

## ***Report to the Cabinet***

***Report reference: C-065-2013/14***  
***Date of meeting: 2 February 2015***



**Epping Forest  
District Council**

**Portfolio: Safer, Greener and Transport**

**Subject: Off-Street Car Parking Strategy and Revised Tariff Structure.**

**Responsible Officer: Qasim (Kim) Durrani (01992 564055).**

**Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470).**

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### **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

**(1) That a revised Car Parking Strategy based on the following principles be agreed:**

**(a) in order to support the economic vitality of town centre businesses, a low-cost tariff level for the first 30 minutes in all car parks to be retained, but that the tariff be increased from 10p to 20p;**

**(b) with the exception of locations in (c) below, new tariffs to be implemented as set out in the Table in paragraph 9;**

**(c) no tariff increases to take place in the Waltham Abbey and Ongar car parks (which do not offer access to the train and London underground systems) [except for an increase in the tariff for the first 30 minutes from 10p to 20p];**

**(d) except as provided in (e) below: a free 2 hour parking period followed by a charge of £1 to park all day be introduced in those car parks that are currently free on Saturdays, with the same charges applying in all other Council car parks on Sundays and bank holidays, with the exception of Waltham Abbey and Ongar where the current free all day parking will continue.**

**(e) parking to remain free of charge on Saturdays, Sundays and bank holidays during the month of December;**

**(f) charging to be introduced at the Civic Offices car park, with free stays for visitors to the Council offices;**

**(g) Blue Badge holders to continue to be exempt from payment in Council car parks.**

**(2) That the revised tariffs commence on a target date of 1 July 2015, following the installation and commissioning of new pay-and-display machines;**

**(3) To agree capital and revenue budget estimates in 2015/16 for the following improvement and enhancement works in the Council Car Parks:**

**(a) £ 100,000 capital allocation for the purchase of new Pay and Display machines, 'smart' meters;**

**(b) £ 15,000 DDF for making of new traffic orders and installation of new information boards in the car parks;**

**(c) £ 100,000 capital allocation for the installation of new CCTV systems to ensure all car parks have full coverage;**

**(d) Continuing Services Budget growth of £26,670 in 2015/16, £5,280 in 2016/17 and £8,189 in 2017/18 be approved for the additional costs associated with the changes agreed above;**

**(4) To set aside Contract Standing Order C1 (10) to instruct the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) to carry out the necessary work associated with the introduction of new tariff structure in the Council car park; and**

**(5) That a Portfolio Holder Advisory Group be established to review the impact of the new parking strategy and to make recommendations for the future.**

### **Executive Summary:**

The consultation on the revised off-street car parking strategy requested by Cabinet in March 2014, closed on 31 July 2014. The consultation was carried out to get a better understanding of car park usage and public opinion. Proposals included provision of differing tariffs for different locations, priority in parking to some users over others and charging for parking based on demand. The consultation was open to all members of the public as the Council was keen to seek views from residents, visitors, workers, businesses and commuters. In addition to the on-line questionnaire, the Council engaged the services of Alpha Parking Limited, who carried out face to face surveys, at random, in all Council car parks. A total of 800 people participated in the survey, 500 of those took part in face to face interviews and 300 of whom completed online questionnaires. Unfortunately participation from the business community was very low, despite a number of targeted promotional activities, with only 5 returns.

The pressure on Council car parks continues to grow from commuters, workers and shoppers. Availability of short stay parking space is essential for the vitality of high streets and town centres, and in order to balance the competing demands of various users careful consideration is required before any tariff change is introduced. It is for this reason that in Waltham Abbey and Ongar where there is negligible pressure from commuters, the only increase is from 10p to 20p for 30 minutes. Free parking on weekends in the month of December is to continue. A charge of £1 for all day parking on weekends and Bank Holidays will be introduced to recognise the high level of investment and the quality of the Council's car parks. However, in order to facilitate local shopping free parking be limited to the first 2 hours.

The investment in 'smart' meters will benefit car parks users and enable better operational management. The installation of new CCTV systems and the physical improvement works will make the car parks safer.

### **Reasons for Proposed Decision:**

The Cabinet at its meeting on 3 March 2014, approved its future off-street car parking strategy for consultation and asked for a further report, including proposals for 'smart' meters and a revised tariff structure.

