

ANNEX B OF APPENDIX 3

From: Salisbury City Centre Management Ltd
Federation of Small Businesses, Salisbury
Salisbury and District Chamber of Commerce & Industry

To: Councillor Richard Tonge, Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport, Wiltshire Council

Subject: City of Salisbury parking charges

Date: 11 July 2011

Introduction

This paper was prepared following a Salisbury City Centre Management members meeting on 28 June 2011 and in response to a meeting held with Councillor Richard Tonge, Allan Creedy and Richard Mortimer on 8 July 2011. It contains a set of proposals for a revised parking regime in Salisbury.

In submitting these proposals we have listened to the views of our members and of the wider business community in Salisbury. Representations have also been considered from Land Securities, the Business Through Referrals group and from the city's business community through a survey carried out in early July. In preparing this paper we were also conscious of the high level of dissatisfaction among residents and shoppers with the current charging regime as reported in the media over the past two months. We were also, of course, aware of the 7,000 signature petition collected by the Salisbury Journal, Spire FM and shoppers in the Maltings Shopping Centre which was presented to Wiltshire Council on 8 July 2011.

This report and its proposals have the fundamental support of Salisbury City Council. For details of the City Council's formal response to the current parking charges reference should be made to the Resolution passed by the Full Council on 6 June 2011.

Background

In common with most of the country's 'High Streets' Salisbury's businesses, and in particular its retail and associated sectors, are being badly affected by the widely reported downturn in consumer spending caused by the continuing recession. Footfall in Salisbury city centre has fallen in 27 out of the last 30 months with the figure for the first six months of 2011 being 20% down on the same period just three years ago.

Businesses are now feeling the impact of fewer people spending even less money and this has been particularly evident since the introduction of the current parking charges. Prior to this it had appeared that Salisbury was largely bucking the national trend, with businesses reporting that trade was steady; some were even reporting a slight increase in turnover in the first three months of 2011 compared to last year. Since May, however, this situation has changed dramatically. Businesses are now reporting a drop in trade of anything from 5 – 20% which they attribute directly to the high parking charges in Salisbury compared to the charges in the city's competitors. The increase of a minimum two hour stay at £2.20 in Salisbury is considered to have been particularly damaging. The cost of parking in Salisbury and its main competitors is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

	Cost of Parking					
	1 hr	2 hrs	3 hrs	4 hrs	5 hrs	All day
Basingstoke	£0.90	£1.50	£2.00	£2.60	£3.30	£5.20
Bournemouth	£0.50	£1.00	£2.00	£3.50	£5.00	£8.00
Southampton	£1.20	£2.40	£3.30	£4.20	£5.00	£8.00
Salisbury	£2.20	£2.20	£4.00	£4.60	£5.50	£7.40
Basingstoke Festival Place	£1.00	£2.00	£2.80	£3.40	£4.50	£15.00
Bournemouth BIC	£1.50	£2.50	£4.00	£6.00	£7.00	£12.50
Southampton West Quay	£2.00	£2.00	£3.00	£4.00	£5.50	£8.00

Table 1 shows that parking in Salisbury is more expensive across four of the six timebands, with the biggest discrepancy being the charge for one hour which costs just £0.90 in Basingstoke, as little as £0.50 in Bournemouth and £1.20 in Southampton. Even in Southampton West Quay which attracts a premium the cost is less than the £2.20 charged in Salisbury due to the minimum two hour charge. Shoppers' surveys show Southampton to be Salisbury's biggest competitor, i.e. of the people that could shop in Salisbury but don't the majority go to Southampton.

Parking charges are just one of the factors that people consider, consciously or sub-consciously, when deciding to visit a particular place to shop. Other factors include the length of journey, ease of access and parking, quality and variety of cafes, pubs and restaurants, experience last time or recommendation, and the general environment. But the most important factor is the variety and quality of the retail offer.

