

Joint Report of: Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods and Director of City Development

Report to: Executive Board

Date: 19th June 2013

Subject: Review of City Centre Car Parking

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): City and Hunslet	Yes
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	Yes
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	Yes
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	No

Summary of main issues

- In September 2012 Executive Board received a detailed report reviewing City Centre car parking. In considering the report Members noted the complex issues involved and the important part that parking provision and pricing play in the overall operation of the city centre economy. It was agreed that pricing needs to be regularly reviewed on a site by site basis; this also included the position with regard to charging for on street parking on Sundays and in the evening.
- Since the report in September 2012 Woodhouse Lane multi-storey car park has re-opened following extensive refurbishment and pricing has been reviewed and reduced to attract greater use, in particular the daily charge has been reduced from £9 to £5. The successful operation of the car park will be an important element in the overall success of the Leeds Arena due to open in July. Work is underway to introduce 24 hour opening at Woodhouse Lane which will allow longer and more flexible user tariffs to be introduced, this will support people intending to visit the city to attend events at the Leeds Arena.
- Developments in the city centre have also continued with the opening of Trinity Leeds and other significant proposals for both retail and leisure in the pipeline. This underlines the need to continue to review car parking provision and pricing to ensure that the Council's objectives in relation to economic growth and the environment are supported and promoted.

- A consultation exercise seeking views on the possible introduction of Sunday and evening car parking charges was carried out in late 2012 via the Citizen's Panel, the consultation exercise was also made available online and forwarded to city centre businesses. In overall terms the responses received did not favour the introduction of car parking charges on Sundays (494 in favour, 1008 not) or evenings (528 in favour, 991 not).
- Nevertheless, the Executive Board are recommended to approve the introduction of charges for on street car parking in the City Centre and recommendations are made as to levels of charge and operating times. The proposals do not seek to set charges at commercial rates but rather set them at a level which will not discourage people from visiting the city centre.

Recommendations

Members are requested to support the following recommendations:

- The introduction of a £5 tariff for parking in Woodhouse Lane for Arena events
- The introduction of 24hr car parking at Woodhouse, with the availability of longer term tariffs.
- The introduction of a £2 evening charge from 6-10 for on street parking
- The introduction of £1 charge for up to 4 hours and £4 for all day between 10am and 6pm on a Sunday for on street parking.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report provides an update on various issues relating to city centre car parking that were considered in a report to Executive Board in September 2012.
- 1.2 Since the report in September a consultation exercise has been undertaken in relation to Sunday and evening charges and a recommendation is made that charges be introduced. Information is also provided in relation to Woodhouse Lane multi storey car park and Members are asked to note the current daily charge of £5. Members are also asked to note the on-going development of both retail and leisure opportunities within the city centre and keep car parking pricing and provision under regular review.

2 Background information

- 2.1 In September 2012 Executive Board considered a report looking at a Review of City Centre Car Parking in Leeds. The report considered a number of issues including: overall supply of parking spaces; occupancy levels at Woodhouse Lane multi-storey car park; the role of parking availability in terms of city centre vitality; links to the Council's wider environmental agenda and also pricing with respect to private sector operators.
- 2.2 Executive Board resolved that the review work undertaken be used as the basis for consulting on attitudes towards the introduction of Sunday and evening car parking charges.
- 2.3 Executive Board also resolved that income generated from parking activities should be ring-fenced to expenditure on transport infrastructure. Members also asked that a 'league table' be drawn up to identify the permanent car parks operating in the city centre, who the operators are and the respective prices charged.

3 Main issues

Woodhouse Lane Multi-storey Car Park

- 3.1 The car park re-opened fully late last year and now provides an attractive and safer facility (due to the introduction of CCTV) for users. Following re-opening customer numbers were slow to recover initially and a review of operating arrangements was undertaken. One key element was price and a reduction from the previous level of £9 to £5 for daily use was introduced, this is clearly having a positive impact, with overall users increasing.
- 3.2 Other work has also been completed to increase the profile and availability of the car park by better advertising and signage; this is being kept under review for its overall effectiveness and impact on customer numbers. The car park is being better 'signposted' via a range of communication channels including through events and initiatives hosted or organised by the Council particularly those taking place in the Civic quarter area – Civic Hall, Town Hall, Museum etc.

