

**PAPER NO. 9**

**REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE MEETING OF 5<sup>th</sup> December 2016**

---

**Meeting:** Executive  
**Date:** 5<sup>th</sup> December 2016  
**Subject:** Car Parking Strategy  
**Report of:** Elaine Bird – Regulatory Services Manager  
**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr N Bannister  
**Status:** Decision  
**Relevant Ward(s):** All Wards

---

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To consider the responses to consultation of the Car Parking Strategy and approve the strategy, to make a recommendation to Council to consider amending the (Off Street Parking Places) Order including the amendments to the off-street parking tariffs and for the Executive to consider adjusting the parking permit charges, including charges to align with any approved tariff increase.

2 Recommendations:

2.1 The Executive:

- (i) approves the Car Parking Strategy as set out in Appendix A of this report;
- (ii) makes a recommendation to Council to consider the following amendments to the Off Street Parking Places Order to:
  - a) consider amending the off-street car parking tariffs as set out in Appendix B of the report;
  - b) redesign of car parks to amend the number of long and short stay spaces;
  - c) introduce charging at Symington Recreation Ground car park for Monday to Friday;
  - d) introduce alternative payment methods;
  - e) introduce electrical charging points;

- f) **develop provision of coach parking and;**
- g) **removal of some private car parks from the Order**

**(iii) approves the principle of setting permit prices which will be applied once Council have approved the new tariffs.**

### 3 Summary of Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1 The current car parking strategy was published in 2008. Whilst there is no legal requirement for a Council to provide car parking facilities, they do play an important part in promoting the vitality of the town centres.
- 3.2 The Executive Committee of the 10<sup>th</sup> October 2016 approved the consultation of the draft Car Parking Strategy and proposed changes to the (Off Street Parking Places) Order.
- 3.3 The consultation closed on the 15<sup>th</sup> November 2016 and evaluation of the responses received is required to help develop the amends to (Off Street Parking Places) Order to be considered by Council.

### 4 Key Facts

- 4.1 The Executive Committee on the 10<sup>th</sup> October 2016 approved the public consultation on the car parking strategy and proposed changes to the (Off Street Parking Places) Order.
- 4.2 The consultation ran from the 19<sup>th</sup> October 2016 until the 15<sup>th</sup> November 2016 and 127 responses were received. The majority of responders, over 60%, were from Market Harborough and 15% from Lutterworth or the surrounding area. Over 80% of the responses were from residents in the district, 10% from businesses and a further 10% from visitors to the area.
- 4.3 The consultation set out a number recommendations covering various aspects of the car parking strategy including
  - a) Proposed changes to the parking tariff.
  - b) Making best use of the car parking assets including:
    - Reviewing the options for the existing car parks, including the re-designation of car parks to ensure maximum availability of spaces to meet future demand including providing the right mix of long and short stay spaces
    - Reviewing the access, layout and signage of car parks

- Looking at the possibility of widening the “pop and shop” scheme (bay with 30 minute free period) to other car parks in the district.
- Ensuring adequate provision of disabled bays in the car parks.

c) Exploring alternative payment methods

- Chip and pin/cashless payment options on the machines in the car parks
- The introduction of pay by phone systems.

d) Ensure adequate provision for those with particular requirement

- Coach parking
- Electrical charging points

A copy of the consultation questions and summary of responses can be found in Appendix C and D. The responses received for each consultation question are considered below.

#### 4.4 Changes to tariff structure

4.4.1 Council has the responsibility to determine the level of car park charges and tariffs (minute 681c-2004/05). The Executive committee of the 10<sup>th</sup> October 2016 considered the tariff structure set out in table 1 below and agreed that it should go out to consultation before being recommended to Council as an amendment to the Off-Street Parking Places Order.

