

## **Cabinet – 14 September 2011**

### **Response and Action Plan to the Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel Town Centre Parking Working Group Report**

**Portfolio:** Councillor Tom Ansell –Transport and Environment

**Service:** Neighbourhood Services

**Wards:** All

**Key decision:** No

**Forward plan:** No

#### **1. Summary**

- 1.1 Cabinet will recall at its meeting 27 July 2011 receiving and noting the report of the Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel relating to town centre parking. Cabinet will also recall agreeing a further report in response to the recommendations of the Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel be submitted to the next meeting.
- 1.2 This report is in response to the recommendations of the Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel and includes an action plan for their implementation should Cabinet approve the recommendations.

#### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 That Cabinet note the full response to the recommendations made by the Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel as set out in sections 3.3 and 3.4 of this report.
- 2.2 That Cabinet approve the following:-
  - 2.2.1 That the cost of parking at Ward Street and Dudley Street car parks be reduced to £3.00 per day, for an initial trial period of three months with delegated authority given to the Executive Director for Neighbourhood Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder to continue the trial for a further three months if found to be successful at this stage.
  - 2.2.2 That the four hour parking charge on all town centre car parks be reduced by £1.00 to £2.80 for four hours for an initial trial period of three months with delegated authority given to the Executive Director for Neighbourhood Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder to continue the trial for a further three months if found to be successful at this stage.

- 2.2.3 That officers, in conjunction with representatives of the Crown Wharf and Premier Business Park, determine the demand for dedicated permit holder only car parks in Frederick Street, Charles Street and Brook Street. Subject to a suitable level of demand, to introduce permit holder business parking at a cost of £30 per month.
- 2.2.4 That pay and display parking be introduced at the above car parks subject to the demand for permit holder business parking. The level of charge to be set at £3 per day but to be reviewed after six months.

### **3. Report detail**

- 3.1 The Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel identified the need to consider town centre parking when establishing its work programme in May, 2010. The Panel raised the matter again when considering the quarter 2 financial monitoring position for 2010/11 (at their meeting held on 16 November, 2010). The report identified a potential risk relating to income received from car parking and enforcement thereof. The Scrutiny and Performance Panel established a working group to consider and report on a number of matters in relation to car parking within the Town Centre.
- 3.2 The Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel set up a working group to look at town centre parking, as this is an issue that affects residents, businesses and the Council. The working group agreed to investigate areas including charges and locations of car parks whilst having regard to The Traffic Management Act 2004 and the change in Government direction with regard to car parking.
- 3.3 The working group report was presented to the Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel at its meeting on 16 June 2011. The Panel endorsed the report and recommended the proposals as set out in the report with the omission of the two recommendations relating to the introduction of charges for blue badge holders in off street car parks. Members of the Panel expressed the view that the original recommendations 3 & 4, as detailed below be removed from the report:-
- a) That officers now implement a charge for off street parking charges for blue badge holders in Walsall
  - b) That charges for blue badge holders remain the same as for other members of the public with an additional concession that they be allowed an additional 1 hour following the expiration of their ticket
- 3.4 The final recommendations of the Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel were presented to Cabinet 27 July 2011. Those recommendations are set out below with Points for consideration and relevant actions also detailed.
- 1) *That the cost of parking at Ward Street and Dudley Street car parks be reduced to £3.00 per day, for a trial period of 6 months from the date of implementation.*

Given the current low usage of these car parks, it is anticipated new custom may be generated as a result of the reduced rate. However, there is a risk that existing customers currently using other Council car park for all day pay and display parking may simply relocate to these car parks and pay the reduced rate. This risk could be partially offset by proposing a three month trial period with officer delegated authority to continue for the full six month period should the potential risk fail to materialise.

Officers will action this recommendation should Cabinet approve. However, In order to comply with statutory procedures imposed by the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996, this change will require a minimum 28 days to implement following a decision from Cabinet.

- 2) *That the 4 hour parking charge on all town centre car parks be reduced by £1.00 to £2.80 for 4 hours for a trial period of 6 months.*

Given the current profile of ticket sales at the four hour band, there is a potential risk of £15,000 should this proposal fail to generate additional custom to offset the reduced charge. This risk could be partially offset by proposing a three month trial period with delegated officer authority to continue for the full six month period should the potential risk fail to materialise.

Officers will action this recommendation should Cabinet approve. However, in order to comply with statutory procedures imposed by the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996, this will require a minimum 28 days to implement following a decision from Cabinet.

- 3) *That the staff parking policy be reviewed once the impact of the Smarter Workplace Initiative has been established.*

Officers are already reviewing the possible implications of the smarter workplace initiative in order to consider the need for a revised staff parking policy. Progress with this review is reported to the Corporate Management Team.

- 4) *That Officers continue to work with the business community to constantly review parking provision in and around the Crown Wharf and Premier Business Parks.*

Officers routinely review parking provision across the whole borough. However, officers have also undertaken specific reviews in conjunction with representatives of the business parks to address their concerns.

