

## **Response to Environment Select Committee Minority Report**

1. A report on the proposed approach to reviewing the current LTP Parking Plan was presented to the Environment Select Committee at its meeting on 12 January 2010. Paragraph 19 of this report stated the following:

*Ultimately, the LTP3 Parking Strategy will set the context for the supply, management and co-ordination of car parking in Wiltshire. While this will inevitably mean a degree of prescription, the aim is to allow sufficient flexibility for Area Boards to adopt approaches to parking that, within the framework of the strategy, reflect the local circumstances found within their respective areas. In particular, it is the intention to generate four bands for parking charges within which Area Boards would be able to set the actual charges imposed on the ground. This would then allow any surplus funds above the minimum charge to be used to support local sustainable transport initiatives (e.g. bus services, cycle routes, etc.). It is proposed that the bands, the minimum and maximum levels of which will be determined as part of the Mouchel commission, are based on the following areas:*

- *Band 1 – Salisbury*
- *Band 2 – Chippenham, Trowbridge and Devizes*
- *Band 3 – Other Market Towns*
- *Band 4 – Small Towns and Villages*

2. However, the minutes of the above meeting state that “...the committee felt that area boards should be used for consultative purposes only as it was felt inappropriate for area boards to have full responsibility for parking charges within their respective areas”. Given this, the committee resolved to amend paragraph 20 of the report to read:

*“That the Area Boards should have a chance to consider and be consulted upon regarding car parking charges in their area and to make any recommendations through the Executive”.*

3. It is clear that the Council was prepared to offer local areas the opportunity to determine car parking charges (within upper and lower limits) but that this approach was rejected by the Committee. It should be noted that no mention was made at the meeting of the approach now outlined in the minority report.
4. As an alternative to the above rejected approach, the Council offered two opportunities as part of the consultation on the draft LTP car parking strategy. While the majority of Band 4 councils have expressed an interest in taking up the opportunity to manage their respective car parks, none of the Band 3 councils have expressed an interest in buying out a proportion of their parking spaces.

5. The majority of parish and town councils did not indicate in their consultation responses that they wished to take on the flexibility or responsibility suggested in the minority report. Instead, the main thrust of their responses were as follows:
  - a) Band 4 town and parish councils wanted to maintain the status quo (i.e. no charging).
  - b) Some Band 3 town councils felt that they should be categorised in Band 4 and therefore be given the opportunity to manage their car parks.
6. It is considered that the reason for the high take up from Band 4 towns is because it allows the respective town and parish councils to maintain free car parking at a reasonable cost – the cost is calculated on operating costs and not revenue income.
7. On a practical level, it is not clear how the negotiation between Wiltshire Council and the respective towns and parish councils would be conducted and resolved. Quite apart from the significant timing and resource implications of this process (e.g. How many iterations would be allowed as part of the negotiation? Who would arbitrate in the event of a stalemate situation?), there would also be significant risks associated with forecasting individual car park income levels. The minority report does not make it clear who would be responsible for these revenue risks.
8. The approach in the minority report is based on achieving pre-set income levels from a town's car parks. However, parking is a strategic issue and an important tool in helping the Council manage a number of economic, community and environmental factors (e.g. traffic congestion, providing accessibility to essential services and air quality). Allowing town and parish councils to vary parking charges at each car park may have unintended consequences on these factors.
9. Finally, the minority report makes several references to a 'one size fits all' approach. However, the banding of towns (the configuration and concept of which is accepted in the minority report) and the opportunities offered clearly means that the strategy is not a 'one size fits all' approach. Furthermore, an appropriate level of flexibility has been incorporated in the approaches to managing car parking and non-residential and residential parking standards.