There are a number of organisations in the UK providing widely respected retail rankings for the country's principal areas. All of them show Salisbury to be ranked significantly lower than the city's main retail competitor, Southampton. Experian, for example, rank Salisbury as 168 in the country whereas Southampton is 13. Basingstoke and Bournemouth, Salisbury's other retail competitors are 116 and 106 respectively (2007 figures). Javelin VenueScore rankings for 2010 show Salisbury at 59, Basingstoke 63, Bournemouth 62 and Southampton 14.

Equity in Parking Charges

It is, as shown, more expensive to park in Salisbury than in the city's main competitor, Southampton and yet Southampton is considered to be far more attractive than Salisbury in retail terms. It is also more expensive to park in Salisbury than in Basingstoke or Bournemouth although both towns have a superior retail offer. This is clearly an unsustainable situation; some would say a recipe for disaster.

Elsewhere in Wiltshire the situation is very different. The cost of parking in Trowbridge and Chippenham is significantly lower than it is Bath, their principal retail competitor. The cost of parking in Trowbridge, Chippenham and Bath is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

	Cost of Parking				
	1 Hour	2 Hours	3 Hours	4 Hours	All Day
Bath (Broad Street short-stay / Charlotte Street long-stay)	£1.60	£3.10	£4.30	£5.40	£8.50
Trowbridge / Chippenham (short-stay / long-stay)	£1.10	£1.30 / £1.50	£2.60 / £3.20	£3.10	£5.90

There is recent local evidence which suggests that the link between parking charges and footfall is far more significant than some people think. Last year Swindon Borough Council cut the cost of parking in the town centre and it is now possible to park for four hours for just £2.00. The result of this has been an increase of 286,000 in visitors to the Brunel Shopping Centre in the first six months of 2011.

Wiltshire Council Economic Development & Regeneration Service

Two of the fundamental principles of Wiltshire Council's economic development and regeneration service are:

- *'to work to sustain and develop a competitive economy for south Wiltshire, and a high quality of life for its residents'; and*
- *'to develop the district's economy by encouraging new investment and supporting existing business'.*

The current parking charges are counter-productive to both of these principles.

Summary of Critical Factors

1. Footfall is falling
2. Direct competitor towns and cities have much lower parking charges
3. Parking charges within Wiltshire are not equitable
4. Salisbury's retail and consumer offer needs to be greatly improved to bring it closer to its main competitors (to be addressed in the long-term by the Salisbury Vision)
5. Negative publicity (which was needed to achieve action) needs to be urgently counteracted by some immediate positive action and publicity
6. The proposals are strongly supported by the city's principal business organisations representing approximately 1,000 local businesses
7. National and local economic factors need to be compensated for

Proposals

These are exceptional times. We have a retail environment that could not have been anticipated just a year ago and Salisbury's businesses - its shops, cafes, pubs and restaurants - need urgent help and support. We believe that these exceptional times demand exceptional action.

Parking charges are not the single most important factor affecting retail but they are, as clearly shown an important factor. They are also a key psychological factor for consumers and retailers alike. We believe that the current parking charge regime is making a bad situation worse. Many people now consider that parking in Salisbury is too expensive and there is evidence to show that the high parking charges coupled to the retail offer is making Salisbury a much less attractive place to visit than Southampton, Bournemouth and Basingstoke.

We believe that a one hour parking charge needs to be re-introduced as a priority and that the city's parking charges generally need to be significantly reduced. We, therefore, request that Wiltshire Council implement the nine parking proposals shown on pages 4-5.

Each of these proposals is considered important and their full implementation is, we believe, essential if Salisbury is to compete on a 'level playing field' with its major competitors, Southampton, Bournemouth and Basingstoke. The implementation of proposals 1 and 2 are particularly important; they will go some way to reducing (not removing) the parking charge inequity that currently exists in Wiltshire, i.e. parking charges in Trowbridge and Chippenham are around 41% *less* than the charges in their main retail competitor, Bath whereas parking charges in Salisbury are around 18% *more* than the charges in its main retail competitor, Southampton.

