

Agenda Item 7

Forward Planning & Transportation
Salisbury District Council, Bourne Hill
Salisbury, Wiltshire SP1 3UZ

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Report

Subject : Sunday car parking charges

Report to : The Cabinet

Date : 07 June 2006

Author : Eric Teagle

Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport : Councillor Dennis Brown

1. **Purpose of report**

- 1.1 To consider objections received following the formal advertisement of the Council's intention to introduce Sunday car parking charges and to recommend that the decision be confirmed.

2. **Background**

- 2.1 At the Cabinet meeting held on 1st February 2006 it was resolved to recommend that Sunday car parking charges should be introduced. This recommendation was endorsed by the full Council meeting on 20th February 2006. A schedule of the proposed charges is given in Table 1.

TABLE 1: PROPOSED SUNDAY PARKING TARIFFS

	Charging period	Tariff
Off-street car parks	10 am – 4 pm	£1 per visit. No restriction on length of stay, except in the Market Place (2 hour maximum).
On-street	10 am – 4 pm	As Monday – Saturday 0 – 15 minutes 20p 15 – 30 minutes 50p 30 – 45 minutes £1 45 – 60 minutes £1.50.



Awarded in:
Housing Services
Waste and Recycling Services



2.2 In order to implement this decision, it is necessary to add to the current on and off-street parking place orders. This report is in respect of the off-street order. Wiltshire County Council is dealing with the amendment to the on-street order(s) separately.

2.3 The proposal to introduce Sunday charging in the off-street car parks was the subject of a formal advertisement on 23rd March 2006. A period of 21 days was allowed for responses, although any representations received subsequently have also been considered.

3. **The reasons given for the proposed introduction of Sunday charges**

3.1 The Statement of Reasons to which the formal advertisement referred contained the following justification:

It is Council policy to maximise income consistent with the economic activity of the City Centre, the general financial position of the Council and the Transport Plan which seeks to utilise the car parking price mechanism to mitigate the increase in car use. Accordingly consideration was given by the Council to the fees and charges to be applied in the District of Salisbury consistent with achieving the best service provision and/or maximising income as appropriate. It was also considered in the light of Sunday now being regarded by a number of retail outlets as a normal trading day, requiring the Council to expend resources in the provision of services such as street cleaning. It was therefore resolved that in addition to increases in parking charges generally throughout the District, parking charges should also be introduced on Sundays in Salisbury City car parks.

4. **The representations**

4.1 Copies of the representations have been placed in the Members' Room. Overwhelmingly the correspondence has come from churchgoers who believe it is inappropriate and unacceptable to introduce car parking charges on a Sunday. A letter has also been received from the manager of a local supermarket. The points made may be summarised as follows:

- Salisbury is a Christian city. It is inappropriate to charge people attending church services. Charges will impact on the number of worshippers and reduce income through the collection plate.
- Very few worshippers live within walking distance of the city centre. Elderly people driving from outside the city to attend church will no longer be able to afford to do so. It has never been the case that attendance at church in Salisbury has incurred parking charges and at a time when congregations are limited in number they will become fewer. Attendance at morning service is greater than in the evening by a factor of about 15 to 1.
- Churchgoers should be exempted from charges or they should start later, after morning worship has finished.
- Charges will impact most on the poor, the elderly, or those coming from outside the city, where public transport is inadequate.
- Charges will affect citizens' health and well-being. It will reduce recreation in the city's parks and gardens.

- Illumination of park and ride sites could be reduced to save money instead. The required revenue should be found from other sources. Charges will impose additional pressures to 'watch the clock' on Sundays.
- It could cost upwards of £200 a year to attend church on Sundays (*note: this is a misunderstanding*).
- It will be counter-productive to pay double time to Ambassadors for the small income involved. Will the charges even meet the costs of Sunday parking enforcement or compensate for the considerable inconvenience, cost and irritation to a significant number of citizens?
- Sunday should be kept special and the Council should not join in with its commercialisation.
- This is just another money making scheme for the Council. It is a tax on religion and faith.
- There is a need for a city-wide permit system for religious organisations that meet on a Sunday – individuals visiting the centre for commercial reasons would be asked to pay to park and those wishing to pursue spiritual journeys would not be taxed.
- Are Sunday charges a good source of income or will they create a higher level of disgust in the Council Tax payers' minds as to how the Council administers its finances?
- Churches should not have to compete with others who are encouraged to 'worship' in the halls of Mammon. It is wholly inexcusable for the District Council to impose financial constraints upon those who wish to witness their Christian faith in this city. This ill-advised proposal should be reconsidered.
- The proposal will undermine the long-standing heritage of Sunday Christian worship in Salisbury city centre.
- The cost of erecting new signs will be large. The Council is losing money because of people who park on residential streets.
- It is not fair to charge people who are going to pray for themselves and the world and worship our Divine Father.
- Churches play an important role in the community. Charges will prejudice churches' ability to put on other activities during the rest of the week. People who give regularly to their churches keep them going for weddings, christenings and funerals. Non-churchgoers will not object to paying through Council tax for worshippers' Sunday car parking – churchgoers should be exempt.
- Salisbury is a Christian city, founded by a bishop. How the Council can ever think of charging for parking for those trying hard to be practising Christians is beyond comprehension. Councillors have passes when on business. The Council should issue similar passes to those on God's business. Remember the Commandment, "Keep Holy the Sabbath Day".
- Charges will cause hardship and extra expense to all those attending church services in Salisbury. Churchgoers throughout Salisbury should not be penalised for their faith.
- Charges could result in reduced giving to St Thomas's church – money used for maintenance. The church is used by the Mayor and Councillors. Could parking tickets be presented to SDC for a refund, which would be given to the Parochial Church Council? This reversal of the flow of money from the church to the Council would be entirely fair.
- The Council is being unreasonable, has made no attempt to address the hardship that will be caused, has not given adequate consideration to representations and is thus acting in an undemocratic manner.
- Consulting the Chief Officer of Police or obtaining the consent of WCC are simply procedural steps. They are no justification for bulldozing the measure through in the face of valid opposition.
- SDC should give further consideration to some to the unintended consequences of Sunday parking charges upon the city, its churches, its shops and everything else.