- 3.3 It is anticipated that the Council will be charging £5 at Woodhouse Lane Car Park on event nights which is less than a number of other core cities with similar arena facilities, current charges elsewhere are; Sheffield £5, Newcastle £6, Birmingham £6.50, Manchester £12 and Liverpool £5.
- 3.4 The car park will help to support the operation of the Leeds Arena when it opens in July. It is proposed that a £5 charge will cover the cost of parking for an event. 24 hour operation is currently being implemented. This also provides the opportunity for longer and more flexible price tariffs to be introduced e.g. 24 hours or 48 hour tickets that would allow people to use the car park for longer stays such as overnight stops for Arena hosted events.

City Centre Developments

- 3.5 Leeds city centre is a key driver of the success of both the local and regional economy and in recent months the opening of Trinity Leeds has taken place and shows the ambition of the city and confidence that business has to invest in Leeds.
- 3.6 Further developments are planned in the city centre area and whilst these are all welcomed they will place increased pressure on car parking provision and pricing. It is important therefore that pricing and provision is kept under regular review and that for facilities the Council controls or operates it is recommended that this continues to be done on a site by site basis as this provides the most flexible approach that allows the Councils 'offer' to set at the most appropriate level.

Review of Sunday and Evening Car Parking Charges

- 3.7 Following the Executive Board's resolution in September 2012 a consultation exercise has been undertaken via the Citizen's Panel. The survey was also made available more widely via Talking Point and directed to city centre businesses via colleagues in City Centre Management.
- 3.8 Unsurprisingly, the majority of people who responded did not favour the introduction of charges for either Sundays or evenings. Summarised information on responses is provided in the table below.

Question	Agree	Disagree
I do not support the introduction of Sunday charges	1008 (67%)	494 (33%)
I do not support the introduction of evening charges	991(65%)	528 (35%)

- 3.9 Two petitions were received with the same wording from the Leeds City Centre churches group, Leeds Cathedral, St George's Church, Leeds Minster, Holy Trinity and Oxford Place. A total of 930 people signed. It stated "We wish to

register our opposition to the proposed car parking charges in the City Centre on Sundays. Many people from across the city come to the City Centre on Sundays and their only means of transport is by car. We also believe that this move will be detrimental to business as many worshippers also use the cafes, pubs and shops”

3.10 The introduction of charges for any service previously provided for free is always likely to be contentious. However the decision to introduce a charge for on street parking, is influenced by a number of factors:-

- The Council’s faces significant budget pressure for the current and future years and other equally difficult decisions are being considered in other service areas. As part of the budget consultation for 2013/14 the Council sought views via the YouGov poll. 46% of respondents to that exercise said that increasing car parking charges was an option they favoured, this was significantly more than other ‘across the board’ options such as increasing Council Tax.
- Over the next few years the population of the city is forecast to increase significantly and we are also seeing an increase in the city centre ‘offer’ in terms of new cultural and leisure opportunities; both of these factors will lead to an increased demand on the car parking spaces available in the city centre. Currently there are approximately 19,000 city centre car parking spaces and approximately 2,400 of those are on street spaces which are controlled by the Council and are currently free, the majority of all other spaces, either public or privately managed, are charged for at evenings and weekends. Introducing an appropriate level of charge for these on street spaces will allow better regulation and availability of those spaces for the increasing number of city centre visitors anticipated in the coming years.
- Other ‘core cities’ also charge for Sundays and/or evening.
- The opening of the Leeds Arena will increase the demand for city centre car parking spaces; it seems illogical to provide free spaces when all other operators (including the Council at Woodhouse multi-storey) will be charging.

Proposed Charges

3.11 Whilst people do not favour introducing charges, those that did were strongly in favour of a flat rate charge for both evenings and Sundays.

