

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

FROM: Head of Contract and Asset Management and Project and Programme Executive	<u>REPORT NUMBER:</u> L28
<u>TO:</u> OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (COMMUNITY SERVICES) COMMITTEE	DATE OF MEETING: 21 June 2011

REVIEW OF LONG STAY CAR PARKING CHARGES IN SUDBURY AND HADLEIGH

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report on the operational arrangements introduced for long stay parking charges during the six month period from 18 October 2010, and to recommend improvements to the system.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Head of Contract and Asset Management submits a draft car parking amendment order to a future meeting of Strategy Committee to bring into effect the following changes:
- a) The current restriction on parking for only 24 hours be extended to 72 hours, and amendments made to ticket issue accordingly
 - b) Parking permits to be transferrable within the long stay car parks
- 2.2 That officers maintain regular contact with Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Police in order to monitor on-street parking patterns

The Committee is able to resolve this matter.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The income generated in the first six months is below the predicted figure. There has been a shortfall of approximately £68,000. The discounted usage prediction of 40% in estimating the budget was obviously insufficient. However the change in parking patterns that has taken place would have been very difficult to predict, given that there are no comparable systems in operation elsewhere.
- 3.2 On the positive side on current patterns of use the service will generate an income of £110,000 per annum which will make an important contribution to meeting the tough and demanding budget reductions the Council must achieve. Overview and Scrutiny (Stewardship) Committee will continue to monitor the position during the year.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

There are no risks arising from this report.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPACT

There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this review.

6. SHARED SERVICE/PARTNERSHIP IMPLICATIONS

There are no issues directly arising from this report.

7. KEY INFORMATION

7.1 Council resolved in February 2010 to introduce a long stay parking charge of £1.50 (but with the first 3 hours free) in the following long stay car parks:

- The Station, Sudbury
- Station Road, Sudbury
- Magdalen Road, Hadleigh

7.2 Council further resolved in June 2010 to introduce a discount parking permit scheme (i.e. season tickets purchased annually, quarterly and monthly) for 25% of the long stay spaces. This was based on Members being concerned at the impact that charges would have on the lower-paid who worked in town centre shops and businesses. There are 535 spaces subject to the charges, so 133 parking permits were made available. This was judged to be a balance between meeting the needs of the regular daily users, and the needs of the less frequent users whilst ensuring the loss of income is proportionate and affordable.

7.3 A revised Parking Order was made to introduce the following changes:

- A ticket must be displayed in the long term car parks between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday to Saturday, with a payment of £1.50 if the stay exceeds 3 hours.
- A limited number of parking permits would be available for each long stay car park under the following conditions:
 - Parking is not guaranteed
 - Permits apply Monday to Saturday (8.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.)
 - It is possible to pay monthly, quarterly or annually
 - Fees are calculated as a discount of the daily sum paid over a year i.e. 6 days @ £1.50 x 52 weeks = £468, or 5 days @ £1.50 x 52 weeks = £396 discounted as shown in the following table:

Type of Season Ticket	Cost	Discount based on 5 days	Discount based on 6 days
Annual	£250	36%	47%
Quarterly	£70 (£280 pa)	28%	40%
Monthly	£25 (£300 pa)	23%	36%

8. ISSUES FROM THE FIRST 6 MONTHS' OPERATION

- 8.1 Key stakeholders have been consulted for their views on the first 6 months of the new arrangements. Their comments are summarised in Appendix A to this report. Taking into account these consultations, comments and suggestions from staff, and correspondence relating to appeals, the conclusions in the following paragraphs can be drawn.

Operational

- 8.2 A limited number of users have been confused by the fact that no payment is required for the first 3 hours. Some are inserting money assuming there is a charge whatever the length of stay, but then take a three hour ticket. This must be due to the fact that these few users are not reading the signs at the machines, which are of sufficient clarity to prevent this happening.
- 8.3 Charging has created a change in the use of these car parks. There is now a 'churn' of vehicles throughout the day, therefore a better usage of spaces. It is now easy to find a space where it was not before charging was introduced, which should certainly help the viability and vitality of the town centres.
- 8.4 There is clear evidence from the data on tickets issued that these car parks are now being used by the majority of users as short term parking i.e. free.
- 8.5 There has been an allegation that many people are returning to put fresh short stay tickets (which are free) to avoid payment of the long stay fee. We have always been aware of this possibility, so our wardens are trained to undertake specific checks for this at random intervals. There has been very little evidence that this is in fact happening to any degree. Obviously any vehicle detected would receive a parking notice.
- 8.6 The take up of parking permits is only just over 50% (76 out of the 133 available), and appears to be benefit rail commuters. From a review of the models and registrations it is reasonable to conclude that the scheme is not being used by low-paid workers
- 8.7 Permit holders feel that they should be allowed to use their permits in all three long stay car parks.
- 8.8 There have been some requests for more than one registration number to be allowed on permits.

Enforcement

- 8.9 Parking is currently limited to a 24 hour period, as it always was. However this restriction is now far easier to enforce because of the need to display a ticket. It is however causing real problems to a number of commuters whose business (or in a few cases medical) circumstances requires them to stay away overnight. [Note: in Ipswich the two car parks near to the railway station allow multiple day purchases of tickets to permit parking for more than 24 hours. The same applies in Colchester and Marks Tey].