Retail comments

- The proposal will have a detrimental impact on the city centre. Charges are not consistent with general economic activity. They will not mitigate the increase in car use, but encourage the diversion of trade to out-of-town retail parks where parking is free. They are contrary to the Government policy of encouraging linked trips to city centre locations. The distance travelled by car is likely to be increased. Sunday is not a 'normal' trading day. The economic benefits of Sunday trading outweigh the cost of providing services like street cleansing.

4.2 In addition, two letters have been received from the City Centre Manager and a reply has been sent to the first of these. This correspondence is attached as **Appendix 1**.

5. **Comment on the representations**

- 5.1 It will be recalled that the decision to introduce Sunday car parking charges was taken in the context of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the need to make substantial savings, or generate substantial additional income, over a three year period. Few of the alternatives that were considered and were the subject of public consultation were easy options. The measures eventually adopted for inclusion in the MTFS were those that in the opinion of the Council were, on balance, the least disadvantageous to the wellbeing of citizens of, and visitors to, the District.
- 5.2 The decision to propose the introduction of Sunday car parking charges was based very much on the fact that Sunday has become a trading day much like any other. Whilst it is debatable whether it has become a 'normal' shopping day, it is nevertheless the case that many shops and other facilities are open as a matter of routine. For many, if not most people, commercial activity on a Sunday is no longer objectionable.
- 5.3 Salisbury is now busy on Sundays. The large number of people who come into the city, and the commercial activities that take place, require that public services, such as street cleaning, must be provided. These services have to be paid for and it is not unreasonable that at least some of the cost should be recouped directly from Sunday users of the city centre. It is also the case that city centre car parks are busy and, in some cases, full on Sundays. At the moment, parking enforcement is undertaken only on an occasional basis. However, there has for some time been concern amongst parking managers that the lack of a parking enforcement presence results in a haphazard and potentially unsafe use of car parks and on-street parking places. There is thus the need to make parking enforcement a seven day a week operation and this, too, has to be paid for. Parking charges at least have the benefit of falling directly upon users and although the proposed £1 charge is modest, it might also have some small effect in moderating car use.
- 5.4 The concerns of churchgoers are acknowledged, but it would be both impracticable and inequitable to attempt to discriminate between different individuals or groups because they had different reasons for using the Council's car parking facilities. The Council can only charge for the use of its car parks; it cannot charge (or not charge) on the basis of the characteristics or beliefs of the users. It has to be acknowledged that Salisbury is part of a multi-cultural and multi-faith society. Discriminating in favour of believers in Christianity would be unacceptable and would inevitably invite well-founded challenges. Calls for similar privileges to be introduced for practising adherents of other faiths would be irresistible and these exemptions would apply not just on Sundays, but on other days of the week too. If the decision is taken to introduce Sunday car parking charges, it has to be across the board and for all users of the car parks.
- 5.5 As noted, the proposed charge - £1 – is modest and highly unlikely to impact on church incomes in the manner suggested by responders. To the limited extent that it may cause some churchgoers to think about their car use and perhaps share with

others, it may offer some marginal reduction in the growth in traffic. This would be helpful as every car that is on the road, irrespective of the purpose of its journey, is contributing to congestion and air quality problems.

- 5.6 It is also unlikely that many people would be deterred by the proposed charge from coming to the city centre to shop or visit. Out of town retail outlets do offer free car parking, but this is the case throughout the week. The nature of the shopping and other facilities on offer is different and a visit to Salisbury city centre is a substantially richer experience. Some people may choose to visit other towns and cities, but this decision is likely in the majority of cases to impose other costs and Salisbury would not be unique in charging for car parking on Sundays.

6. **Conclusion and recommendations**

- 6.1 Following the decisions of Cabinet and full Council in February, the proposal to introduce Sunday car parking charges has been advertised. 30 letters of representation have been. Most of these letters come from churchgoers and one is from the manager of a Salisbury supermarket. 2 letters have been received from the City Centre Manager. This report responds to the points made and suggests that there are no grounds for abandoning the proposal to introduce a charge for parking in Salisbury city centre car parks on Sundays.

