

Report to Select Committee

Date of meeting: 04 November 2021



Portfolio: Parking Services Portfolio (Councillor Sam Kane)

Subject: Review of Off-Street Car Parks Tariff

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1.0 Recommendations/Decisions Required

1.1 To consider the attached report and provide comment on the proposed review of car parking tariffs in Council owned off-street car parks for consideration by Cabinet.

1.1.1 Parking Charges;

- The existing tariffs of £0.20 for 30 minutes, £0.80/£0.90 for up to 1 hour and £1.60/£1.80 for up to 2 hours to be increased by £0.20 across the District. The principle of differential tariff between car parks to be retained.
- To retain the tariffs for stays above 2 hours.
- To extend full tariff on Saturday to apply to all car parks across the District.
- To extend 1 hour free parking on Sunday to 2 hours across the District and increase all day £1.00 charge to £2.00.
- To remove daily 1 hour free charging in Civic Offices Car Park (Sunday free allowance will remain) in consistency with other District car parks.
- To agree full tariffs to be introduced in Beaumont Park Drive Car Park, with a view to exploring satisfactory resolutions for demand.
- To retain free weekend and Bank Holiday parking during the month of December.
- To continue free parking for Blue Badge holders and motorbikes.

1.1.2 Permits & Season Tickets;

- To increase first residents permit charge from £50.00 to £55.00 per annum, in line with on-street charges.
- Introduction of business and residents permits in Cornmill Car Park (Waltham Abbey) and business permits in Oakwood Hill East Car Park (Loughton).
- Season Tickets 5% discount to be retained and prices to be adjusted in line with proposed parking charges.

1.1.3 To agree proposed operational hours of 08:00-18:00 in all car parks for consistency.

1.1.4 To agree implementation of changes in tariff to commence in Q1 2022

2.0 Report

2.1 Background

2.1.1 The purpose of the proposed report is to review the charging regime in EFDC off-street car parks, which has not increased since 2015, to ensure parking charges are sustainable to support the operation of car parks and to assist with budget pressures as a result of Covid-19 that have impacted maintenance and enhancement works.

- 2.1.2 Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) operate 22 off-street car parks in the Epping Forest District area. The car parks are located in key population areas and/or commuter towns of Buckhurst Hill, Debden, Epping, Loughton, Ongar, Waltham Abbey and Roydon.
- 2.1.3 Epping Forest District Council review off-street parking tariffs periodically to ensure the charging regime is at an appropriate level across the District that do not undermine the vitality of our town centre economies. The last tariff review was conducted in 2018 and the decision to retain tariffs was applied (formerly reviewed in 2015) and a linear hourly tariff structure for stays above 2 hours was introduced. Inflation has risen by approximately 2.16% pa (approximately 13% total) since 2015.
- 2.1.4 The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in significant financial pressures on the Council's budget and income. Current data suggest parking income is circa 80% of pre-pandemic levels, with occupancy of short stay car parks recovering well, but long-stay car parks remain affected. Further financial pressures are expected with the Cottis Lane & Bakers Lane Car Parks redevelopment projects.
- 2.1.5 A benchmarking assessment has been conducted to understand how current tariffs compare with charges in Epping (on-street and other off-street car parks) and neighbour local authorities (see Appendix A). EFDC off-street car park charges appears to be in the lower range for up to 2 hour stays, whereas tariff band charges for over 2 hours is above average. A cost-benefit analysis assessment and consultation has been undertaken with RTA Associates to propose a sustainable charging structure, balancing parking requirements and the needs of car park users.

2.2 Existing & Proposed Off-Street Parking Charges

Table 1: Existing Tariff Structure

	<i>Epping, Loughton & Buckhurst Hill</i>	<i>Waltham Abbey and Ongar</i>
Mon-Fri		
Up to 30 min	£0.20	£0.20
Up to 1 hour	£0.90	£0.80
Up to 2 hours	£1.80	£1.60
Up to 3 hours	£3.00	£3.00
Up to 4 hours	£4.00	£4.00
Up to 5 hours	£5.00	£5.00
6 hours +	£6.00 (Long Stay) / £10.00 (Short Stay)	£6.00 (Long Stay) / £10.00 (Short Stay)
Sat		
Up to 1 hour	Full Tariff / Free*	Full Tariff / Free*
1 hour +	Full Tariff / £1.00*	Full Tariff / £1.00*
Sun		
Up to 1 hour	Free	Free
1 hour +	£1.00	£1.00

*Saturdays 1 hour free - £1.00 all day tariff is applicable to Burton Road, Burton Road South, Civic Offices, Bakers Lane, Smarts Lane, Traps Hill, Pleasance, Cornmill and Darby Drive Car Parks.