- 5) *That Officers in conjunction with representatives of the Crown Wharf and Premier Business Park, determine the demand for dedicated permit holder only car parks in Frederick Street, Charles Street and Brook Street. Subject to a suitable level of demand, to introduce permit holder business parking at a cost of £30 per month.*

Officers in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce Business Park Coordinator have already identified a suitable level of demand for permit holder parking on at least one of the car parks.

Officers will action this recommendation should Cabinet approve. However, in order to comply with statutory procedures imposed by the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996, this will require a minimum 42 days to implement following a decision from Cabinet.

- 6) *That pay and display parking be introduced at the above car parks subject to the demand for permit holder business parking. The level of charge to be set at £3 per day but to be reviewed after 6 months.*

Following the work with the Chamber of Commerce Business Park Coordinator, officers anticipate introducing pay and display parking on at least one of the car parks.

Officers will action this recommendation should Cabinet approve. However, in order to comply with statutory procedures imposed by the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996, this will require a minimum 28 days to implement following a decision from Cabinet.

- 7) *That Cabinet and the Planning Committee be requested to consider the Council's Policy with regard to parking spaces allocated to residential properties built within the town centre as it was the Scrutiny Panel's view that current permitted spaces per property, in reality, created tensions and issues for existing residents and businesses.*

Officers routinely advise the Planning Committee as part of its decision making process. Planning applications are considered on their individual merits, with a range of views and legislative constraints being considered prior to any final decision on the application.

- 8) *That planning enforcement action is taken swiftly where appropriate to close down unauthorised car parks.*

The Council's planning enforcement team routinely undertake enforcement action for non compliance with planning requirements; this will continue to be the case.

- 9) *That the Parking Guidance System and Variable Message Signing be introduced as soon as possible.*

The introduction of six variable message signs within Walsall has already been completed as part of a wider package of 42 variable message signs across the West Midlands. These are routinely used to inform motorists of unplanned events on the highway or to provide routine road safety messages. Phase Two is the introduction of a parking guidance system for Walsall Town Centre. This is planned for initial completion by April 2012,

but ongoing discussions with private parking operators may result in a further expansion of the system beyond April 2012.

- 10) *That the current approach to planning restrictions relating to car parking at all developments, for supermarkets and schemes with their 'own' parking facilities be enforced.*

The Council's planning enforcement team routinely undertake enforcement action for non compliance with planning conditions; this will continue to be the case.

- 11) *That an update on actions arising from the Working Groups recommendations be considered by the Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel in the 2011/12 municipal year.*

An update to the Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel will be programmed into the 2011/2012 timetable.

#### **4. Council priorities**

- 4.1 Communities and Neighbourhoods: Addressing local parking concerns is vital to ensure local people feel they have a voice that can influence local decisions. The views of a range of stakeholders were sought by the Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel working party prior to making their recommendations to Cabinet on 27 July 2011.
- 4.2 Health and well-being: The provision and management of suitable parking facilities will assist with a reduction of instances of illegal parking that often creates unnecessary traffic congestion and associated air pollution. These reductions have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of local residents.
- 4.3 Economy: The provision of suitable parking facilities is essential to support the local economy. The Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel has reviewed the impact of current parking arrangements and concluded their recommendations will support the local economy as they address the challenges presented by the current economic climate.

#### **5. Risk management**

If the recommendations in this report are approved there could be a risk to the financial profile in relation to pay and display parking income. This risk cannot be fully negated but can be offset by providing officer delegation to continue, or not, with the reduced parking charges trial after the first 3 month period.

## **6. Financial implications**

The introduction of reduced parking charges could result in an overall reduction in income collected from pay and display parking. Given the current profile of ticket sales, this could be in the order of £20,000 over the six month period. However, it is anticipated that a reduction in the cost of pay and display parking could result in additional custom, but the actual level is difficult to quantify. The effect on usage will be monitored and reported upon monthly, however, should the anticipated additional custom fail to materialise, the parking service income target will need to be reviewed accordingly and potentially reduced to reflect the outcome of the trial.

## **7. Legal implications**

Any approved changes to parking charges or the introduction of permit holder parking will need to be introduced through the statutory procedures detailed in the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.

## **8. Property implications**

None directly associated with this report.

## **9. Staffing implications**

None directly associated with this report.

## **10. Equality implications**

This report complies with the Council's approved Parking Strategy. It recommends Cabinet approve the reduction of some parking charges which will give greater opportunity for parking for members of the community as parking charges may become more affordable. The introduction of parking permits for some business users will assist the commercial sector and hopefully contribute to future improvements in the economy.

## **11. Consultation**

This report has been produced in consultation with the Neighbourhood Services finance team.

## **Background papers**

- a) Report of the Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel Town Centre Parking Working Group
- b) Cabinet 27 July 2011

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Jamie Morris  
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jamie Morris', with a stylized flourish at the end.

5 September 2011

Councillor Tom Ansell  
Portfolio Holder

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Ansell', with a stylized flourish at the end.

5 September 2011