

**CAR PARKING STRATEGY – PROPOSED 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 a Car Parking Strategy Action Plan. This builds on the feedback previously provided by the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) and the Cabinet during their consideration of the Draft Action Plan during October 2007. It also addresses the results of the public consultation carried out during November and December.
- 1.2 The report also presents a Proposed Action Plan for formal consideration and approval (arising from the Car Parking Working Group at their final meeting held on 10th December 2007. This meeting considered the comments of Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) and Cabinet as well as the results of the public consultation).
- 1.3 The background to this work and the financial implications were covered in the October 2007 reports previously considered.

2. ISSUES FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION/CAR PARKING WORKING GROUP

- 2.1 At their meeting on 9th October 2007, Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) requested the Cabinet to invite the Car Parking Working Group to reconsider and further investigate the following:
 - a) the offer of incentives sufficient to motivate drivers to purchase vehicles with green low-vehicle emission rates, (for example free parking for a narrower group of vehicles available to all users and not just season ticket holders/residents);
 - b) that the time-related charge of nine hours be extended to at least ten or eleven hours which should still be of sufficient length to deter rail commuters from parking in town centre car parks;
 - c) that it be made clear where the surplus income generated by increased parking charges would be spent, given the target within the existing Strategy to use this to encourage "integrated, sustainable and accessible" transport;

- d) that the long and medium term opportunities offered by the new guided bus be investigated e.g. the possibility of a park and ride at Huntingdon and the benefits which might accrue from the award of grant to Cambridgeshire County Council from the Transport Innovation Fund;
- e) how the overspill of car parking in the residential roads of Huntingdon would be managed following the imposition of charges in the Riverside and other car parks in Huntingdon;
- f) whether the suggestion in Option 1 that a residents car parking permit in town centres should be priced at £40 was sufficient to encourage residents to consider whether it was necessary to have a car when living in a town centre location as opposed to using other forms of transport; and
- g) how a charge for long stay car parking in Riverside Car Park, Huntingdon could be justified when no charges were recommended for the Riverside Park in St Neots?

2.2 At their meeting on 18th October 2007, Cabinet considered the views of Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) together with the Draft Action Plan. Cabinet resolved that the Draft Action Plan be approved for public consultation and further work undertaken on the associated charging scenarios and that the Members' Car Parking Working Group be reconvened to consider the foregoing issues and the recommendations of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) in the light of the outcomes of the public consultation and further work on the charging scenarios:

- a) the potential use of the car park to be provided in St Ives for the proposed guided bus service other than by users of the service;
- b) the possible use of the district's leisure centre car parks other than by customers;
- c) the application of charging for Members and staff of the District Council who used public car parks in conjunction with their official duties or employment;
- d) the introduction of resident permit zones within designated areas around St Neots and Huntingdon Railway stations;
- e) the effect of differential charging rates to reflect off-peak hours; and
- f) the management and level of disabled parking.

2.3 The public consultation questionnaire was structured around the key issues as outlined in the draft Action Plan as well as those arising

from the Panel and Cabinet meetings held in October. A copy is attached at Annex A.

- 2.4 The consultation period ran from 12th November to 5th December and the questionnaire was sent out to over 200 local groups and organisations. Additionally, unmanned static displays were held in each of the four market towns and the consultation was also available via the Council website. As well as the questionnaire, the draft Action Plan was also made available together with a consultation brochure outlining the work to date and the key issues and recommendations.
- 2.5 Each Town Council also had the benefit of a specific presentation on the consultation.
- 2.6 A total of 75 responses have been received, including written responses from all four Town Council's. The percentage results from the Questionnaire are attached at Annex B, together with general comments/feedback to the consultation at Annex C.
- 2.7 Key points that Members should note include:
- Strong support for considering each town on its own merits (80%)
 - Similar levels of support for discouraging rail commuters from town centre car parks in Huntingdon (78%). However it should be noted that a number of rail commuters also registered their objection to this approach with others indicating that rail station car parks should be extended
 - 53% support for the introduction of charges at Riverside, Huntingdon, with Riverside, St. Neots remaining free of charge. It should be noted that a further 15% did not offer a view due primarily not living in the area or using either car park
 - Almost two-thirds (63%) supported a 25% reduction for vehicles producing less carbon emissions with a 50/50 split when asked if further concessions should be offered
 - 76% of respondents did not consider that Residents Permits were too cheap
 - Making Mill Common, Huntingdon and Tan Yard, St. Neots short-stay was supported by 74%. 81% also stated that it was not unreasonable to expect those parking all-day to walk a short distance into the town centre
 - The trial of a range of alternative payment methods was supported by 79%

- 60% of respondents indicated that we should consider charging at Leisure Centre car parks but many also felt that Centre users should be able to park for free with others indicating that the burden of enforcement would be too costly
- When asked to specify which charging option was preferred, 54% opted for Option 1, 14% for Option 2 with an additional 32% offering no view/comment.