Table 1

Car park	Up to 1 hour	Up to 2 hours	Up to 3 hours	Up to 4 hours	Over 4 hours
Current Short-stay	N/A	70p	£1.20	£1.70	£3.20
Lutterworth	<b>N/A</b>	<b>£1.00</b>	<b>£1.50</b>	<b>£2.50</b>	<b>£4.00</b>
Market Harborough Short stay	<b>N/A</b>	<b>£1.00</b>	<b>£1.50</b>	<b>£2.50</b>	<b>£6.00</b>
Current Long-stay	£1.20				£2.20
All long stay car parks	<b>£2.00</b>				<b>£4.00</b>

4.4.2 The proposed tariff structure received the highest number of objections with 80% of responders disagreeing with the changes. A number of responders were concerned that the price increases would deter visitors and shoppers away from the towns and the increase in long stay tariff would have an impact on workers and displace cars to on-street parking areas.

4.4.3 The concerns of the responders are appreciated however this is the first price increase since 2012 and whilst other expenses relating to providing the car

parking service has increased. In addition it is recognised that the future demand for parking provision will increase especially with the amount of development in and around the towns. Income generated through parking charges can be used to develop the service further and to support other town centre initiatives.

- 4.4.4 One of the recommendations of the Strategy was to undertake periodic review of the benchmarking data for neighbouring authorities. Using the proposed tariff structure for Market Harborough and Lutterworth the 2016 benchmarking data can be found in Appendix E. Whilst there are a number of variations in the tariff structures for each comparator towns, the benchmarking data shows that the proposed charges for Market Harborough and Lutterworth are still comparable with a number of neighbouring authorities.
- 4.4.5 That aside, a number of responders to the consultation expressed concerns over the size of the increase, especially in relation to the cost of the longest stay in the short stay car parks and the long stay charges and the impact this increase would have on people who work in the town. There were concerns that the level of increase may deter people from using the car parks and increase problems with on street parking.
- 4.4.6 It is important that there is sufficient differential between the long and short stay tariffs to encourage appropriate use of the car parks and that there is sufficient turn over of spaces in short stay a car park to encourage more people into the towns.
- 4.4.7 A number of responses expressed concern over the impact the potential increased charges would have on the viability of the town centres. The Business Support Manger has been in discussion with a local retail agent and local businesses in relation to the number of empty retail units. At the time of the survey, (September 2016) there were 12 empty units in Market Harborough, of which 5 were in the process of being re-let. A number of the properties required re-negotiation of the lease and whilst this was underway, the properties remained vacant for longer than usual. Feed back from local letting agents indicates that whilst the September vacancy rates were higher than normal it is anticipated that the vacancy rates would shortly reduce to normal levels supporting the viable nature of the town.
- 4.4.8 The Council has considered all of the responses received and in light of the reasons set out above and in Appendix D, it is not anticipated that the problems identified through the consultation process will come to fruition.
- 4.4.9 As previously discussed a number of responses to the consultation expressed concern over the impact the price increases would have on the vitality of the

towns. The proposed tariffs only relate to Harborough District Council car parks and all on-street parking controls are under the remit of Leicestershire County Council. As part of Leicestershire County Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) they are currently assessing the potential for introducing on-street parking charges in county towns including Market Harborough. At this stage nothing has been agreed and the introduction of parking charges in any area will be subject to a full consultation process before implementation.