3.12 It is felt that a flat rate charge for evening is appropriate as it is simpler to administer and easy to understand from a customer perspective. A flat rate charge of £2.00 is recommended from 6.00pm until 10.00pm.

3.13 For Sundays a flat rate charge could be introduced and the arguments as set out in 3.11 would largely apply. However, it is felt that there a number of different issues are at play in relation to Sundays and a tiered approach is recommended so allowing people to visit the city centre for shorter periods without paying a full daily rate. A proposed approach is set out below:-

- Up to 4 hours - £1.00

- Over 4 hours - £4.00

3.14 When first envisaged the proposed charges for Sunday looked at a number of options involving a higher charge for a shorter period of time – either £1.00 for up to 2 hours or £2.00 for up to 4 hours. The approach set out in 3.12 proposes a lower tariff and for a longer initial period and so would help to mitigate the concerns of people attending city centre religious buildings/services on a Sunday in that only a modest charge would be applied for up to 4 hours. Shoppers and other visitors would also be accommodated by being able to park for up to 4 hours without having to pay the full proposed daily rate. The rates proposed are also below many of the private sector providers and are recommended to apply from 10.00am until 6.00pm. By charging a higher rate for over 4 hours, churn will be encouraged, improving the availability of spaces.

Current City Centre Car Parking Providers

3.15 As requested by Executive Board in September information has been collated on current city centre car park providers and the attached table at appendix 1 shows current provision, operators and charging levels. Members will note that the Council is by no means the only provider of city centre car parking provision, something referred to in the report to Executive Board in September 2012.

Financial Information Relating to Car Parking Activities

3.16 The Council reports income and expenditure under various headings as part of its annual budget reporting process; for 2012/13 the following was reported in relation to car parking:-

Turnover	-	£12.575 million
Net surplus	-	£5.579 million

Total expenditure on Highway related activities for the same period was £10.436 million.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 The decision on whether to introduce Sunday and evening car parking charges has a direct impact on residents and city centre businesses and it is important to gather their views on the issues concerned. The consultation exercise undertaken, and as described in this report, gives Members important information for them to take into consideration when making a decision on this matter. While it is unsurprising that many people do not favour introducing charges both the Council's own survey and the YouGov poll do show some recognition of the difficult budget issues faced.

4.1.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.1.1 An impact assessment exercise has been undertaken in relation to the introduction of Sunday and evening parking charges and all relevant documentation completed and is attached at appendix 2 to this report.

4.1.2 The positive impacts are:-

- Disabled drivers will still be able to enjoy free parking
- A higher charge for long term car parking on Sunday will increase vehicle movements (and hence visitors, shoppers etc.) into the city centre area

4.1.3 The negative impacts are:-

- Financial impact on various groups including: people on low incomes, people who attend churches and other religious buildings in the city centre on Sundays; people who currently shop in the city centre on Sundays.

4.2 Council policies and City Priorities

4.2.1 Charging for car parking provision can increase the turnover and use of car parking spaces in the city centre which may have a beneficial impact on the number of people visiting and using shops and other facilities.

4.2.2 Resources and value for money

4.2.1 The introduction of the charges is expected to generate £0.4m as a full year effect in 2014/15, based on anticipated usage, considering issues raised in this report.

4.2.2 Charging levels proposed within this report are based on a reasonable level of charge when compared to other core cities and also with reference to other car parking providers within the city centre. As with other parking charges the Council levies they are not at the 'top of the market' in terms of pricing. The banded approach to charging on Sunday would also mitigate the concerns of people who visit the city centre on that day for various reasons in that short term parking would still be possible for a relatively modest charge.

4.3 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.3.1 A decision to introduce charges for Sunday and evening car parking is a Key Decision and is eligible for Call In.

4.4 Risk Management

4.4.1 Introduction of Sunday and evening charges requires considerable work to be done e.g. reviewing existing Traffic Regulation Orders, signing and lining etc. A Project Board has been set up to manage the overall process and has drawn up a risk register to identify and monitor key risks and supporting activities.

5 Recommendations

5.1 Members are requested to support the following recommendations:

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6 Background documents¹

6.1 None.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.