The parking service is required to generate an additional £100,000 income to support the

2015/16 budget.

### **Other Options for Action:**

There is no alternative to the replacement of the existing pay-and-display machines, most of which are now obsolete, with parts becoming ever harder to source. Cheaper, more basic replacements could be obtained, but these would not provide the required functionality. It would be possible to delay the introduction of new tariffs, but this course of action would endanger the Council's budget objectives.

### **Report:**

1. The Cabinet agreed the revised text of the strategy at its meeting on 3 March 2014 and resolved that a public consultation be carried out with local business organisations, residents, shoppers and commuters. This consultation was carried out between May and July 2014. Every respondent was offered an incentive of a £100 prize, which has subsequently been awarded to a Loughton resident.

2. The consultation consisted of two questionnaires, one for the general public and the other dedicated to business users. The questionnaires were advertised in the Forester, made available on the Council website, sent to: Town and Parish Councils, Town Centre Partnerships, Federation of Small Businesses, Chamber of Commerce and One Epping Forest. In addition Alpha Parking Limited was appointed to carry out face to face surveys in the 17 Council car parks. The questionnaires attempted to address all the main elements of the strategy. Full details of the consultation including the outcomes can be viewed on the Council website.

### **Key Findings**

3. A total of 800 questionnaires were completed, 500 in face to face interviews and 300 on line. This represents 0.6% of the District population, although not all the respondents were residents of the District. The key findings of the consultation responses include: majority of the respondents were shoppers or short stay visitors who usually stay for up to 2 hours; most respondents could easily find parking within 10 minutes; there were mixed views on charging disabled badge holders; 63% of the users are visitors or shoppers; 25% park to go to work, 6% had GP or other appointments and only 6% stated that they were commuters. The highest number of responses was received from the users of Cottis Lane Car Park and Bakers Lane Car Park in Epping followed by Traps Hill in Loughton and Chipping Ongar Car Parks.

4. 98% of the respondents were car drivers, of which 4% were blue badge holders. 47% thought that £4 or under was a reasonable charge for all day parking; 49% stated that 80pence per hour was a reasonable charge; 64% felt that the Council should not charge more in busier car parks; and the response to charging blue badge holders was mixed with 54% against, 20% in favour and 26% undecided.

5. Cabinet agreed, for public consultation, a District wide parking strategy at its meeting on 3 March 2014. The consultation was carried out during the summer months and the responses received have been considered in preparing the final strategy, which is now presented for adoption (**recommendation 1**):

**(1) The provision and availability of short stay parking for up to five (5) hours be considered on a case by case basis;**

**(2) The introduction of differential tariffs can be considered on a case by**

**case basis, due regard given to local needs and adjustments made accordingly;**

**(3) The introduction of a new £1 all day charge on Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holiday, after an initial 2 hour free period, including those car parks that are currently free on Saturdays, and in all other car parks on Sundays and Bank Holidays, the exception being the continuation of free parking in all car parks on weekends in December of each year;**

**(4) The needs of locally based employers and their employees be recognised and that provision be made to facilitate their long stay parking by keeping the number of business permits that can be issued under review;**

**(5) The wish of residents and non-residents to use the Central Line to commute to work be recognised and facilitated, but that the costs of parking properly reflect the comparative costs of parking in station and other private parking facilities, and appropriate increases in charges in the Council car parks be implemented;**

**(6) In support of the above, Council car parks be generally available for both short and long stay use but that the balance between those uses be controlled through:**

**(a) the retention of the most popular tariff for upto 30 minutes;**

**(b) the promotion of season tickets, and subject to available technology and capacity, the use of 'smart cards' for local employers and employees; and**

**(c) the balance of season ticket availability within car parks**

**(7) Given the difficulties of determining acceptable solutions for parking pressures around commuter stations within the District, the current policy of not undertaking any further wide area parking reviews once the existing commitments to Buckhurst Hill and Loughton have, subject to available resources been delivered, be maintained. Following these implementations, all requests for further on-street controls or amendments to existing controls be referred directly to Essex County Council as the Highways Authority or to the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP). The Council will, through its relationships with NEPP and the County Council, continue to seek to influence NEPP and the County Council in investigating on-street parking stress and determining and delivering solutions;**

