

Background Briefing and Main Considerations for the Council

1. A report on the proposed approach to reviewing the Wiltshire Local Transport Plan (LTP) Car Parking Strategy was presented to the Environment Select Committee on 12 January 2010. In response to the proposal to allow Area Boards to set parking charges (within defined limits), the Committee:
2. *...felt that area boards should be used for consultation purposes only as it was felt inappropriate for area boards to have full responsibility for parking charges within their respective areas.*
3. The Council commissioned its term consultants, Mouchel, to undertake the review of the car parking strategy in January 2010. Mouchel's final reports were issued to the Council at the beginning of July 2010.
4. Consultation on the draft car parking strategy was then undertaken from 12 July to 3 September 2010. A variety of means were used to inform people of the consultation.
5. Feedback on the consultation findings were presented to all the Area Boards between 22 September and 23 November 2010.
6. The Environment Select Committee considered the car parking strategy at its meeting on 2 November 2010 where Members resolved:
 - a. *To congratulate the Cabinet Member on the work undertaken and note the update provided and request that the comments made are taken into consideration by the Cabinet Member prior to the final report's submission to Cabinet.*
7. Following the Environment Select Committee meeting, a minority report was received on 18 November 2010. The response to this report was issued on 13 December 2010.
8. The Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 2011-2026 – Car Parking Strategy was approved by Cabinet at its meeting on 14 December 2010. The minutes of this meeting record the receipt of two questions and 46 written submissions. Ten verbal representations were also made.
9. The following off-street (Monday-Saturday) car parking charges were agreed by Cabinet:

Table 1: Off-street car parking charges (Monday-Saturday)

Band	Stay	<1hr	<2hrs	<3hrs	<4hrs	<5hrs	<8hrs	All day
1	Short	-	£2.20	£4.20	-	-	-	-
1	Long	-	£2.20	£4.00	£4.60	£5.50	£7.40	£7.40
2	Short	£1.10	£1.50	£3.20	-	-	-	-

2	Long	£0.90	£1.30	£2.60	£3.10	£4.20	£5.40	£5.90
3	Short	£0.40	£1.20	£2.10	-	-	-	-
3	Long	£0.30	£1.10	£2.00	£2.40	£3.20	£5.20	£5.60
4	Short	£0.30	£1.10	£2.00	-	-	-	-
4	Long	£0.20	£1.10	£1.90	£2.30	£2.90	£4.80	£5.20

10. The Sunday parking charge in Salisbury was set at a flat rate of £1.70.
11. In accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules (Part 8 of the Constitution), the Cabinet decision was called in by the Environment Select Committee. At the extraordinary meeting held on 21 December 2010, the Committee resolved:
- That it was satisfied by the response, and agreed to no further action being taken and requested that the decision-maker (Cabinet) was informed accordingly; noting that the decision would then be implemented immediately.*
12. On 3 February 2011, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport approved the report 'Season Ticket and Permit Options and Costs' (reference HT-003-11).
13. Following Cabinet's decision and the above Cabinet Member decision, the required amendments to the Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) were advertised in accordance with the processes set out in the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. Consultation on the amended TROs was undertaken between 27 January and 21 February 2011.
14. The LTP Car Parking Strategy was formally adopted by the Council at its meeting on 22 February 2011 as part of the Wiltshire LTP 2011-2026. Three petitions relating to car parking issues in Bradford-on-Avon, Devizes and Marlborough were presented at the meeting.
15. Following Cabinet Member approval of the report 'Off-Street Traffic Regulation Orders for Wiltshire' (reference HT-006-11) on 11 March 2011, the revised car parking charges were introduced on 18 April 2011.
16. A petition on car parking charges in Chippenham was presented to the Council meeting on 12 July 2011 where the request for this report was made.
17. In response to an expressed public desire, Cabinet agreed on 19 August 2011 to the reintroduction of the one hour charge (at £1.50) and variation of the two hour charge (to £2.50) in Salisbury from 19 September 2011.
18. At its meeting on 6 September 2011, the Environment Select Committee made the following resolution in relation to the agenda item on car parking charges:
- That the Committee consider Car Parking Charges as a full item on the agenda of the next meeting, with the understanding that a suitable report will be circulated in advance of the meeting, to provide details on the following:*

