

Appendices

0

**Item No.**

8

CABINET REPORT**Report Title****Free Car Parking – Town Centre – Phase 1****AGENDA STATUS:****PUBLIC**

Cabinet Meeting Date:	16 June 2011
Key Decision:	Yes
Listed on Forward Plan:	No
Within Policy:	Yes
Policy Document:	No
Directorate:	Environment and Culture
Accountable Cabinet Member:	Councillor Tim Hadland
Ward(s)	Castle

1. Purpose

- 1.1 As set out in its election manifesto, Northampton Borough Council's new administration believes that convenient and reasonably priced car parking is key to improving access to the town centre and plays an important part in attracting visitors and supporting the local economy.
- 1.2 The new administration has therefore decided to review the operation of the council's town centre car parks to ensure that it is able to maximise the impact of these important assets.
- 1.3 A firm proposal has promptly been developed to:
 - Introduce **free one hour car parking** in three of the town centre's main shoppers' car parks (Mayorhold, St Michael's and St John's multi-storey)
 - **Reduce charges by 20p for one hour and by 40p for two hours** in all town centre premier car parks
 - Introduce **free Sunday car parking** in all town centre premier car parks
- 1.4 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet's agreement to this proposal and to advise Cabinet that further proposals may be brought forward as new opportunities are identified to deliver future improvements to the council's town centre car parking offer.

2. Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 2.1 Agrees to introduce free one hour car parking and a 40p reduction for the second hour in the following town centre premier car parks:
 - Mayorhold
 - St Michael's
 - St John's (multi-storey)
- 2.2 Agrees to reduce car parking charges by 20p for the first hour (where one hour charges apply) and by 40p for the second hour in all of the other town centre premier car parks.
- 2.3 Agrees to introduce free Sunday car parking in all town centre premier car parks.
- 2.4 Notes the financial implications of the proposal contained in this report, as set out at paragraph 4.3.
- 2.5 Delegates to the chief executive authority to implement changes to the proposal contained in this report, in response to the statutory consultation process, if he deems it necessary and appropriate to do so.
- 2.6 Notes that further proposals to improve town centre car parks may be brought forward to Cabinet as they are identified and developed.

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Report background

- 3.1.1 As part of the planned growth of Northampton a number of key redevelopment and regeneration proposals are planned to add to the retail, employment, leisure and amenity value of the town and to ensure that the town centre offer keeps pace with the demands of a changing and growing population.
- 3.1.2 An approach to car parking is required in the town centre that will support and enable this growth and which will encourage and enhance the economic viability and vibrancy of the town centre.
- 3.1.3 It is important that the council's car parking service supports the economic prosperity of the town centre.
- 3.1.4 The proposal contained within this report and those that may be brought forward in the future are intended to balance the income the council taxpayers of Northampton can achieve from the council's car parking resources whilst at the same time actively supporting the town's retail and commercial offer and minimising the impact on car park users.

- 3.1.5 Consideration needs to be given to the future development and management of the council's town centre car parks so as to ensure that these assets are able to meet the needs of the people and businesses of Northampton in the future.

Free car parking

- 3.1.6 A proposal has been developed to:

- 3.1.6.1 Introduce free one hour car parking and a 40p reduction for the second hour in three of the town centre's premier car parks – Mayorhold, St Michael's, St John's (multi-storey) – reducing the charge for up to two hours from £1.60 to £1.20.

- 3.1.6.2 Reduce car parking charges by 20p for the first hour (where one hour charges apply) and by 40p for the second hour in all of the other town centre premier car parks, reducing the charge for up to one hour from 80p to 60p and the charge for up to two hours from £1.60 to £1.20.

- 3.1.6.3 Introduce free Sunday car parking in all town centre premier car parks.

- 3.1.7 A complete list of the council's premier town centre car parks is provided below:

- Mayorhold
- St Michael's
- St John's (multi-storey)
- St John's (surface)
- Grosvenor Centre
- Commercial South
- St Peter's
- Albion Place
- Upper Mounts
- Ridings
- Commercial Street
- Newlands
- Wellington Street
- Abington Place
- Campbell Square

- 3.1.8 Premier car parks are designated as such because they are located in the heart of the town centre and are therefore the most popular car parks for town centre shoppers.
- 3.1.9 Premier car parks have been selected for free and reduced cost car parking because they are the car parks where the lowering of charges is likely to have the biggest impact on town centre visitor numbers.
- 3.1.10 It is anticipated that free and reduced cost car parking in the council's premier car parks will improve access to the town centre, benefiting both shoppers and retailers.

Monitoring and evaluation

- 3.1.11 There will be close monitoring of all aspects of this free/reduced charge car parking proposal. A robust evaluation will take place in February 2012 to assess its impact on town centre visitors, retailers and other town centre stakeholders.