**(8) The need to encourage alternative modes of transport to the car are recognised. However, given that the availability of public transport is limited, particularly in the more rural areas the Council will continue to seek to influence the County Council to ensure the availability of appropriate public transport. It will also endeavour, through its adopted planning policies and development control powers when approving new developments, to seek to ensure a balance between:**

**(a) the need to have access to and use of a car;**

**(b) the proximity of and availability of public transport**

**(c) the needs of those with disabilities be recognised and that:**

**(d) dedicated free spaces for holders of valid "blue badges" continue to be provided in the Council's car parks;**

**(e) notwithstanding (c) above, a vehicle displaying a valid blue badge can park in any space within a Council car park at no charge; and**

**(f) That the cleanliness and safety of the Council's car parks be maintained such as to retain the accredited status of Park Mark.**

#### Free Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holiday Parking

6. Of the 17 Council car parks 9 are free on Saturdays whereas all car parks are free on Sundays and Bank Holidays. Some of these are close to LUL stations while some are close to local high streets. No change is proposed in Saturday charging apart from the general tariff increases in the 8 car parks where normal charges currently apply. In the remaining 9 car parks that are free a £1 all day tariff is proposed. Similarly it is proposed that £1 per day be charged in all car parks on a Sunday and Bank Holiday. This charge is deemed to still represent excellent value for car users, given the quality and level of investments in the Council car parks, especially as it is proposed to have an initial 2 hour free period. The exceptions will be the car parks in Waltham Abbey and Ongar, where free weekend and Bank Holiday parking will continue and, as in the rest of the District, all Council car parks will be free on weekends during the month of December.

#### Visitors Car Park Outside the Civic Offices in Epping

7. The visitor car park in the Civic Office in Epping has 28 spaces. This car park was only chargeable on a Saturday, this has been suspended to help traders on Epping High Street. The car park is usually full early in the morning and anecdotal evidence suggests that commuters and workers and employees in the town take up significant spaces. This does not assist visitors to the Civic Offices who have to park in the other two pay and display car parks in Epping. It is proposed that a free one hour parking be offered followed by the same charging regime as Cottis Lane Car Park in Epping. Visitors to the Civic Offices shall be offered free parking for longer.

#### Constraints

8. The Council, like the rest of the public sector, faces financial constraints and needs to make significant savings across all Council services, within the 2015/16 financial year. Car parking tariffs represent a means of achieving such income and the Council has agreed a target of generating an additional £100,000 income from its car parks. When considering the options of increased parking charges careful consideration has been given to the responses to public consultation, the need to protect high street businesses and balance the needs of long and short stay visitors to the District. Efforts have been made to address the competing needs of the motorists as much as possible, and to raise the additional revenue.

#### Revised Tariff (Recommendation 2)

9. The interim increase in car parking charges in March 2014 was the first such increase in five years and the tariff essentially went up in line with inflation over these five years. It would have been preferable to have not increased the tariff before a public consultation on the parking strategy was concluded. However the increase in tariff at London Underground Limited (LUL) car parks resulted in a large amount of displacement parking, necessitating the interim tariff increase. Now that the consultation has been carried out and the scale of

financial savings required to be made in the next financial year is known it is necessary to increase the car parking tariff. The table below sets the new revised tariff in all Council car parks, except those in Waltham Abbey and Ongar where the only increase is in the lowest tariff from 10p to 20p for 30 minutes. The charges in Cottis Lane Car Park in Epping have been brought in line with the rest of the car parks. The availability of free limited waiting bays in Epping High Street will continue.

### Revised Tariff Structure

Type of car park	Up to 30 min	Up to 1 hr	Up to 2 hr	Over 2 hr	Up to 3 hr	Over 3 hr	Up to 4 hr	Up to 5 hr	Season Tickets Long and Combined stay only (months)		
									1m	3m	12m
Cottis Lane											
Existing	£0.10	£0.70	£1.40		£2.10		£2.80	£3.50			
Proposed	£0.20	£0.90	<b>£1.80</b>		£2.30		£3.00	£3.70			
Short Stay											
Existing	£0.10	£0.80	£1.60		£3.20	£10.0					
Proposed	£0.20	£0.90	£1.80		£3.50	£10.0					
Long Stay											
Existing			£1.60	£3.50						£135	
Proposed			£1.80	£3.80					£65	£190	£750
Combined											
Existing	£0.10	£0.80	£1.60	£3.50						£135	
Proposed	£0.20	£0.90	£1.80	£3.80					£65	£190	£750