3. CAR PARKING WORKING PARTY

3.1 At the request of the Cabinet, the Working Party met again on 10th December to consider both the results of the public consultation and the specific issues raised by Panel and Cabinet. Their recommendations are as follows:

a) That the original proposal of a 25% reduction in the cost of a car parking Season Ticket for cars with CO2 emissions of 120g/km or less be adopted. After discussion, it is still considered that this represents a fair and equitable discount at the present time;

b) It is agreed that the introduction of any time-related charges to discourage rail commuters for the car parks at Riverside, Huntingdon and Bridge Place, Godmanchester be increased from nine hours to ten hours;

c) That any surplus income generated by increased car parking charges not be ring-fenced to 'integrated, sustainable and accessible transport'. Given the level of current Council spending on transport with the current MTP well in excess of any increased income, it is felt that this measure is unnecessary;

d) That the Council continue to work with the County Council on the delivery of the proposed bus priority measures between Huntingdon and St. Ives and any proposals emerging for future park and ride at Huntingdon;

e) The Council will continue to work with the County Council, through the Hunts Traffic Management Area Joint Committee, to consider any issues arising from overspill parking on adjacent public highways following the imposition of car parking charges. This has been supported by the County Council as part of its formal response to the public consultation;

f) Following the representations made as part of public consultation, that the proposed level of charge for the cost of a resident's car parking permit is at a sufficient level and that the revised charge be recommended as outlined at Annex D;

g) A further survey has been carried out at Riverside car park, St. Neots, which indicates that long-stay parking levels are between 35% to 38% of overall available capacity. On this basis, it is not recommended that charging can be justified at the present time as part of the recommended Action Plan;

h) Discussions have been held with the County Council regarding the possible use of the new Guided Busway Park & Ride car park. It is now understood that a management regime will be implemented to prevent free all day car parking by those using the new arrangements;

j) Whilst noting the general public support for the introduction of car parking charges at Leisure Centres, subject to free parking for users, the members of the Working Party do not support the introduction of charges at the present time and consider this should be held for future review. It is considered that the Council would be faced with significant costs to enforce an additional regime, which need to be considered in more detail. It is also felt that the introduction of charges could lead to increases in on-street parking in residential areas, which cannot be justified based on current leisure centre parking issues, particularly as some of these are shared with schools;

k) In relation to both Member and Staff car parking within public car parks, the Working Party recommend that the current regime remains unchanged namely, that anybody requiring to pay car parking charges as part of their official duties is suitably reimbursed. However reimbursement or free parking cannot be supported for those attending their place of employment. The Working Party considers that this would not be equitable with other town centre employers and their employees who are required to pay car parking charges;

l) The Council will work with the County Council, through the Hunts Traffic Management Area Joint Committee, to consider the need for parking restrictions in the vicinity of Huntingdon and St. Neots railway stations;

m) It is not considered that there is a need for differential charging rates to reflect off-peak hours as short-stay charging is not charged after 6.00pm Monday to Saturday and all parking is free of charge on Sundays;

n) The Working Party expressed its satisfaction with the management of current parking for the disabled and noted that current blue badge holders can park in any car parking spaces free of charge. It does recommend that the level of designated spaces is reviewed to assess compliance with nationally recommended levels and to make amendments when car parks are re-designed or re-marked.

3.2 Members will also recall that as part of previous consideration of future charging levels in October 2007, the financial implications of a

new 3-year pricing policy were considered. Annex D contains an overview of the two options presented for public consultation and it should be noted that 54% of those responding supported Option 1 with 14% supporting Option 2. A further 32% expressed no view or comment, mainly due to not being directly affected by the proposed changes.

- 3.3 In considering these pricing options, the Working Party recommends that Option 1 be supported. For clarification, these figures are broadly in line with those under the heading of 'Option 3' in the October 2007 reports.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Subject to formal approval of the Proposed Action Plan at Annex E, it will 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 issues etc. It is planned that, subject to the necessary legal process and public notice period that has to be given, that we would plan to introduce changes from 1st June 2008 onwards.

5. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

- i) the Proposed Action Plan is approved;**
- ii) the current Off-Street Parking Places Order be amended for introduction from 1st June 2008, and;**
- iii) authority be given to advertise the proposed car parking charges in accordance with the first option in Annex D.**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

SDG Final Report - March 2007
Members Car Parking Working Party Minutes – 12th June, 6th July, 15th August & 10th December 2007
Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) Report – 9th October 2007
Cabinet Report – 18th October 2007

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