NB: 30-minute stays are cash only.

Table 2: Proposed Tariff Structure

	<i>Epping, Loughton & Buckhurst Hill (A)</i>	<i>Waltham Abbey and Ongar (B)</i>
Mon-Fri		
Up to 30 min	£0.40	£0.40
Up to 1 hour	£1.10	£1.00
Up to 2 hours	£2.00	£1.80
Up to 3 hours	£3.00	£3.00
Up to 4 hours	£4.00	£4.00
Up to 5 hours	£5.00	£5.00
6 hours +	£6.00 (Long Stay) / £10.00 (Short Stay)	£6.00 (Long Stay) / £10.00 (Short Stay)
Sat		
Saturday	Full Tariff	Full Tariff
Sun		
Up to 2 hours	Free	Free
2 hours +	£2.00	£2.00

- 2.3.1 The proposed tariff structure recommends the following changes (highlighted above):
- £0.20 increase in tariff bands up to 2 hours stay and to retain tariffs above 2 hours which has not incurred any price changes since 2015.
 - Full tariffs on Saturdays to be retained and apply to all car parks for consistency, and to align with other parking in Epping and neighbouring authorities generally.
 - Increase free parking on Sundays for up to 2 hours (ticket required) and increase all day tariff to £2.00.
- 2.3.2 The modelling assumes the proposed increases will not affect car park occupancy rates. This is supported by British Parking Association and Government research that there is no clear relationship between car parking charges and footfall levels.
- 2.3.3 The Council are aware of its legal obligations when setting charges, however it is recognised that the proposed changes are essential with increasing operational and maintenance costs, and to accommodate future enhancements, providing a high quality service. The proposed charges will remain in the lower range within charging in Epping and competitive with neighbouring local authorities. With the exception of Sundays, we are not proposing any changes to stays over 2 hours to ensure costs remain reasonable to support businesses and local traders.
- 2.3.4 It is suggested to retain differential tariffs across the towns served by London Underground (Epping, Loughton and Buckhurst hill) and Waltham Abbey and Ongar.
- 2.3.5 It is recommended that free parking for Disabled Badge holders and motor bikes is to be continued. It is also recommended that free weekend and Bank Holiday parking during the month of December is also continued, as this assists the change in increasing footfall during the Christmas period.
- 2.3.6 The proposed tariff structure is estimated to generate an additional gross income of £340,000.00 (£40,000 would need to be deducted in year 1 from this to satisfy legal duties in changing Traffic Regulation Order, consultations, advertisements and replacing notice boards and signs in car parks). This based on modelling, with assumptions including the same car park usage and that the car parks will achieve pre-Covid occupancy levels. Cottis Lane Car Park has been excluded from this modelling.
- 2.3.7 At present, EFDC off-street car parks have different operational hours of 08:00-18:00, 08:30-17:30 and 09:00-18:00. Uniform operational hours of 08:00-18:00 is recommended across all

car parks and during these hours the car parks will be subject to parking enforcement. Parking outside these hours will be free for all car park users.

2.4 Beaumont Park Drive Car Park, Roydon

2.4.1 Beaumont Park Drive Car Park, Roydon is the only free Council owned car park in the District. The provision of free parking is not sustainable, considering cost of running the car park, including maintenance and future car park enhancements. It is recommended for the Council to introduce parking tariffs (tariff structure B) to meet the cost of the provision and maintenance by the Council of the car park and create consistency across the District.

2.4.2 The Council is mindful of the user groups that make use of Beaumont Car Park (primarily the local school which has its own car park, business and residents) and it is prudent to explore satisfactory resolutions of demand through measures such as residents permits, business permits and no enforcement during school pick up/drop off times.

2.4.3 Introducing charges in Beaumont Park Drive is estimated to generate an additional gross income of £35,000 per year.