- 4.4.10 It is proposed to introduce charging to the Symington Recreation Ground car park as observations indicate that during the week most vehicles use this car park to purposes other than using the recreation facilities as the car park is close to the town centre and for the train station. The original proposal was to impose the charges Monday to Saturday however following the consultation, there were a number of representations expressing concern for charging at the weekend as it would have a significant impact on users of the Recreation Ground. Consequently, it is proposed that charges should only be applied Monday to Friday to enable people to use the sports facilities as the weekend without charge.
- 4.4.11 The proposed tariff structure can be found in Appendix B and will be recommended to Council for consideration.
- 4.4.12 The Council offers a number of parking permits for specific car parks in Market Harborough and Lutterworth. The current permit scheme is very complex and permits are available for either 3, 5 or 6 days and can be renewed annually, half yearly or quarterly. Evidence shows that the majority of permits purchased are for either the 5 or 6 day period and are renewed annually.
- 4.4.13 The Executive Working Group reviewed the current permit system and concluded that the present range of permits should be simplified to a single 6 day permit (Monday to Saturday) only available in long stay car parks.
- 4.4.14 The Executive under its delegated powers (Minute 681c 2004/05), is required to set the tariffs applicable to car park permits. The cost of the permit is based on the actual cost of the highest tariff for the long stay car park with a 40% discount. It is suggested that the current methodology used to determine the cost of a permit is maintained with the proposal to introduce a phased increase in the price of the permits by reducing the amount of discount applied to the permit. Each increase in the charges will require a variation to the (Off Street Parking Places) Order. The current permit prices and permit prices based on a 40% discount off of the proposed tariffs has been provided in Appendix B

#### **4.5 Making best use of the car parking assets.**

- 4.5.1 There were mixed responses in relation to how the Council should make best use of its car parking assets. There was strong support for the use of pop and shop bays and there was recognition that more parking spaces are required. A number of responses related to issues in specific car parks and this information will be collated and where appropriate consideration will be given as part of the Council's improvement programme.
- 4.5.2 The current (Off Street Parking Places) Order enables the Council to designate off-street parking bay as "pop and shop" bays to enable visitors to park for free for 30 minutes. There are currently 57 pop and shop bays in Market Harborough with a further 18 planned for Lutterworth if the one hour free tariff is removed. It is important that the number and location of pop and shop bays is kept under review to take into consideration any future changes that may have an impact on both off-street and on-street parking especially in view of the potential introduction of on-street parking charges.
- 4.5.2 There were a number of objections regarding the proposed introduction of charges at Symington Recreation Ground car park as it would have a detrimental impact on users of the area especially at weekends. The proposal is to recommend to Council that if charges are introduced, they are restricted to weekdays only.

#### **4.6 Exploring alternative payment methods**

- 4.6.1 The current pay and display machines are old and are reaching the end of their useful life. In addition, the introduction of the new £1 coin means that the machines would need to be modified if we were not already planning to renew them. There was significant support for the provision of alternative payment methods provided that service users are still given a choice. All new machines have the ability to pay by card and the pay by phone scheme is a stand alone alternative and is not dependent on the replacement of the machines.
- 4.6.2 There is a transaction charge for using both cashless and pay by phone payment methods. Whenever payment is made using either a debit or credit card, there is charge made by the banks to the business. At the time of the discussions with the Executive Working Group the transaction costs were in the region of 25p per transaction. Based on this information, the Executive Working Group agreed that due to the potential financial impact on the Council with the introduction of chip and pin/cashless payments, consideration should be given whether transaction costs could be passed on to the service user. However during the year there have been a lot of changes in this area

with the introduction of the Interchange Fee Regulations and whilst the cost of transaction charge has been reduced it would not be deemed appropriate to pass this charge on. However to reduce the financial risk further it will be possible to set a minimum payment level on the use of cashless payments for pay and display machines. The recommended threshold level for cashless transactions should be in line with the highest long stay car parking tariff.

- 4.6.3 The introduction of cashless payments and pay by phone will require a change to the (Off Street Parking Places) Order and whilst the new machines will be replaced in the 2016/17 financial year, the ability to use the cashless facilities will not be activated until the new Order has taken effect. Until such time the new machines will just accept cash payments.