### Financial Implications

10. There are a total of 44 pay and display machines in 17 car parks. These machines are maintained by North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) at a set fee. Some of these machines are very old and getting beyond repair while some need upgrading. Cabinet has previously allocated a budget of £90,000 for the replacement of some of the older machines. However at the meeting on 3 March 2014 Cabinet agreed to consider proposals for installation of 'smart' pay and display meters. These new machines can be accessed via the internet for diagnostics, messages can be displayed on the electronic screen, alert messages can be received in the event of a problem with the machine and importantly they have enhanced security features. A procurement exercise has been undertaken via the Essex Procurement Hub and a preferred supplier identified. It is estimate that the total additional cost of upgrading all the machines, including installation will be £100,000. **(recommendation 3-a)**

11. New tariffs can only be charged once the necessary legal formalities like Notice of Variation and Traffic Regulation Orders have been completed. The Council does not have the necessary technical expertise to carry out this work. NEPP has the resources to prepare these orders, and they do so for other districts in the Partnership. It will also be necessary to change the display boards within the car parks to inform users of the new tariff. The cost associated with these is £15,000 **(recommendation 3-b)**

12. All Council car parks have Park Mark (safety checked) accreditation. Eight car parks have got CCTV camera systems. It is felt that by installing new CCTV systems in the remaining nine car parks, the Council will bring all the car parks to the same standard. This will increase the customer experience, reduce the risk of anti-social behaviour and is likely to increase car park usage **(recommendation 3-c)**

13. To achieve the full functionality of the new 'smart meters' will require Sim cards for

connection via the internet. These require the payment of a monthly line rental. There are other electronic components, for example credit card readers, and chip and pin devices that enable contactless payment. The increased number of complex and sensitive electronic components requires more frequent maintenance. The increased number of CCTV cameras and associated recording systems will require adequate funds for maintenance. To cover the additional cost of maintenance of the new infrastructure a Continued Service Budget growth of £26,670 in 2015/16, £5280 in 2016/17 and £8,189 in 2017/18 is required **(recommendation 3-d)**

14. The Council is a member of the NEPP and under the Joint Committee Agreement it pays a set fee for utilising its services. In 2013/14 the Council paid a sum of £253,110. As stated earlier NEPP is best placed to carry out the necessary legal and technical work associated with the introduction of the new tariff. However the current financial commitment with NEPP is such that a breach of Standing Orders will arise if any additional work is awarded. It is therefore necessary that Contract Standing Orders C1(10) be waived **(recommendation 4)**

15. It is proposed that a Portfolio Holder Advisory Group is established with a remit including the assessment of user behaviour in the Council car parks and the engagement of appropriate technology to promote the efficient usage of the 17 Council car parks. **(recommendation 5)**

#### **Resource Implications:**

In the 2013/14 financial year the car parking charges generated an income of £780,000, after VAT deduction. The Council revised the car parking tariff after a period of five years in May 2014 and it was estimated that this would generate an additional car parking income of £150,000 in the 2014/15 financial year. If the current income trends continue then the Council will only achieve an additional income of £120,000.

#### **The anticipated income from the tariff structure proposed in para 9 of the report:**

<b>Note</b>	<b>Source of income</b>	<b>Additional income 2015/16</b>	<b>Additional income 2016/17</b>	<b>Additional income 2017/18</b>
	Tariff increase	£125,574	£125,574	£125,574
	Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holiday charges (£1 all day)	£13,138	£13,138	£13,138
	Visitors Car Park Civic Offices Epping (same tariff as Cottis Lane Car Park)	£4,166	£4,166	£4,166
1	Gross income	£142,878	£142,878	£142,878
2	Additional running costs	£26,670	£31,950 (£26,670+£5,280)	£40,139 (26,670+£5,280+£8,189)
	Net income	£116,208	£110,928	£102,739
3	Sensitivity factor of 3%	£25,402	£25,402	£25,402
	Net income after sensitivity	£90,806	£88,526	£77,337
4	Part year income	£68,104	-	-

#### **Note 1:**

It is estimated that the revised tariff as set out above, subject to no changes in usage, would

generate an additional £142,878 per annum. However these estimates are based on modelling which make assumptions around usage and the actual income levels may be different.

