

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

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Members have previously considered the proposed Action Plan relating to the Car Parking Strategy at various meetings during January 2008. In addition to the Action Plan, the associated report also provided feedback on public consultation, the recommendations of the Car Parking Working Party and the financial options underpinning the Action Plan.
- 1.2 Following the publication of the Cabinet decision of 31st January, 8 Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) called in the matter. This was then discussed at a further meeting of the Panel on 20th February, which was attended by Councillors I C Bates and PLE Bucknell as Leader and as the appropriate Executive Councillor.
- 1.3 Having discussed the issues raised as part of the Call-In, the Panel decided to refer the matter back to Cabinet for its further consideration with the following recommendations;
 - (a) the introduction in the forthcoming car parking order of a proposal to permit free parking for vehicles with CO₂ emissions of 120 g/km or less (equivalent to Bands A & B of the current vehicle excise duty rates) in all Council car parks (a 'green badge' scheme), the parking to be limited to the normal maximum stay in the respective car parks;
 - (b) the wider issues of encouraging the use of low emission vehicles to be dealt with in the forthcoming Environment Strategy and in the next review of the car parking action plan;
 - (c) removal of the current inconsistency in the Car Parking Strategy vis-à-vis Council policy in terms of the ring-fencing of surplus income from car parking charges for integrated, sustainable and accessible transport;
 - (d) commence implementation of the car parking action plan proposals during the forthcoming summer;

- (e) the commencement of a review of the car parking action plan with effect from January 2009 to enable the impact of the forthcoming changes to be assessed from 6 months after their implementation;
- (f) the acceptance of an invitation for a representative of the Panel to consider with the appropriate executive councillor and relevant officers, the initial scoping of the review of the car parking action plan referred to in (e) above

1.4 Cabinet subsequently discussed these matters at their meeting on 21st February 2008, when the following was recommended for approval;

- (a) that a free parking scheme for low emission vehicles would not be supported but that a Season Ticket reduction would be offered at 50% of normal rates for qualifying vehicles. In addition, it was agreed to adopt charging Option 2 as opposed to Option 1 previously approved;
- (b) accepted as written;
- (c) this item would not be supported;
- (d) accepted with a view to implementation by 1st June 2008;
- (e) accepted as written;
- (f) accepted as written.

2. IMPLICATIONS

2.1 Upon further reflection, Cabinet members have subsequently indicated that they wish to reconsider their decision further in the light of the Action Plan recommendations. An earlier consultation exercise undertaken as part of the preparation of the Action Plan supported the introduction of charging Option 1 and members are of the opinion that the views of stakeholders should be acknowledged in any final decision. The overall Charging Options are shown at Annex A. It should be noted that the Season Ticket reductions for low emission vehicles are still shown at a rate of 25%.

2.2 As part of this reconsideration, Members recognise that any decision on car parking charges will be influenced by the Council's emerging Environment Strategy and the decision to commence a further early review of car parking from January 2009. They therefore consider that it would seem inappropriate to increase car parking charges over and above the previously approved Option 1 at the present time, subject to further discussion on a possible hybrid Option 1 as outlined in Section 2.4 below.

2.3 Additionally, Members of Cabinet are mindful of the potential impact of the wider Option 2 charges on the overall delivery of the Car Parking Strategy and Action Plan, as part of the wider agenda relating to the local economy of our market towns and the impact on the emerging Environment Strategy.

2.4 In terms of a possible hybrid to Option 1, Members have asked for details of the financial impact of raising the 1-hour and 2-hour charges at all Inner, Mid-Term and Waitrose Car Parks in line with Option 2 suggestions as follows. The proposal also shows an increase in the level of on-street charges to reflect that these charges are historically at a higher level than off-street parking, a principle which the County Council have supported during the public consultation.

