

Councillors' Briefing Note

No. 160

Service: Parking Services

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Date Prepared: 04/09/13

Title: Parking and Sustainable Transport Update

In light of the recent national and local media coverage on parking and its impact on the economy, this briefing note aims to update councillors on parking and sustainable transport in Wiltshire particularly in relation to Salisbury.

Wiltshire's economy

Boosting Wiltshire's economy is one of the council's key priorities and so far despite the national economic situation it is faring relatively well. Jobseeker claimant figures are below 2percent compared to 3.4percent nationally and 2.2 percent regionally.

Last year Salisbury was recorded as having the fewest number of empty shops in any retail centre in Britain and major companies such as Greggs and Hitachi are continuing to invest in the county. This context is paramount when looking at car parking and transport in the county. Car parking cannot be looked at in isolation which is why the council services responsible for these areas work closely together taking a holistic approach.

Salisbury Park & Ride:

A comparison of car parking usage and Park & Ride usage indicates a clear migration of users from the city's long stay car parks. The numbers overall using long stay around Salisbury has remained stable pointing to the council's Local Transport Plan 3's (LTP3) objectives in moving traffic to the Park & Ride sites being met. In 2010/11 – the year which preceded the council's introduction of the (LTP3) – usage was at an average of 23,000 cars per month compared with the following year (2011/12) of more than 27,000 cars monthly; an increase of more than 12 percent.

Data is being collected and analysed for the current financial year. However, comparing January and February this year usage has increased by 3.6% (an average of 24694 cars).

The more people who use Park & Ride results in fewer cars travelling into Salisbury's city centre, reduced congestion and improved air quality making the city even more appealing to tourists and shoppers.

Season car parking tickets:

In December 2011 the council reduced car parking season ticket prices by 20 percent with the aim of helping people whose options on taking up alternative forms of transport were limited. The response to this was an increase in take up by 63 percent (before the reduction an average of 17 tickets were sold compared to 74 tickets currently sold). So far, this year's figures show an increase on purchases of more than 3.5 percent to 77 tickets sold per month. This increase in season car parking ticket sales has inevitably had a direct effect on pay and display income and will continue to reduce as more season tickets are sold.

Parking charges

Car parking charges across Wiltshire will be reviewed in 2014.

Any surplus income generated from car parking has been put back into subsidising certain bus routes ensuring people without cars are able to travel within the county.

To support local people who wish to come together to hold events and activities within communities the council offered two concessionary days for each banded town that have parking charges. The choice of days is the town and parish councils and is generally being used to support local community events. This initiative has, in 2012, seen ten days used between eight town councils. In 2013 the initiative has seen 11 days used by nine town councils. This will be continued and reminders of this will be sent out to town council regularly to ensure good take-up.

Car parking in Salisbury

To add some historical context, charges have increased in Salisbury since 2000 when Wiltshire County Council and Salisbury District Council jointly adopted the Salisbury Transport Plan to seek to address a number of economic, social and environmental objectives.

The Wiltshire Local Transport Plan Car Parking Strategy 2011-2026 (<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/council/howthecouncilworks/plansstrategiespolicies/transportpoliciesandstrategies/localtransportplan3.htm>) was approved by Full Council in February 2011 following in-depth research undertaken by our then consultants, Mouchel, and an extensive public consultation exercise. The strategy outlines that the supply and management of parking can help achieve a number of objectives including:

- 1) support the local economy (e.g. by making it easy for shoppers and tourists to visit Wiltshire's market towns) and facilitate development growth

- 2) meet residents' needs for car parking near their homes (e.g. by introducing Residents' Parking Zones).
- 3) encourage sustainable travel and help reduce reliance on cars
- 4) raise revenue for the council to reinvest in public transport such as bus services

Salisbury was put into its own band in terms of parking charges because it is a Wiltshire's only city – which attracts a large number of tourists and shoppers – and it has a wider range of sustainable transport alternatives. Following representations, including from Salisbury City Centre Management, the council initially agreed a £2.00 flat charge (uplifted to £2.20 by resolution (v) in the report) for up to two hours. Subsequently, in response to an expressed public desire in Salisbury, Cabinet agreed to the reintroduction of a 1hr charge (£1.50) and a revised 2hr charge (£2.50) (see <http://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=141&MId=6406&Ver=4>).

In considering a report on the countywide impact of car parking charges, Full Council agreed to a 10p reduction in the 1hr charge in Salisbury (see <http://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=17274#mgDocuments>). Also, in analysing the impacts of the charges, the report's key conclusions were that:

The council has developed a Salisbury Transport Strategy to help support and deal with the development growth in Salisbury. Parking charges and car parking supply form part of this strategy. The aims of the strategy are to:

- enable more people to enter the city centre – 45 percent by sustainable modes supporting the vitality, viability and resilience of Salisbury's economy in a sustainable way
- reduce congestion especially at the most critical junctions in the highway network
- improve air quality

Sustainable transport

In July 2012, Wiltshire Council secured £4.5 million through the government's Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) to improve transport services and transport information in Wiltshire.

Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) to improve transport services and transport information in Wiltshire. These improvements include:

- Working with First Great Western to provide a new Trans Wilts rail service through Melksham. Subject to current franchise negotiations, we expect to make an announcement on the service in the next 6 weeks.
- Improving connections to rail stations such as walking and cycling routes, cycle parking and improvements to bus services. These are underway.
- Improving information about transport in Wiltshire through a new website, marketing campaign, and personal travel planning advice service.