Proposal 1: Short-stay parking

- a) Introduce a one hour stay at a charge of £1.20;
- b) Introduce a five hour stay in the Brown Street short stay car park. This is particularly important for the hotels and other accommodation providers in the city centre some of which are reporting lost business, including the lucrative conference market, due to a lack of nearby long-stay car parking; and
- c) Reduce charges for two and three hour timebands.

Proposed short-stay parking charges:

1 hour	£1.20	
2 hours	£2.00	
3 hour	£3.00	
5 hours	£4.00	Brown Street car park only

Proposal 2: Long-stay parking

- a) Reduce charges for four hour, five hour and all-day parking.

Proposed long-stay parking charges

4 hours	£4.00
5 hours	£5.00
All day	£6.00

Note:

We acknowledge that when the city has a park & ride service which meets the needs of people working in the city (see proposal 4) the cost of all-day parking in city centre car parks can be increased.

Proposal 3: Parking charges on Sunday's and Bank Holidays

- a) Introduce a flat rate parking charge of £1.00 when the park & ride service is not operating, i.e. on Sunday's and Bank Holidays

Proposal 4: Park & Ride

- a) With immediate effect extend the operating hours of the park & ride service from 6.00 am to 8.00 pm to make the service more attractive to city workers;
- b) Promote the new extended service to the city's businesses;
- c) Simplify the charges; and
- d) Introduce some concessions will for a trial period as a means of countering the adverse publicity generated over the past few months (Salisbury City Centre Management, Salisbury and District Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Federation of Small Businesses and Salisbury City Council will submit some ideas for consideration).

Proposal 5: Christmas and New Year parking

- a) That Wiltshire Council enter into discussions with Salisbury City Centre Management, the Federation of Small Businesses, Salisbury and District Chamber of Commerce & Industry, and Salisbury City Council to agree special concessions for city centre car parks and the park & ride service for the 2011 Christmas and New Year sales period.

Proposal 6: Pay-on Exit

- a) That the Culver Street car park is converted to a pay-on-exit system as soon as possible and that in the longer term the Council similarly converts the city's other car parks.

Proposal 7: Future parking charges and arrangements

- a) That Wiltshire Council meet with Salisbury City Centre Management, the Federation of Small Businesses, Salisbury and District Chamber of Commerce & Industry, and Salisbury City Council to discuss any future changes to parking charges or arrangements at an early stage, i.e. before any decisions are taken; and
- b) That until Salisbury's retail offer has been significantly improved (i.e. with the completion of the Maltings and central car redevelopment) the presumption shall be that the cost of parking in Salisbury will be less than it is in Bournemouth and Southampton.

Proposal 8: Promotion of Salisbury

- a) That Wiltshire Council implement a marketing campaign aimed at overturning any negative perceptions of Salisbury that may have been gained as a result of the current parking charges; this campaign to be designed to promote Salisbury as *the* place to shop for people living within a 40 minute drive-time of the city. This campaign will also counter competitive local advertising in Salisbury which we understand is planned by Bournemouth and Southampton.

Proposal 9: Wiltshire Council staff parking

- a) That Council staff currently using the Salt Lane car park be instructed to use the Culver Street car park instead; thus freeing up valuable short-stay spaces in a small central car park for paying customers.

Implementation schedule

The combination of a still deteriorating economic climate and high parking charges is, as has been shown, having a severe impact on the city's businesses. Indeed some businesses are telling us that they have only weeks to survive if the conditions described continue. The proposals submitted, particularly proposals 1 and 2, therefore need to be implemented immediately if businesses are to ride the economic storm that is currently hitting the city.

The council has estimated that re-introducing a one hour parking charge will take a minimum of 24 weeks and that reducing the existing parking charges will take a minimum of 16 weeks. Both of these periods include 10 weeks for the council process and initial consultation. This is far too long for the city's businesses.

We fully understand that there are statutory periods which largely dictate this timescale. We also understand that the Council is concerned that it could be vulnerable to a legal challenge if it does not follow its prescribed process. As stated earlier, however, these are exceptional times and they require exceptional action. We urge the council most strongly to do everything it can to significantly speed this process up.