

Summary of Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport Comments to Cabinet

14 December 2010- Car Parking Strategy

Note references are to the Cabinet report, the electronic link is shown as the end of this document (hard copies can be obtained from the Community Area Manager)

Car parking is a very broad subject and is not just about charges. It is a strategic matter given the extent to which it demands a countywide approach. During the consultation mention has been made of the localisation bill, this looks to increase local control of public finances. This has been addressed in the report by giving specific opportunities to local Councils.

1. The need for the review is shown on page 8 and the process on page 9.
2. Some concerns were expressed at several Area Boards about the web based consultation. This is covered at para 17 page 10. Paper copies were available in libraries and everyone who requested a paper copy was sent one. Thirty of the 240 Parish and Town Councils responded.
3. Feedback has been given to all the Area Boards that requested it and, where formal comments or motions were recorded, these are shown on page 10.
4. Scrutiny reviewed the principles of the review on 12th January this year and the results of the consultation on 2nd November. At the January meeting Scrutiny stated that the Area Boards should be used for consultation purposes only as it was felt inappropriate for Area Boards to take full responsibility for parking charges in their area. This recommendation was adopted.
5. In the consultation the majority of respondents (59%) supported banding, but the majority (54%) did not agree with the band their community was in. Various suggestions for banding were made, these are shown on page 12. There was no consensus on how bands should be changed, the recommended banding is not 'one size fits all'.
6. On the basis of the consultation the 'preferred option' for car parking charges has been applied and is shown at para 56 on page 17. Comment was made by some respondents that the first hour should be free. It is estimated that this would cost £3M of the total £6.05M income from off street parking.
7. Representations were made from Salisbury to have an alternative of a £2.00 two hour charge with no option of a first hour charge. This has been accepted as Salisbury is in its own band, this is shown at para 58 page 17.
8. Representations were made from Devizes concerning the proposed charges in the Market Place. It is suggested at para 59 page 17 that Devizes and Marlborough should be treated in an equal manner given that charges are higher in these two former Kennet District Council Towns than for the rest of Wiltshire.
9. Recommendation 8 suggests that Band 3 Towns are offered a buy back of a proportion of spaces, this arrangement has historically been used by Westbury and Warminster Town Councils. No Towns have expressed an interest in taking up this suggestion.
10. Band 4 includes Towns and Parishes where there are small car parks that have not had charges in the past. Recommendation 8 suggests that the Town and Parish

Councils should have the option of managing these car parks at their cost as an alternative to charges. The majority of these Towns and Villages have expressed an interest in entering a negotiation on this.

11. The Chambers of Commerce have made representations concerning the cost of parking for staff working in local shops. This will be reviewed together with season tickets as shown in recommendation 13. To be more specific we will be entering discussions with the Chambers with the objective of introducing special season ticket arrangements, this will take into account an assessment of unused spaces in long term car parks and local demand. Salisbury will be excluded from this as there is the alternative of Park and Ride.
12. The Chambers have also commented on the need for pay on exit. The alternative pay by mobile has recently been rolled out across the County and serves the same purpose with the ability to top up without returning to the car park.
13. Other issues concerning developers, enforcement, residents parking zones etc are also covered in the report. There is no recommendation to impose Sunday parking charges where there is none now.

Car parking and public transport are linked strategically and I would like to comment on one of the other areas which will be affected by the decisions made here today, and that is buses. Many people, particularly those who live in urban areas, have the option of using their car or a bus to get to work, for shopping, for leisure, for education and for visiting their doctor or hospital.

However there are many others who are less fortunate either because they don't own a car or can't drive (some 16% of households in Wiltshire do not have a car), those who only have one car (nearly 46%) that is used by the breadwinner to get to work leaving their partner without transport during the day. Buses are very important to families particularly in a rural authority like Wiltshire and many of these buses would not exist without a subsidy from the Council. If they are not subsidised they will disappear.

The subsidy in Wiltshire is in the order of £5.4M. Almost half of bus journeys (47%) are subsidised directly by the Council.

The reason for going through this is that during the consultation many people said that we were just trying to make a profit from car parking, however it is only by using any excess as a cross subsidy that many bus services survive. Recommendation 6 in the report is that any income over and above this years outturn be hypothecated into supporting bus services. If this does not happen buses will be stopped, this would badly affect those who depend on them and make it difficult for them to get into the shops and other facilities in the Towns and to get to work.

All local authorities are under considerable financial stress due to the reduction in monies from central government over the next 4 years and the fact that that the cuts will be front loaded. The overall reduction will be in the order of 28%.

This will affect our public transport budget in four ways;

1. The 28% reduction will cut deep.

2. The arrangement for concessionary fares will change so that bus operators get less, they will in turn ask for more subsidy from the Council
3. In 2012/13 the Bus Services Operator Grant will reduce by 20%, the operators will ask for more subsidy to cover this.
4. The passenger transport budget is dominated by mandatory tasks such as getting children to school, social care, special needs transport etc. As this can't be reduced the burden of the reductions has to fall on subsidised buses.

These financial aspects are covered in Appendix 4 of the report. They are very severe.

This is the reality we have to live with and why recommendation 5 suggests a 10% uplift on car parking charges and that recommendation 6 suggests hypothecation of any excess over this year's outturn.

In summary;

No one likes to pay for car parking and the accusation is often made that motorists are taxed unfairly. In this case there is a difficult balance to make.

Should car parking be reduced to a level that only covers the running costs with the result that nearly 50% of buses would disappear? Or should car parking charges be at a level where there are funds to subsidise buses that are needed for the more vulnerable in our community but without making them so high that residents are deterred from shopping in Wiltshire Towns? The report recommends the latter.

Links

Paper to Cabinet <http://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=509&T=10>

Minutes of Cabinet <http://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=509&T=1>

Main impact on the Amesbury Community Area

1. **Amesbury Town Council has the option to 'buy back' a small proportion of short stay spaces from Wiltshire Council to offer as free parking spaces.**
2. **25% of car parking spaces in Amesbury town centre will remain free of charge for the first hour for a period of one year to be followed by a review.**
3. **Current charges for all on and off-street parking will increase by 10%.**
4. **In Amesbury car parks – the charges will be:**
Short Stay: <1hr: 40p / <2hrs:£1.20 / <3hrs: £2.10
Long Stay: <1hr: 30p / <2hrs:£1.10 / <3hrs: £2.00 / <4hrs: £2.40 / <5hrs: £3.20 / <8hrs:£5.20
All Day: £5.60
5. **These changes are proposed to take effect in Spring 2011, following a legal process that will take place over the coming months. This legal process includes a 21 day period for public comment and consultation on the specific changes for Amesbury.**