- *Full details of the estimated shortfall in parking revenue, with a countywide total and an area-by-area breakdown, and showing a comparison with the revenues prior to the changes to the car parking charges.*
- *The wider economic context, using data from statistical neighbours if possible.*
- *Effects on Traders to be made clear, and differentiated from the effects of the recession.*
- *Detail on the nature and extent of the link between revenue from car parking and the provision of bus services / subsidies.*

19. The Chippenham Area Board discussed car parking charges and town centre viability at its meeting on 12 September 2011 following the presentation of a petition to the Area Board at its meeting on 4 July 2011 and the Council at its meeting on 14 July 2011. The following resolutions were made:

- (i) *That the cost of the first hour's parking in Chippenham town centre car parks be reduced back towards 50 pence.*
- (ii) *That Wiltshire Council moves towards separating car parking charges and the subsidising of public transport in next year's budget.*

Main Considerations for the Council

Introduction

20. At the full Council meeting on 22 February 2011, Councillor John Brady (in his previous capacity as Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Strategic Planning) committed the Council to conducting a post-implementation analysis of the current car parking charges. This analysis, however, was not something that the Council would have undertaken only five months after the charges had been introduced. As stated by the Chief Executive in a letter to Salisbury City Centre Management, dated 16 June 2011, the review was planned to have been undertaken early next year when people's behaviour and patterns had stabilised, and when there would have been a year's economic and transport-related evidence to analyse.
21. Having said this, it was always recognised that undertaking the post-implementation analysis would not have been easy given the current economic situation and the fact that parking charges is only one factor of many influencing an area's economic performance. Carrying out the analysis now, however, does mean that people's behaviour and patterns are still in a state of flux, and there is not a significant timeline of post-implementation economic and transport-related evidence available. Given this, this report utilises the best available evidence and, where necessary, highlights concerns with its robustness and/or relevance.
22. Before setting out the available evidence, a summary of the basis for the banding of Wiltshire's towns and current charges is provided as way of context.

Banding

23. Banding seeks to establish a balance between acknowledging the range of economic, social and environmental differences between towns with the need to develop a more consistent approach to parking policy, management and operations throughout Wiltshire. The towns were banded into one of four spatial bands based on the following (also see **Appendix 2**):
- (i) The hierarchy in the emerging Wiltshire Core Strategy (which considers the role and function of towns, and their level of facilities and services).
 - (ii) Population levels.
 - (iii) The availability of sustainable transport alternatives.
 - (iv) Operational parking issues.
24. Banding also reduces the ability of towns to compete with each other over car parking charges (e.g. by competing on offering the lowest parking charge rather than, for instance, on offering the best retail offer). The concept of spatial banding was supported by the majority of respondents (58.7%) to the consultation on the car parking strategy review.

Basis of Current Charges

25. In undertaking their review of the car parking strategy, the Council's consultants, Mouchel, found that parking charges in Wiltshire were generally significantly lower than in surrounding areas and key competitor towns. Mouchel also found that, as a result of having four former district councils, there were significant differences in parking charges across Wiltshire.
26. Based on the above analysis, three options for parking charges (Monday–Saturday) were proposed as part of the consultation on the car parking strategy: 'conventional' (lowest charges), 'balanced' and 'radical' (highest charges).
27. In the end, a 'preferred' option based on a weighting of the consultation responses was proposed in the report to Cabinet on 14 December 2010. These charges were subsequently increased by a further 10% by Cabinet in order to help support local bus services under threat from the combined effect of reductions in Council funding and changes in the concessionary fares reimbursement process and Bus Service Operators Grant. In addition, Cabinet agreed that any surplus parking revenue would be hypothecated to offer further support for sustainable transport measures such as local bus services.
28. In recognition of a strong consultation response, Sunday parking charges were not universally introduced and only retained in Salisbury at a flat rate of £1.70.
29. At the same time, the following opportunities were offered to Band 3 and 4 towns:

- In Band 3 towns, to 'buy back' a small proportion of short-stay spaces from Wiltshire Council to offer as free parking spaces.
 - In Band 4 towns, to take over the management of local public car parks and associated costs as an alternative to parking charges being set by Wiltshire Council.
30. While all the Band 4 town councils took up their respective opportunity, none of the Band 3 town councils took up the 'buy back' option at the rate of £500 plus VAT per space per year.
31. Based on the strong support and comments made through the car parking strategy consultation, the Council launched a new season ticket scheme earlier this year. This scheme aims to make it easier and cheaper to park for people who frequently use the Council's car parks. In particular, businesses can purchase season tickets which, because they are not vehicle specific, can be used by any employee or volunteer so reducing their parking costs.