8.10 The feedback from the Magistrates' Court is that in most cases the mitigation being put forward by defendants is they did not understand the Council's long and short stay parking regimes, particularly with the first 3 hours free in long stay car parks. Magistrates have expressed a degree of sympathy for defendants because our regime is unusual, but have upheld the cases on our behalf.

Impact

8.11 In varying degrees it has been pointed out that the introduction of long stay charges has caused congestion in several side streets in Sudbury, and a few in Hadleigh. The problem is more of an issue in Sudbury. It was always anticipated that this would be an initial reaction to charging

8.12 The problems would appear to be either that congestion is being caused, or that residents are unable to park outside or near their own properties. It is accepted that this is happening to some degree.

8.13 This issue has been discussed with Suffolk County Council, as the highway authority. They have no proposals to introduce any restrictions in any of the streets in Sudbury or Hadleigh at present. They have also indicated that they have no proposals to introduce decriminalised parking in Sudbury at present. This would involve a complete review of all parking arrangements i.e. on street and off street, and would include a review of residents parking.

9. PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

9.1 As a result of a review of the operation of the new regime, and consultation with key stakeholders, the following revisions to the scheme are now proposed that will improve the service to customers:

- a) The current restriction on parking for only 24 hours be extended to 72 hours, and amendments made to ticket issue accordingly
- b) Parking permits to be transferrable within the long stay car parks
- c) That officers maintain regular contact with Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Police in order to monitor on-street parking patterns

It is not considered possible to have multiple registrations on Parking Permits. This would reduce income, but more importantly would require an additional verification process.

10. APPENDICES

Title	Location
A - Summary of consultation responses	Attached

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

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APPENDIX A

Summary of consultation responses:

Hadleigh Chamber of Commerce	No response received
Sudbury Chamber of Commerce	The Chamber feel that, by not allowing multiple day parking, revenue is lost and it is a major inconvenience. Business users are quite happy to pay for two or more days parking when they use trains in connection with overnight trips.
Hadleigh Town Council	The Council is considering the matter at its meeting on 16 June, so their views will be reported verbally.
Sudbury Town Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They named 18 roads in the Sudbury town centre which they felt that were now being used (probably by commuters and those starting work early) for early parking early each day • They continue to receive numerous complaints from residents in these roads that, once they have moved their car in the morning (to go to the school, shopping, doctor etc), they are no longer able to park anywhere near their own property. Not just a few yards away but sometimes they have to end up using the car parks as there is nowhere else. • They state that the different ticket times between the short and long stay has resulted in many people receiving fines when they genuinely thought they did not need a ticket. • They consider that many people use the short stay and return after three hours to put a new ticket in the car – which defeats the whole idea of ‘Short Stay’ • They feel that this initiative has not worked and that income would be better generated from another source without causing so much disruption to the townspeople and visitors of Sudbury. • They would like to see the decriminalisation of car parking and the issue of residents parking (which would generate an income) and urge Babergh to talk to Suffolk County Council about this. They maintain that Suffolk Police have already indicated their support. • <p>The following comments were also made that are not included in this review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They request the removal of parking charges forthwith • The wish to make suggestions on how long stay income can be generated by other means
Suffolk Constabulary	No observations
Suffolk County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been an increase in on-street parking in adjacent residential areas • They do not object to the implementation of parking charges and do not request any revisions at this time. • However, Babergh should be aware that, at present, there is no budget available to address any resulting on street parking issues • Traffic Regulation Order work could be undertaken to address these issues if funded by the District Council.

<p>Local Ward Members</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local residents are upset by the on-street parking since the introduction of charges for all day parking. • Since the introduction of charging many residents have indicated serious problems over vehicles being parked in the vicinity of the railway station to avoid the charging system and it is considered this will continue • There are more cars parked in George Street and other places since charging was introduced • The long stay car parks now have many spaces. There are few problems finding a space even at peak times. • Waitrose has allowed staff to park on a piece of spare land off Edgeworth Road in their ownership or at less busy times within their own customer car park at the far end. Their staff can therefore avoid the car park charges implemented and spaces are freed. Staff from this store would have been a significant user. • Residents in many roads have complained about the big increase in on street parking. Some junctions in the Meadow Lane area are suffering parking causing problems for elderly residents exiting out of their estate. There is a need for double yellow lines to stop this inconsiderate parking on some junctions or enforcement. • The decision was solely budget led therefore no mitigation measures for residents had been discussed with Suffolk County Council (SCC). • There must be a significant shortfall on expected income from charges. Users have avoided charges by parking in the side streets causing some nuisance to local residents. • The scheme was publicised well in comparison to errors made on the machines in the short stay car parks. • An issue remains that users/commuters of the station car park fear that if there is snow/bad weather disruption in winter and they are stuck in London, they are unable to renew car park tickets and so fear fines when they return from work the following day. <p>The following comments were also made that are not included in this review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the Council was to consider any other charges it would need to model more accurately expected income, consider working with partners especially SCC and the Suffolk Police. • SCC also rejected residents parking schemes because of the issue of enforcement but some (not all) residents would welcome these schemes even more so now following the increase in on-street parking.
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