Note 2:

The additional costs associated with the new tariff structure include the cost of increased enforcement on weekends and bank holidays, maintenance of the pay and display machines CCTV cameras, charges for remote access and repairs/maintenance of chip and pin key pads etc.

Note 3:

It is essential to note that the tariff modelling has made certain assumptions around the continued usage of car parking facilities. The actual outturn may be different if the assumptions are not borne out. A sensitivity analysis has been carried out and if the overall usage of the car parks drops by 3% then the increase in income, before factoring any additional maintenance costs, in 2015/16 would reduce from £142,878 to £117,476; alternatively if the falls in usage were 4% then the increase in income would be £109,009 and for a 5% drop in usage the additional income would be £105,542.

Note 4:

The proposed changes will not be implemented until 1 July 2015. This will mean that the increased income will only be realised for nine out of the twelve months of the next financial year.

**Legal and Governance Implications:**

The changes to the tariff structure will require a Notice of Variation under sections 35C and 46A of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. The Council does not have the expertise to prepare and implement such notices. This could be done by the NEPP who have the expertise and carry out such work across all the other members of NEPP.

**Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:**

All the Council car parks have Park Mark accreditation. The installation of CCTV camera systems in all car parks will further enhance safety and security for users. All car parks are regularly maintained, all equipment kept in good working order, hedges, fences and signs are checked and updated when required. The installation of new pay and display machines will enable remote access to officers who will be able to monitor usage of the machines, NEPP can empty the machines when sufficient levels of cash is collected (the new machines are able to send messages via the internet if there are technical problems or if the level of cash is reaching storage capacity). It will also be possible to use credit cards, however as the machines capable of reading cards are expensive and there are transactional charges these will only be installed in the busier car parks.

**Consultation Undertaken:**

NEPP which are generally in favour of the proposals.

Public consultation in respect of Car Parking Strategy as agreed by Cabinet at its meeting on 3 March 2014

**Background Papers:**

Cabinet report to 3 March 2014.



**Risk Management:**

There is a risk around the modelling assumptions and until the new tariff is implemented, it would not be possible to ascertain if the income assumption will be realised or not.

The Council only increased tariffs last year after 5 years. The Council is keen to help local businesses and high streets. However the increase could be seen as a further burden on local businesses and high streets. That said in the public consultation majority of the users felt that a 90p to £1 an hour is a reasonable charge.

# Due Regard Record

Name of policy or activity:

**What this record is for:** By law the Council must, in the course of its service delivery and decision making, think about and see if it can eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations. This active consideration is known as, 'paying due regard', and it must be recorded as evidence. We pay due regard by undertaking equality analysis and using what we learn through this analysis in our service delivery and decision making. The purpose of this form is as a log of evidence of due regard.

**When do I use this record?** Every time you complete equality analysis on a policy or activity this record must be updated. Due regard must be paid, and therefore equality analysis undertaken, at 'formative stages' of policies and activities including proposed changes to or withdrawal of services. This record must be included as an appendix to any report to decision making bodies. Agenda Planning Groups will not accept any report which does not include evidence of due regard being paid via completion of an Equality Analysis Report.

**How do I use this record:** When you next undertake equality analysis open a Due Regard Record. Use it to record a summary of your analysis, including the reason for the analysis, the evidence considered, what the evidence told you about the protected groups, and the key findings from the analysis. This will be key information from Steps 1-7 of the Equality Analysis process set out in the Toolkit, and your Equality Analysis Report. This Due Regard Record is Step 8 of that process.

Date / Name	Summary of equality analysis
	<p>The Council provides 17 car parks across the District and for the use of which it charges at varying rates. Out of the specific group or characteristics that the Council has a legal duty to have due regard for the following are affected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Age</li> <li>(b) Disability</li> </ul> <p>The age related group could be affected by having to use the new functionality of paying by a credit/debit card facility; however the option of paying by cash will still be available on all new machines.</p> <p>The disability related could be affected if the height of the coin or credit/debit card slot is not convenient. However all disabled badge holders are currently exempt from any pay and display charges and it is not proposed to introduce a charge. To assist users who have a physical disability the ticket dispensers will not have a lift up flap or similar operating mechanism.</p> <p>No special requirements identified for any other residents who fall within the definition of the protected characteristics.</p>