Inner, Mid & Waitrose	Option 1	Option 1 Hybrid
1-hour	40p	50p
2-hour	80p	100p
On-Street One Hour	50p	60p

2.5 In terms of the overall financial impact of adopting Option 1 Hybrid, together with all other charging levels remaining in accordance with Option 1, this would generate estimated increased revenue of £94K during 2008/09 over and above the financial analysis presented in the previous report. The actual resistance to the charges is particularly hard to estimate where charges reach a level where car park usage reduces more than estimated

2.6 As part of the public consultation, Members should note that Waitrose indicated that if the Council were minded to proceed with one of the proposed price increases, then they stated that Option 1 would be more reasonable whilst Option 2 (now shown as Option 1 Hybrid) would be completely unacceptable to them. Under the terms of lease with that Company, they can withdraw from the joint arrangement, subject to a period of notice and operate those car parks independently of our Car Parking Strategy.

2.7 Due to the delay in the final agreement of the proposed Action Plan, it is now likely that the implementation of the new Off-Street Parking Places Order 2008, may not take effect until 1st August 2008, based on the period of notice and public consultation that the supporting legal Orders are required to follow. This will have an effect on the projected level of income within the MTP for the period 2008/09.

2.8 Members should also note that any changes to the on-street regime and the required legal Orders are administered by the County Council through the Huntingdonshire Traffic Management Area Joint Committee (AJC). Given the delay in setting a recommended level for this element of the charging regime and the cycle of 2008 AJC meetings, there will now be a delay with the implementation of this

element. It is likely that, subject to the formal advertisement of on-street legal Orders following consideration by AJC in Summer 2008, that any changes to charge levels, if approved, will not be implemented before the end of 2008 at the earliest. Therefore a short period of time will exist where 1-hour on-street charging will be less than that expected to be set for off-street levels.

3. SEASON TICKETS / RESIDENT PERMITS

3.1 The current number of valid tickets and permits as at 25th January 2008 are as follows;

Season Tickets –

- Huntingdon - 82
- St. Ives - 105
- St. Neots - 54

Resident Permits –

- Huntingdon - 153
- St. Ives - 38
- St. Neots - 10

3.2 It is difficult to estimate with any degree of accuracy what the likely take-up of Season Tickets and Residents Permits will be following the introduction of the new charges. It is therefore suggested that the above figures should be used as a baseline for any subsequent review commencing post-January 2009.

3.3 Broadly speaking, it is not anticipated that there should be any significant changes in St. Ives as no car parks are subject to any regime change, other than any introduction of a low emission discount and new overall charges. The most significant change will be the opening of the new Guided Bus Park & Ride site early in 2009 where we will need to commence the assessment of the impact on town centre car parking. This is included as a long-term issue in the Action Plan.

3.4 In St. Neots, the significant change that could marginally affect Season Tickets and Residents Permits is the change of Tan Yard car park from long to short-stay. This will render this car park no longer available to those possessing Season Tickets and the effects of that will be monitored against the January 2008 baseline. Free long-stay parking will remain within the town.

3.5 The most significant likely impact will be within Huntingdon where free parking will no longer be available and Ingram Street and Mill Common car parks will no longer be available to Season Ticket holders. Mill Common will also change from long to short-stay.

Additionally, following the removal of free parking for staff at Pathfinder House and the overall introduction of charging (at Riverside and Bridge Place) and planned increases in charging levels as well as low emission discounts, could all lead to significant first-time applications for Season Tickets and Residents Permits.

- 3.6 It is anticipated that using the January 2008 baseline and taking all the above factors into account, that Season Ticket purchases will significantly increase given the overall cost saving when compared to paying a daily charge.
- 3.7 It is also anticipated that there may be more demand for Residents Permits given the removal of eligibility for Season Ticket holders to park at Ingram Street or Mill Common. Historically there has been far greater demand well in excess of available capacity for all users at both car parks which have led to on-going complaints and the proposed changes in the Action Plan are structured to try and address this issue. However, even with the removal of Season Ticket holders, there will still be considerable demand from both Resident Permit holders and those paying a daily charge.

4. **CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1 This information is submitted at the request of Cabinet in order that they may reconsider their decision on charging taken at their meeting held on 21st February 2008.

5. **RECOMMENDATION**

- 5.1 Cabinet is recommended to implement Option 1 Hybrid (as set out in paragraph 2.4) together with all other charging levels in accordance with Option 1.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Cabinet Reports – Car Parking Strategy and Action Plan

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