEFER AND PROGRESS AN ALTERNATE CHARGE INCREASE

6.7.1 The Council may consider an option to defer the implementation of the any charge changes until the development of the parking strategy has concluded. Once this is clear, the implications for the Council's MTFS will be put forward for approval.

*This option is reflected by recommendation 'e) Recommend to Council that the 20p increase as set out in the MTFS should not be implemented in 2026/27. The detail of the charges will be considered and agreed in 2026/27'.*

6.7.2 If this option is progressed there will be a variation to the agreed MTFS for year 2. Once the position on charges is known adjustment to subsequent years in the MTFS will be required.

**TABLE 6: OPTION E - IMPACT ON BUDGET AND MTFS**

	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	Total Impact
<b>Agreed Budget</b>	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	
<b>Option Impact</b>	- £270,000	£0	£0	£0	£0	<b>- £270,000</b>
<b>Option Budget</b>	£2,336,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	

6.7.3 The outcome of the strategy is unknown and will not be available until after a proposed budget and MTFS are brought to Council. Should the strategy not support the charges as agreed, this would impact the agreed budget and MTFS.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

*The Cabinet is recommended to:*

a) Note the agreed MTFS baseline position in relation to parking charges and in particular the 20p increase; along with the other financial information included in this report.

*The Cabinet is further recommended to choose from either b), c) or d) below as the agreed way forward:*

b) Agree to implement the charge increase as set out in the MTFS, and;

- Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Place) in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene to make and confirm necessary changes to Parking Orders in order to confirm and implement the agreed charges, and;
- Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Place) to instruct the undertaking of any other activities necessary to implement and communicate the increase in charges.

*OR*

c) *Recommend to Council*

- i. *That the 20p increase as set out in the MTFS should not be implemented and;*
- ii. *Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Finance and Resources) and Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources to make necessary changes to the Councils finances, including movements from Reserves, to ensure that a balanced MTFS position for 25/26 is maintained.*

OR

d) *Recommend to Council*

- i. *That an alternative increase in car parking fees for 25/26 be implemented and;*
- ii. *Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Finance and Resources) and Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources to make necessary changes to the Councils finances, including movements from Reserves, to ensure that a balanced MTFS position for 25/26 is maintained, and;*
- iii. *Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Place) in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene to make and confirm necessary changes to Parking Orders in order to confirm and implement the agreed charges, and;*
- iv. *Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Place) to instruct the undertaking of any other activities necessary to implement and communicate the increase in charges.*

OR

e) *Recommend to Council*

- i. *That the 20p increase as set out in the MTFS should not be implemented in 2026/27. The detail of the charges will be considered and agreed in 2026/27 and will be considered against an updated Car Parking Strategy, and;*
- ii. *2025/26 - Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Finance and Resources) and Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources to make necessary changes to the Councils finances, including movements from Reserves, to ensure that a balanced MTFS position for 25/26 is maintained, and;*
- iii. *2026/27 - Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Finance and Resources) and Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources to make necessary changes to the Councils finances, including movements from Reserves, to ensure that a balanced MTFS position for 26/27 is maintained notwithstanding the budget process for the 2026/27 MTFS, and;*
- iv. *Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Place) in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene to make and confirm necessary changes to Parking Orders in order to confirm and implement the agreed charges and;*
- v. *Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Place) to instruct the undertaking of any other activities necessary to implement and communicate the increase in charges.*

## **8. COMMENTS OF O&S**

8.1 No pre-decision scrutiny has been undertaken. Given the nature of the decision, Cabinet will either be delegating to implement the will of Council; or in the alternative, will be recommending to Full Council to consider an alternative and the subsequent changes to budget policy which are reserved for Full Council. In that context, there is sufficient scope for Scrutiny of any alternative proposal by Full Council.

## **9. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES**

9.1 The budget is the financial interpretation of the Council's strategic and operational priorities that are included within the Corporate Plan.

9.2 The Council has recently adopted an Economic Growth Strategy (2025–2030) which includes a strong focus on revitalising town centres—specifically Huntingdon, St Ives, Ramsey, and St Neots—by supporting infrastructure, businesses, public realm improvements, and connectivity.

9.3 Car parking plays a significant role in supporting town centres by influencing accessibility, economic vitality, and overall attractiveness.

## **10. Financial Implications**

10.1 Deviation from the current charges agreed will impact the income received by the Council in relation to parking charges. The Council approved a balanced budget and MTFS which set a dependency on a level of income received and associated with an increase to parking charges.

10.2 Failure to implement Option A would be a deviation from the Council's existing Medium-Term Financial Strategy which received full Council approval in February 2025. This decision would immediately create an in-year shortfall of £136,000 and a recurring annual deficit of £270,000, equating to over £1 million across the MTFS period.

10.3 It is highly unlikely that such a gap could be absorbed without needing to utilise reserves, undermine financial resilience, or consider service delivery. This would effectively cause other community priorities to have to be reconsidered to subsidise parking. These are ultimately choices for Members to make, balancing up the need for financial sustainability, with other priorities. This could include money from reserves, stopping or reducing services, or reallocating money from other objectives such as the Community Health and Wealth Building Strategy (CHAWS) fund – thus resulting in less money being available for those objectives.

10.4 Parking charges have not increased since the change implemented in 2019 and remain below inflationary levels; in this time, costs have increased (for example business rates, utilities, and staffing costs); rejecting this modest increase would not be financially prudent. If not increased, over time the gap between the charges and the costs will continue to widen, and the shortfall in income cannot be recovered.

10.5 The Council has a legal commitment to maintain a balanced budget.

10.6 The implementation of charges other than those set out in the 'Fees and Charges schedule for 2025/26' will require a formal decision to agree and establish prior to the service related implementation process of charges which includes the Notice of Variation and other activities set out in 6.2

**11. Legal Implications**

11.1 The process of Notice of Variation may be used by the Council to implement changes to parking charges and is allowed for under the Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984, the Parking Places (Variation of Charges) Act 2017, and the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure).

11.2 The Council exercises its power for off-street parking places in accordance with the Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984 (the Act). Section 55 of the Act comments on the ringfencing of income in respect of parking on highways for payment. The ringfencing is not applicable to off-street parking places.

**12. Background papers**

Meeting of Council, 26<sup>th</sup> Feb 2025 - Final 2025/26 Revenue Budget & Medium-Term Financial Strategy (2026/27 to 2029/30)

[Agenda item - FINAL 2025/26 REVENUE BUDGET AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY \(2026/27 TO 2029/30\) - Huntingdonshire.gov.uk](#)

**13. Contact Officers**

Head of Economy, Regeneration & Housing (PS)