

CAR PARKING REVIEW 2009
(Report by Head of Planning Services)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Members will recall that an in-depth and substantive review of our Car Parking Policy was carried out during 2007 with a final Action Plan and revised charging policy approved by Cabinet in March 2008. The revised charging arrangements and other operational changes came into effect on 1st October 2008.
- 1.2 At the time of the last Review, Cabinet resolved to commence its next Review within a shorter timeframe than the usual 3-year cycle and specifically requested that work commence 6-months after the implementation of the previously approved changes coming into effect. The Member Car Parking Working Group was reconstituted to undertake this task.
- 1.3 Whilst this review addresses several current issues, it is considered that a full, overall review of all parking charges be undertaken from October 2010 onwards.
- 1.4 A list of the Members of the Working Party is attached at Annex A to this report.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Working Party has met on two occasions since June 2009. At the first meeting, the Working Party reviewed progress on the actions arising from the previously approved Action Plan and scoped the issues to be included as part of the 2009 review and upon which they wished Officers to undertake further detailed studies. Details of the Action Plan progress are included at Annex B.
- 2.2 At the second meeting, the Working Party received and reviewed a series of Topic Papers relating to their original scoping issues and Members formulated their recommendations to go forward for the formal consideration by the Cabinet. These are outlined in Section 3 below.

3. RECOMMENDED CAR PARKING ACTIONS

3.1 Based on the work of the Car Parking Working Party, the following issues are those that are being recommended for formal consideration and agreement by the Cabinet;

3.1.1 Huntingdon & Godmanchester area

i) Riverside Car Park – Members noted that there has been little overall demand for the short-stay area introduced in October 2008 to serve the Park and it was agreed that these should be reduced to no more than 8 spaces. In making this recommendation, Members did note that short-term parking will still be available across the rest of the car park and that overall demand is now less than total supply following the opening of Bridge Place car park at Godmanchester.

ii) Oak Tree Centre – It was noted that the car parking in the vicinity of the Centre and Sapley Square continues to cause a degree of operational difficulty. In advance of more robust measures being considered, it is the recommendation of the Working Party that Officers continue to press the NHS to deliver the required Travel Plan for the Centre as part of the original planning permission, with the overall aim of reducing the overall car parking demand.

iii) Mill Yard and Park Lane (Godmanchester) – The Working Party noted that since the introduction of charged car parking at Riverside and Bridge Place, there has been a significant drift of users to these car parks in order to be able to (continue to) park free of charge and walk into Huntingdon. Members considered issues around possible time-limited restrictions or potential charging but concluded to recommend that at this time impacts continue to be monitored and this is again considered by the next recommended review in 2010.

3.1.2 St. Neots area

i) The Working Party requested Officers explore options around ending the current free parking arrangements at both Cambridge Street and Riverside. Discussion took place around applying a level of equality for the town when compared to the similar retail offer in both Huntingdon and St. Ives whilst also recognising the lack of play areas in Eaton Ford, which places increased demand on facilities at Riverside. Following a majority vote, it was agreed that it would be recommended that appropriate charges would be introduced but with some free parking for a two-hour period (exact details to be agreed) be retained at Riverside in order to support its recreational use. At Cambridge Street, the Working Party recommends that charging should be reintroduced on the basis of overall demand generally exceeding supply.

It was also agreed that where charging applies this should be at the same rates as in Huntingdon and St. Ives as shown in Annex C.

Due to MTP timescales if such action were to be approved, a Bid has been developed based on these charging scenarios and it is estimated that an overall net income of approx. £64.5K per annum would be generated.

ii) Members noted that since 1st October 2008 when Tan Yard became short-stay to meet local demand, particularly Market days, that this car park is now little used. To redress this issue and to reduce demand at Tebbutts Road, it is recommended that Tan Yard remain short-stay but permit usage by holders of either Resident Parking Permit's and / or Season Ticket holders.

3.1.3 Controlling Parking in Ramsey

i) The Working Party requested options be put forward for their consideration on how to control the demand of off-street parking at Mews Close, whilst noting that there was still a significant level of overall parking provision in the town when considering total available space both on and off-street. The problem at Mews Close was based on the lack of turnover of short-stay spaces to encourage visitors and shoppers.

Members recommend that the introduction of some short-stay parking areas up to a maximum of 2-hours stay be investigated, together with some additional provision of spaces in the Mews Close within land owned by the District Council, as shown indicatively in Annex D, in tandem with possible residential development together with improved pedestrian and servicing routes.

3.1.4 Eligibility for Resident Parking Permits and Season Tickets

i) The Working Party noted that as part of the review it had come to light that there are a number of anomalies in respect of those eligible to qualify for either a Resident Parking Permit or Season Ticket. An example of this is at Hinchingsbrooke where some residents qualify due to the location of their property within the Parish of Huntingdon whereas neighbouring properties do not due to still being located within The Stukeleys Parish. Members recommended that the issue be investigated and resolved by the use of revised town boundaries or local eligibility rather than parish wards.