Approvals

- 3.1.12 If Cabinet approves this proposal, an application will be made to Northamptonshire County Council to amend the traffic regulation order. It is expected that the proposal will be implementable during October, which will conveniently coincide with the Christmas shopping period.

Christmas 2011

- 3.1.13 In consultation with the Town Centre BID, other proposals for 'free car parking' will also be developed to create a **Christmas 2011 shopping package** that will make Northampton town centre a destination of choice for residents within and outside of the Northampton boundary.

Future improvements

- 3.1.14 Future proposals to improve the town centre car parking service may be brought forward under some or all of the following headings
- Standardisation of charges
 - Free parking to promote retail and business and community events
 - Evening, overnight, Sunday and bank holiday parking
 - Season tickets/direct debit savers
 - Contract parking
 - Capital investment
- 3.1.15 Further proposals for amendments to car parking charges and the way payment is made may take account of the following:
- The impact upon town centre businesses of reductions in parking charges
 - The potential benefits of the implementation of new technologies
 - Financial pressures upon the Council's General Fund
 - Opportunities arising from working with the Town Centre BID

Longer term issues

3.1.16 There is also a range of more fundamental issues that may be considered in order to deliver ongoing improvements to the council's car parking service, which might include:

- Upgrading ticket machines to take payments by credit/debit card and by mobile phone and to ensure change can be provided to customers in all car parks
- Further introduction of pay on exit
- Implementation of systems that will provide real time management information
- Extension of the use of CCTV to improve efficiency
- Introduction of new shift and working patterns to more effectively manage the work of the service
- Radical re-engineering of back office processes, to remove existing manual processes improving efficiency and management information
- Consideration of future management options and alternative delivery vehicles for the service

3.1.17 Where appropriate, business cases will be developed to secure necessary investment.

3.2 Choices (Options)

3.2.1 Cabinet can choose to agree or not agree the introduction of free one hour car parking in the Mayorhold, St Michael's and St John's (multi-storey) car parks and reductions to car park charges in all of the town centre's premier car parks.

3.2.2 If the proposal is not agreed an opportunity to improve access to the town centre will be missed and benefits that would flow to shoppers and retailers will not be realised.

3.2.3 Other options may also be brought forward to Cabinet in the future aimed at improving the council's town centre car park offer.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Policy

4.1.1 The proposal contained in this report will require a change to the council's car park charging policy.

4.1.2 Further changes to policy will also likely be required as future proposals are brought forward.

4.2 Risk

- 4.2.1 Risks arising from this report relate to loss of income. Analysis has been undertaken to assess the potential financial impact of one hour's free parking/reduced cost car parking so that steps can be taken to effectively manage this risk.
- 4.2.2 Management of risk will include ongoing monitoring and review and a robust evaluation of impacts before the end of the financial year.

4.3 Financial implications

- 4.3.1 Annual income from car parks is in the region of £4m. Around 85% of this income is from daily tickets with the remainder arising from season tickets and contract parking.
- 4.3.2 The cost implications of the proposal contained in this report is difficult to calculate as the impact on usage is not predictable. If, as anticipated, usage becomes greater, cost reductions will be offset to some extent.
- 4.3.3 If there was no increase in usage, analysis of historic data indicates that the full year impact would be approximately **£450k**.
- 4.3.4 Implementation is expected to take place during October and the financial impact on the 2011/12 budget is therefore estimated at approximately **£250k**.
- 4.3.5 The cost of effectively implementing the proposal will be **£25k**.
- 4.3.6 The cost implications of this report can be met from monies held in the council's car parking reserve.

4.4 Legal implications (including property)

- 4.4.1 There is a clearly defined process that must be followed to make changes to car park charges. Timescales and consultation requirements must be observed before changes to prices can be lawfully implemented.
- 4.4.2 The process is understood and will be adhered to. Advice has been sought from the council's internal legal advisors.

4.5 Equality

- 4.5.1 Proposals contained in this report will improve access to the town centre for all customers. There are no anticipated negative impacts for any section of society.
- 4.5.2 Future proposals that may be brought forward will give careful consideration to addressing any inequalities that are identified.

4.6 Consultees (internal and external)

- 4.6.1 Consultation with service users will inform future proposals for town centre car parking. The views of the Town Centre BID and other commercial stakeholders will also be considered.
- 4.6.2 Changes to charges for St Peter's car park must be agreed with the owners of that car park prior to implementation.
- 4.6.3 Consultation will take place with Legal & General in respect of changes to charges for the Grosvenor Centre, Mayorhold and Upper Mounts car parks.

4.7 How the proposals deliver priority outcomes

- 4.7.1 The proposals contained in this report will significantly contribute to the priority outcome of 'a well managed organisation that puts the customer at the heart of what we do'.

4.8 Other implications

- 4.8.1 None.

Julie Seddon, Director of Environment and Culture