#### **4.7 Ensure adequate provision for those with particular requirements**

- 4.7.1 The consultation sought feedback on initiatives such as the introduction of electric vehicle charging points or coach parking facilities. The response from the consultation was not in favour of investment by the Council in these areas. It is recognised that the take up electric vehicles has not been as high as central government had anticipated however it is expected that over time the demand will increase as a wider range of Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEV) become available at a lower cost.
- 4.7.2 The latest vehicle registration data from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders does show a slight increase in the number of electric or hybrid vehicles registered and last month the government announced additional funding to boost the uptake of ultra low emission cars and the announcement was part of the government's plan to improve air quality. Whilst Harborough District is not included in the governments plans to introduce clean air zones, there are known issues of air quality in the local area and an Air Quality Management has been declared in Lutterworth and the installation of electrical charging points, either now or in the future when there is greater demand, will work towards improving local air quality.
- 4.7.3 Whilst the consultation did not show much support for the provision of coach parking; the promotion of tourism is one of the Council's key priorities through the development and implementation of a tourism blueprint for the district. The provision of suitable parking facilities for coaches will help move forward this area for local economic growth by encouraging coach companies to use Harborough district as a visitor location.
- 4.7.4 The current (Off Street Parking Places) Order will require amendment to cover the installation of electrical charging points and coach parking facilities

therefore is it proposed to include these changes in the Order to be amended to enable them to be implemented at a later date.

## 5 Legal Issues

- 5.1 Currently all the parking restrictions across the district are set out in the (Off Street Parking Places) Order 2010. Where there are any changes required, such as re-designation of car parks or the introduction of charges in car parks it is necessary to amend the Order otherwise any restrictions cannot be enforced.

## 6 Resource Issues

- 6.1 The replacement of the pay and display machines and amendment to some car parks has already been identified in the Capital Programme. Additional borrowing costs will be funded from the additional car parking income arising from the increase in the tariff.
- 6.2 A number of the proposals within this report will increase the potential income from the car parking service which can help support the maintenance of the parking assets and enforcement provision as well as to support other town centre initiatives. If all of the proposals are adopted it is anticipated that the yield from car parking will increase in the region of £200,000 to meet the costs of maintaining the car parking assets.

## 7 Equality Analysis Implications/Outcomes

- 7.1 The review of the parking strategy will have an impact of certain sectors of the population. The main areas are:
- Lack of suitable parking spaces, including disabled bays
  - Revised tariff structure.
  - Security in car parks
  - Alternative payment methods

The Equality Assessment in Appendix F sets out in more detail the issues and mitigation measures to be taken to minimise the impact.

## 8. Risk Management Implications

- 8.1 Parking is a service, and the service has to be managed properly. A “free for all” i.e. no restrictions, no charge and no enforcement approach is not an option in good management and will have a detrimental impact on the local community. Having a car parking strategy which sets out the Council’s approach to parking both now and for the future provision and service will reduce the risk of delivering an inappropriate service.

## 9 Consultation



9.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the responses to the public consultation of the car parking strategy.

9.2 There will be opportunities for people to make representation during the implementation of any changes to the (Off Street Parking Places) Order.

10. Options

Off Street Car Park tariff increase

- a) Do nothing – (not recommended) the cost of managing the service and maintaining car parks could eventually outweigh income. Investments in other projects and car park improvements which benefit the wider community may not be possible.
- b) Recommend to Council to consider the car parking tariff increase set out in Appendix B

Other proposed amends to the (Off Street Parking Places) Order

- a) Do nothing – (not recommended) To enable effective enforcement of parking restrictions any proposed changes to the current regime must be incorporated into the new Order.
- b) Recommend to Council the proposed amendments to the Parking Order.

11 Background Papers

11.1 *None to add*

---

**Previous report(s):**

**Executive Meeting 10 October 2016 – Car Parking Strategy**

**Scrutiny Panel for Performance 15 September 2016 – Car Parking Strategy**

**Information Issued Under Sensitive Issue Procedure: N**

**Ward Members Notified: N**

**Appendices:**

**A. Parking Strategy**

- B. Proposed tariff structure**
- C. Consultation questions**
- D. Summary of responses**
- E. 2016 Benchmarking data**
- F. Equality Assessment**