3.1.5 Potential for Charging at Country Parks

Members requested possible scenarios around potential charging at Country Parks when compared to similar facilities within other areas.

i) Hinchingsbrooke Country Park – The Working Party noted that the use of the existing car park is heavily impacted upon by people visiting other local facilities, particularly Hinchingsbrooke Hospital. Members noted that this would likely be exacerbated following the

introduction of on-street waiting restrictions by the County Council nearby at Christie Drive.

Members felt that a reasonable charge should be introduced in order to support the Park and should include options to purchase a season ticket, weekend charging, 6-hour restriction on length of stay in order to deter full-time worker parking, parking refunds for users of the Café and the conference facilities and free parking in the evening. The Working Party also noted the need to consult the Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Park and to communicate as widely as possible the reasons and benefits behind any charging if introduced. Suggested charges are shown at Annex C.

Due to MTP timescales if such action were to be approved, a Bid has been developed based on this charging scenario and while season ticket allowances to be agreed could affect the overall estimate, current work indicates that an overall net income of approx. £24K per annum could be generated.

ii) Paxton Pits – The Working Party noted that the problems at this location are less severe than at Hinchingsbrooke and noting that charging may force users to transfer parking to adjacent quarry access roads and associated open space, Members were minded not to recommend the introduction of formal charging but suggest that a ‘donation box’ be investigated with any resultant income used to support the work of this important recreational and environmental facility.

3.1.6 St. Ives

i) The Working Party does not wish to make any formal recommendations to change existing arrangements in St. Ives but did note that the parking at the new ‘Park & Ride’ site for the Guided Busway is planned to be free of charge. Officers reported that they consider this could have a detrimental effect on town centre parking with users switching to the availability of free parking given the close walking distance to the town centre. This would have a potential detrimental effect on overall car parking income and a revised MTP bid has been prepared to consider this issue.

Members noted that Officers continue to have discussions on this issue with their counterparts at the County Council and that the issue will be further considered once the Guideway become operational and its effects are known.

3.1.7 Review of Overall Charging Levels – The Working Party recommends that following the introduction of revised charging from 1st October 2008, that no further increases should be made at this time (other than specifically recommended elsewhere in this report). It is recommended that a review of overall charging should commence in

October 2010 with a view to any emerging recommendations being introduced from 1st October 2011.

3.1.8 Parking in Village Car Parks and at Leisure Centres – With the benefit of the Topic Papers, the Working Party considered all the issues in relation to the above. In relation to village car parks it was felt that as the majority of these are in rural locations, that a charge would be difficult to justify based on existing usage at the present time. In terms of Leisure Centres it was considered that charging could have an effect on the viability of the facilities and could likely cause an overspill on adjacent roads and school facilities and charging is not recommended either.

3.1.9 Other Issues –

i) New style ‘Pay & Display’ machines – Members were informed that the trial of new machines at Riverside, Huntingdon and Bridge Place, Godmanchester had been particularly successful, including allowing payment by credit/debit card and by also allowing better remote monitoring of the operation, together with the use of new hand-held technology by the Street Ranger service. While it is noted that the cost of administering the credit card service is currently greater than the income received through the facility, it is recommended that the service continue as it is expected that as time passes, a greater take-up of payment by this method will ensue so that income exceeds cost. This is particularly relevant as any machines are replaced and further facilities are offered including credit/debit options.

ii) Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) – The Working Party noted that the County Council Cabinet are to recommend that further negotiations are to take place countywide to continue to explore joint CPE operations and that detailed financial models are to be prepared for an extended CPE operation countywide.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Based on their review work included in this Report, the Members Car Parking Working Party submit their recommendations as outlined in Section 3 above for the consideration of Cabinet.

4.2 Subject to any comments emerging from Cabinet, it is recommended that Officers be asked to develop specific working arrangements based on the proposed recommendations and that these be submitted to Cabinet for their future consideration as part of a revised Off-Street Parking Places Order with a planned introduction date of 1st June 2010.

4.3 In recommending an overall review of car parking charges from 1st October 2010, Members would request Cabinet consider

reconstituting the Members Car Parking Working Party in the municipal year 2010/11 in order to undertake this work.

5. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended;

That Cabinet consider the recommendations contained in Sections 3 and 4 above for further development with a view to submitting a further report to Cabinet as part of a revised Off-Street Parking Places Order 2010 for implementation from 1st June 2010.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Car Parking Strategy Cabinet Report – 13th March 2008
Hunts Car Parking Strategy Action Plan 2008-2011
Members Car Parking Working Party Minutes – 25th June & 24th Sept 2009
Resident Parking Permit and Season Ticket Eligibility Maps

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