

**Reduced Parking Charges in Other Local Authorities**

Walsall Council

Walsall Council's Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel investigated town centre parking issues in a recently published report 'Town Centre Parking Working Group'. In relation to the pricing structure of parking charges the report states that:

*The Working Group considered the risks associated with lowering charges in all Council run car parks and whether reducing costs alone would encourage more people to park in town. A potential risk was that usage may not increase and income could subsequently fall. Free parking offered during Christmas 2010 was referred to as an example as occupancy rates during this period did not differ greatly from the previous year despite free parking being offered. Revenue of circa £30k was lost as a result.*

Swindon Borough Council

In June 2010, Swindon Borough Council's Cabinet approved the implementation of a reduction in parking charges to £1.00 for an hour and £2.00 for a stay between two and four hours in Brunel North, Brunel West and Fleming Way car parks for an initial period to 31 July 2011. At the same time, a complementary variation in charges for all the car parks in Swindon's Old Town to £0.70 for an hour and £1.00 for stays up to two hours was approved. A report to the borough council's Cabinet on 8 June 2011 sought to assess the impacts of these reductions in car parking charges.

Retailers in Swindon town centre have reported an increase in both footfall and turnovers: the Brunel Centre had an additional 286,000 visitors since 1 January 2011 (compared with 2010) which is an increase in footfall of 8.17%. Retailers in the Brunel Centre also report that their sales are ahead of UK sales growth in six of the ten reported months.

In terms of car parking, the report indicates that while the reduction in charges has not increased the overall volume of cars in all car parks in Swindon town centre, they are probably staying longer. However, the report highlights that income and ticket sales across all car parks in the town centre and Old Town is down by £385,000 (income) and 45,000 (tickets). The report states that "What this shows is that whilst the scheme has been successful in the three multi-storeys, this may have been at the expense of the other car parks in the town". While not included in the Borough Council's report, this finding might suggest that those retailers closer to these other car parks may have suffered a commensurate drop in footfall and trade.

Lastly, the report confirms that the Swindon Borough Council, Brunel Management Company and in Swindon spent £50,000 on a marketing campaign, and that the reduction in charges is anticipated to reduce the council's car parking income by £500,000 per annum. A £112,000 parking income shortfall for 2011/12 has been identified in the council's latest budget monitoring report.

#### Newport City Council

In December 2010, Newport City Council introduced two hours free parking in its multi-storey car parks and followed this by introducing a 10p tariff for the first two hours in its surface car parks on 31 January 2011.

A report to the City Council's Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport on 30 March 2011 states that 261 fewer vehicles used the car parks in January 2011 than over the same period in 2010 resulting in a reduced income of £30,253.88. In February 2011, the report states that there was an increase of 2,143 vehicles parked compared with the same month in 2010. The reduction in income between the two years was £59,876 for the month of February.