

## IMPLEMENTATION EXECUTIVE

13 JANUARY 2009

**SALISBURY DISTRICT COUNCIL SUNDAY CAR PARKING CHARGES****Executive Summary**

The attached report from Salisbury District Council (SDC) Cabinet proposes to reduce car park charges in Salisbury on Sundays. SDC Cabinet recognised that the decision would require endorsement by the IE. The impact of this reduction would be to reduce whole year income by approximately £50,000. SDC only recently introduced these charges, as outlined in detail in paragraphs 2.1 and 6.1 of the report.

SDC members have argued that this is appropriate because:

- in the current economic climate the current charge had an adverse impact on businesses in Salisbury;
- the current charge made Sunday parking significantly more expensive than the rest of the week and was perceived as unfair;
- it was an appropriate response to the adverse feedback from the public on the impact of the scheme;
- a pilot scheme would send a positive message to businesses and the public about the city centre economy;
- a pilot scheme would allow an accurate assessment to be made of the impact on the local economy, transportation policies and council income.

Wiltshire County Council currently does not have a full and comprehensive parking strategy and work will be undertaken to develop a necessary strategy after 1 April. However, the strategy must be developed with regard to PPG 13 Transport, PPG3 Housing, PPG 6 Town Centre and Retail Developments, recently updated by PPS 6 Planning for Town Centres as well as the Local Transport Plan. Additionally, a number of separate long term local policies have been developed, such as the Salisbury Vision and the Salisbury Transport Plan and any parking decisions need to be consistent with these.

A parking strategy must be based upon sound consultation and wide stakeholder involvement. It must be consistent with and respond to national and regional guidance including the requirement to facilitate a modal shift away from the private motor car for unsustainable journeys and promote more sustainable transport choices. This sometimes requires a local authority to make unpopular decisions in regard to parking charges to encourage the use of public transport, cycling and walking. The need to use revenue gained from parking charges for transport based schemes including increased links to public transport and improvements to the cycle infrastructure is also recognised. In Salisbury, the parking surplus is used to fund the costs of operating the Park & Ride sites; although SDC have made no provision in their budget for the opening of the Petersfinger Park & Ride scheme.

It is also recognised that it is sometimes necessary to use parking charges as part of the overall traffic and network management plan. The Audit Commission, in its Best Value report on a south coast authority in 2002, has noted that "The Council needs

again to look at charging, as the costs fall on all taxpayers and not just those who use the car parks. Councillors have pursued a policy of free parking because of the perception that it is necessary for the viability of the town centre shops. Free parking is also thought to prevent loss of trade to other shopping areas [...] but we found no clear evidence to support these assumptions. The council has also failed to challenge why the service is free. There was no evidence to demonstrate that the cost to the borough of around £200k represented best value.”

In terms of supporting economic activity, further evidence is available from the Association of Town Centre Managers (ATCM). The ATCM is concerned with promoting good practice in town and city centres and has identified car parking as a key ingredient of successful town centres. It has taken note of a pilot survey carried out in 2002 that investigated the level of parking provision at 170 town centres (including many smaller towns). The study indicates that there is no clear correlation between parking charges and retail performance.

Furthermore, the Europe-wide “Cost 342” study also found little evidence of correlation but did indicate that public reaction to increased parking charges is usually short term. Parking demand falls for a period and then reverts to normal. There is also some evidence that a sharp reduction in parking charges does not result in a proportionate increase in car park use.

Members will recall that an agreement has been developed relating to the parishing of Salisbury. Within this, the County Council has agreed to transfer of assets and income subject to some conditions; one of which is that no changes should be made to parking charges. If SDC make these changes, the IE could be asked to reconsider this agreement and the transfer of £230,000 of income from parking to the new City Council.

The decision to reduce car parking charges on Sundays in Salisbury seems to have been taken against officer advice; it is worth reflecting on the arguments set out by members in considering the efficacy of any change at this time. In light of the above, it is recommended that no changes should be made to parking charges at the current time.

### **Proposal**

That the Implementation Executive reject Salisbury District Council’s proposal to reduce car parking charges in the City of Salisbury on Sundays.

### **Reason for Proposal**

Pending the development of a coherent parking strategy for the City that has due regard to the economic needs of the City and the wider parking strategy, including Park & Ride, the proposal by SDC Cabinet would run contrary to the agreement position proposed in the report on the parishing of Salisbury.

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