- 6.2 Accordingly, it is recommended that:

- a) the contents of the representations received in respect of the proposed introduction of Sunday car parking charges (copies of which have been placed in the Members' Room) be noted; and
- b) notwithstanding these representations, the decision to introduce Sunday car parking charges in Salisbury city centre car parks be confirmed.

7. **Implications:**

- **Financial:** The MTFs projects that an additional full-year income of £70,000 will be generated by the introduction of Sunday car parking charges. If it were decided not to proceed with Sunday charges, an equivalent sum would have to be found from savings or additional income elsewhere.
- **Legal:** As set out in this report.
- **Human Rights:** None in relation to this report.
- **Personnel:** None in relation to this report.
- **Community Safety:** None in relation to this report.
- **Environmental:** The manipulation of car parking prices is recognised as a component of the Salisbury Transportation Plan and is intended to mitigate the rate of growth of car use.
- **Council's Core Values:** Excellent service, Thriving economy, Protecting the environment.
- **Wards Affected:** All

CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE CITY CENTRE MANAGER

Mr. Eric Teagle, Head of Forward Planning and Transportation

Salisbury District Council
Planning Office
61 Wyndham Road
Salisbury
Wiltshire, SP1 3AH

26 April 2006

Dear Eric,

Sunday Parking

Our members remain concerned about Sunday parking charges, not least the charges themselves but the cost implications to the council and how will this be borne.

They would like to know how many Sunday Parking Ambassadors will be on duty and what hours of cover they will provide?

Our members understanding is that there is no financial implication to the council and are drawing the conclusion that ticketing will be required to cover salaries and other costs. This they feel will be necessary, as they do not believe that the Sunday charge will cover the expense, especially since Sunday is extremely quiet in the city and the loss of stress free parking on a Sunday, a luxury enjoyed by shoppers, visitors and the like will drive our few patrons away.

Salisbury City Centre Management would like to refute the statement of the Council that Sunday is the second busiest day for trading. I shall be contacting our members over the next few days and provide you with data that I hope you will find helpful.

We look forward to receiving an explanation of Sunday parking and how it shall be funded to reassure our members and to hear how revenue raised will be used to the benefit of the city?

Thank you and kind regards,

Lindsey Brown
City Centre Manager

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Lindsey Brown
City Centre Manager
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DATE: 02 May 2006

Dear Lindsey

Salisbury Parking

Thank you for your letter dated 26 April 2006.

You may be aware that the Council has received a number of representations about Sunday parking charges. In due course a report will be presented to Members on the matter and I will ensure that your letter is included.

I look forward to receiving further information on the volume of trade conducted in Salisbury on Sundays.

You asked about the costs that might be incurred by the Council. I do not anticipate that these will be large.

In the first instance, we are unlikely to put out a large number of Ambassadors; certainly not as many as on a weekday.

As matters currently stand (the position is under review), Ambassadors working on Sundays would be paid double time, bringing their salaries plus on-costs up to about £20 per hour. Assuming a 33% rate for write-offs, each Ambassador would therefore need to issue no more than one Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) per hour to cover their costs (assuming each PCN was subsequently paid at the discounted £30 rate). Given the extremely poor standard of compliance with parking regulations on Sundays, I do not think the Ambassadors would be likely to issue less. In addition, for each Ambassador on duty on a Sunday, there would need to be just 20 parking acts per hour within the charged car parks to cover their costs (20 x £1). Again, I do not think this would be difficult to achieve.

We will have to see. If Salisbury is as quiet on a Sunday as you suggest, we would not need to put out more than a couple of Ambassadors. If it's as busy as I think it is, we may need to put out more. Either way, the council will more than cover its costs.

Yours sincerely

Eric Teagle
Head of Forward Planning & Transportation

cc: Pat Higgins
Cllr Dennis Brown

Mr. Eric Teagle, Head of Forward Planning and Transportation
Salisbury District Council
Planning Office
61 Wyndham Road
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Tuesday, 09 May 2006

Dear Eric,

Sunday Trading

As promised we have been consulting our members to ascertain the busiest trading days in Salisbury. The findings are interesting but not amazing and our members feel strongly that the introduction of a Sunday charge will be detrimental to trading on what is most certainly the quietest business day.

The results of our sample survey show Saturday to be the busiest day for trading, closely followed by Tuesday and Friday. This is borne out by the footfall figures of the Old George Mall which records the lowest figures on Sunday, the highest on Friday and second highest on Tuesday.

A number of retailers simply do not open on Sunday due to the low footfall and it is believed the Sunday charging will impact this already quiet day. In particular the café's and restaurants will be affected.

I hope that this is helpful to you and may I take this opportunity to offer the services of Salisbury City Centre Management in the future in collecting data to assist the council in its decision making process.

Thank you and kind regards,

Lindsey Brown
City Centre Manager