

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
(SERVICE SUPPORT)
CABINET**

9TH OCTOBER 2007

18TH OCTOBER 2007

**CAR PARKING STRATEGY – DRAFT ACTION PLAN
(Report by Head of Planning Services)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on progress with regard to the development of the Car Parking Strategy Action Plan. This includes the suggestions and recommendations made by both the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) and Cabinet during their formal consideration of the draft Car Parking Strategy in March 2007.
- 1.2 This report also presents a suggested draft Action Plan for formal consideration, which is based on the work of the cross-party Car Parking Working Group which was tasked with that work following the recommendation of Cabinet at their meeting on 13th March 2007.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Members will recall that the current Huntingdonshire Car Parking Strategy covers the period 2005-2016, and was approved by Cabinet in October 2004 with revised charges introduced in June 2005.
- 2.2 This current review has been undertaken in order to address the need for up-to-date evidence, including that required for the development of the Local Development Framework. This also includes information on the parking needs of our Market Towns, to consider emerging development options including retail provision, as well as the increasing provision of residential development within our town centres and the consequential impact on the usage of public car parks.
- 2.3 Members have previously noted the work of our Consultants, Steer Davies Gleave (SDG), in developing a Car Parking Strategy for our Market Towns and generally supported the strategic approaches and recommendations that they have made in order to manage future parking needs. These have also included a profile of the current issues for each of the market towns and a series of recommendations for each one. It is these that have been taken forward by the Member Car Parking Working Group and developed into the draft Car Parking Strategy Action Plan now included at Annex A.

3. DRAFT CAR PARKING STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

- 3.1 The Member Car Parking Working Party has met on four occasions between April and August to take forward the recommendations of Cabinet. The Working Party also undertook a series of site inspections of all town based car parks, including those outside the control of the Council as well as acquainting themselves with on-street parking issues in key locations.
- 3.2 In developing the draft Car Parking Strategy Action Plan, all Members of the Working Party completed a questionnaire outlining their thinking in respect of the emerging themes and the results of this exercise are available as background papers to this work.
- 3.3 In making the recommendations for the draft Car Parking Strategy Action Plan, the Working Party have debated the advice of SDG and understood the obvious stated desire within parts of the community to 'build' more parking to meet demand, whilst balancing that with a need to facilitate the more effective usage of parking and a more balanced, demand management approach.
- 3.4 The Working Party has also recognised the need to provide enhanced accessibility to the town centres in order to encourage shoppers, to provide suitably located parking for those working in the town centres and to generally provide parking in appropriate locations within each town to support the overall growth in economic activity. It has also been recognised that parking provision impacts on different people in different ways across a broad spectrum of the population. Therefore the challenge of the Action Plan has been to recommend a programme that recognises the variations within each town and to ensure a degree of equality relating to overall accessibility within each one.
- 3.5 The Action Plan also outlines the Key issues that the Working Party felt were of particular merit and these have been developed and taken forward in a series of short, medium and long-term actions for consideration. It is recommended that all those listed as short-term measures should be delivered over the life of the Action Plan (2008-2011) and that significant progress should be made on those listed as medium-term. In terms of the longer-term measures, it is considered that these are likely to emerge as part of a future, updated Action Plan but that reference should continue to be made to these and to progress these as necessary.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Working Party has also debated the financial impact of the recommended revisions, particularly in relation to the charging regime currently in place, any introduction of a new 3-year pricing policy and the introduction of long-stay parking charges in Huntingdon. This included detailed debate around the appropriate level of car parking

fees to be applied, inflationary increases to parking charges and the SDG recommendation of considering the level of charging in relation to other forms of access such as public transport costs.

- 4.2 Annex B contains a detailed projected summary of car park income and expenditure for the period 2008/09 based on four different charging options, together with details of the original budget for 2007/08 and the actual figures for 2006/07. Of the four options listed, Option 1 gives the financial analysis for the current regime already in place, Option 2 lists the effects of applying an inflationary price increase, Option 3 shows the effect of beginning to scale charges in line with that recommended by SDG with Option 4 listing a more radical upward increase in charges. The Working Party has concluded that Option 3 is the scenario that should be recommended for approval.
- 4.3 Annex B, Pages 1 & 2, lists the car parking fee scenario outlined in 4.2 above. Members will note that the Working Party is recommending that the Column 3, inc. VAT figures, are those that should be adopted following the introduction of a new charging regime during 2008. Option 1, inc. VAT figures, are the charging levels currently in place.

In terms of Season ticket charges shown on Page 2, it should be noted that the only reduction to the figures listed in Column 3, inc. VAT, would be a 25% reduction in charging levels should Members be minded to introduce a Green Low Emission vehicle rate as outlined in the draft Action Plan.

- 4.4 Members will also note that the financial analysis in Annex B, Pages 3 to 6 inclusive, also includes potential charging scenarios for long-stay car parks in Huntingdon and St. Neots where parking is currently free of charge. The scenarios are based on the assumption that if such charges were to be introduced, this would be at a rate of £1.50/day. The Working Party has debated this issue in terms of the parking needs in both Huntingdon & St. Neots and also the financial impact with or without the introduction of charges. As will be noted in the Action Plan, it has been concluded that due to the particular pressures on parking demand in Huntingdon, that the Working Party is recommending that charges be introduced at both Riverside and Bridge Place at a rate of £1.50/day.

The Action Plan notes a particular issue in Huntingdon and the problems of rail commuter parking and its impact on the town centre provision. It is considered that a targeted time related charge, possibly to the same level of that at the rail station car parks for those parking over a period of approx. 9 hours, presently £4.80 per day, may discourage rail commuters from parking within the town centre car parks without any undue effect on town centre shopper or employee needs.

In St. Neots, it is recommended that Riverside should remain free of charge and that charging at Cambridge Street should continue to be subject to review pending other issues, such as future expansion.

- 4.5 The current MTP commitments relating to additional car parking provision will need to be amended and realigned as an outcome of the adoption of the Car Parking Strategy Action Plan.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Subject to Member comments on the draft Car Parking Strategy Action Plan, it is proposed that this be subject to public consultation during October/November 2007 with the results of that exercise being reported back to Cabinet during December 2007 for final approval. While this timescale is relatively short, it is planned that we will be able to consult with relevant Town and Parish Council's in order to obtain their formal feedback. Additionally it is planned to hold public exhibitions in each of the market towns in order to present the proposals contained in the draft Action Plan.

5.2 Subject to any final approval of the draft Action Plan in December 2007, it would then be necessary to amend the current Off-Street Parking Places Order 2005 to reflect the changes approved by Cabinet in terms of a revised charging regime, car park designations and to implement changes on the ground including signing, ticket machine upgrading etc. Again this timescale is relatively short given the legal process that has to be followed and public notice period that has to be given but it is planned that we would aim to introduce changes from 1st April 2008.

5. RECOMMENDATION

5.1 It is recommended that;

(i) the draft Action Plan is formally approved for public consultation and;

(ii) the financial analysis is noted and that the charging scenarios outlined within Option 3, is taken forward for further development

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Huntingdonshire Car Parking Strategy 2005-2016
SDG Draft Final Report - March 2007
Members Car Parking Working Group Minutes
Members Questionnaire – Car Parking Working Group

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