2.5 Permits and Season Tickets

2.5.1 It is recommended that off-street parking permit costs are aligned with on-street permit costs, see Table 3 (proposed changes are highlighted).

Table 3: Proposed Permit Changes.

	<i>On-Street</i>	<i>Off-Street</i>	
		<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>
Residents Permit (per annum)			
First Resident Permit (per property)	£55.00	£50.00	£55.00
Business Permit (per annum)			
Oakwood Hill East Car Park (1 st permit)	£48.00	n/a	£48.00
Oakwood Hill East Car Park (2 nd permit)	£80.00	n/a	£80.00

2.5.2 It is advised to utilise Cornmill Car Park (Waltham Abbey) by providing business and resident permits, and Oakwood Hill East (Loughton) by providing business permits to satisfy the local demand and create additional use for the car park. The number of permits and extent of properties/businesses to be included within the schemes are to be explored.

2.5.3 Where season tickets are available in car parks, prices will be adjusted in accordance to the revised tariff charges, which is a reduction of 5% of all day parking charge over a month.

2.6 EV Charging

2.6.1 EFDC are partnering with InstaVolt Ltd to install 2 x rapid Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations at Oakwood Hill East Car Park (Loughton) by the end of 2021. Providing public EV charging in Oakwood Hill will support key EFDC policies of reducing road transport emissions, helping meet the Interim Air Pollution Mitigation Strategy for a 10% conversion of cars to Ultra Low Emission Vehicles by 2025 and working towards becoming a carbon-neutral district by 2030. EV drivers will be required to pay parking charges, as per industry standard.

2.6.2 The Parking Team are investigating the prospect of introducing discounts for EV drivers in all EFDC car parks, which will include an online process for drivers to register for the discount and subsequent validation. Further work is necessary to explore the process and resources

required to be able to implement EV discounts.

3.0 Reason for Decision

- 3.1 To review the current charging regime in EFDC off-street car parks which has not increased since 2015 and to ensure the charges are sustainable to support the operation and maintenance demand of car parks.
- 3.2 To generate additional income for the Council to assist with the financial pressures as a result of Covid-19. Financial pressures have impacted the programme of maintenance and enhancement works of the car parks.

4.0 Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 The do-nothing or delay option would not address the requirement to ensure car parking charges are appropriate and would not contribute to the Council's budget objectives.
- 4.2 The option to increase in line inflationary across all tariffs will result in charging higher rates for above 2 hours than neighbouring authorities and may adversely impact occupancy rates, hence is not deemed sustainable.

5.0 Consultation Undertaken

- 5.1 Consultation has been undertaken with RTA Associated for the validation of parking and estimated income modelling. Members have been consulted on the tariff charge options.
- 5.2 A statutory consultation will be carried out in accordance with requirements under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

6.0 Resource Implications

- 6.1 The changes to the tariff structure will require a statutory consultation, advertisement and Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) to be formally made and introduced under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. North Essex Partnership (NEPP) will be commissioned to carry out the associated necessary legal and technical work.
- 6.2 Changes to car park signs, replacing notice boards and system upgrades will also be required to implement the tariff changes.
- 6.3 A budget of £40,000 is required to implement the tariff changes, which could be deducted from the additional income.

7.0 Legal and Governance Implications

- 7.1 Under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, any changes to car parking charges will require a Traffic Regulation Order and will be advertised. Any objections and observations will be formally considered and reported to the Select Committee and Cabinet Board.

8.0 Safer, Cleaner, Greener Implications

- 8.1 Installation of EV charging points will provide charging opportunity in the District and assist in EV uptake, contributing to reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality.
- 8.2 The Council is committed to improve air quality in the District and the proposed tariff charges may encourage car park users to use more sustainable modes of transport. Car park users unable to make different transport choices may benefit from reduced overall demand which maximises the turnover of spaces.

9.0 Background Papers – None

10.0 Risk Management

- 10.1 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. Subject to the implementation of the proposed tariffs, the financial/occupancy data will be monitored to ensure any adverse impact can be corrected. Members need to be aware that there is a risk element to the change in tariff structures should members of the public fail to meet demand then any loss of income would need to be absorbed by the relevant accounts.

11.0 Equality Impact Assessment

- 11.1 The Equality Act 2010 requires that the Public Sector Equality Duty is actively applied in decision-making. The equality information is provided as an Appendix for the consideration of this report.