

DECISION ITEM



REPORT OF		MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DIRECTORATE		OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE	13 SEPTEMBER 2016	6
CAR PARKING WORKING GROUP REPORT				

PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

SUMMARY

This report details the areas of Parking Services that were discussed by the Car Parking Working Group over a series of three sessions and the recommendations that they produced as a result.

RECOMMENDATION

The Car Parking Working Group requests the committee to consider the content of this report and approve the following:

1. In Respect of the Corporate Plan:

- To continue car parking enforcement as currently delivered with an option to review the contract with NSL when it is up for tender in 2018. The working group would review future car parking options;
- To request an audit on car parking signage within the borough identifying the current location of signage and a schedule of recommended improvements to be put to Lancashire County Council.

2. In Respect of Christmas Parking:

- The results and options relating to Christmas parking should be discussed by the Operational Management Committee. *(Results of the survey are included in the body of this report; points 8 to 12. A decision based on this information is requested).*

3. In Respect of the Fylde Resident's Parking Scheme:

- To increase the time allowed on certain long stay car parks from two hours to four hours from 1st November to 20th March.
- To agree that a price review would not apply this year and that the scheme shall be referred back to the committee in the event that 1,000 permits have been applied for.

4. In Respect of the Motorhomes Scheme:

- To extend the scheme to North Beach Car Park and to proceed with consultations with residents. The top end of St Paul's car park was also identified but was noted that this would be for a future consideration once the coastal defence works had been carried out (2017-19).

5. In Respect of Electric Vehicle Charging:

- To support Lancashire County Council's scheme and to propose the locations as set out in the report.

6. In Respect of New Car Parks:

- a. To await the result of the signage review so as to ensure existing car parks are fully utilised especially sites like Lytham Station Car Park;
- b. For Officers to engage in informal enquiries with the owner of the multi storey car park in St Annes regarding its future use and to report back to the Committee on the outcome of these discussions.

7. In Respect of Parking Fees and Charges:

- a. To not introduce charges to any of the currently free car parks;
- b. To recommend to Council an increase in car park tariffs by an average of 5% as detailed in Appendix 6, which would generate an estimated increase in income of £26,986 assuming user numbers remain the same;
- c. To recommend to Lowther Trust the introduction of a nominal £0.20 charge for the first hour's parking. If approved by Lowther Trust the charges would be expected to generate a small amount of additional income which, under the current arrangements, would be shared between the Council and Lowther Trust. The amount of additional income has not yet been quantified pending the decision of Lowther Trust;
- d. To retain the existing car park charging hours of 9am to 6pm.

8. Additional Queries Raised:

- a. To investigate prior to the commencement of the next enforcement contract beyond September 2018 different working patterns and the possibility of annualised hours;
- b. To retain the current arrangement of Fylde Council being responsible for off-street parking enforcement and Lancashire County Council being responsible for on-street parking enforcement.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES		
Spending your money in the most efficient way to achieve excellent services (Value for Money)	√	
Delivering the services that customers expect of an excellent council (Clean and Green)	√	
Working with all partners (Vibrant Economy)	√	
To make sure Fylde continues to be one of the most desirable places to live (A Great Place to Live)	√	
Promoting Fylde as a great destination to visit (A Great Place to Visit)	√	

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONSOperational Management Committee of 2nd June 2015 RESOLVED:

3. Appoint Councillors Julie Brickles, Alan Clayton, Richard Fradley, Edward Nash, Sandra Pitman and Albert Pounder onto the Car Parking working group which will meet as and when required.

Operational Management Committee of 31st March 2016 RESOLVED:

To confirm the establishment of the Car Parking working group, which would meet as and when required.

REPORT

Working Group Background

1. Following the meeting of the Operational Management Committee on 31st March 2016, the Car Park Working Group met on 18th May 2016. Officers provided a background to the work of previous car parking task & finish/working groups and presented members with a detailed overview of the Council's car park services. This information is set out in Appendix 1. During the presentation members sought clarification on various points and requested further information for the following meeting. This information is set out in Appendix 2. The session concluded by reviewing the areas of the service members were being asked to look in further detail which are set out in Appendix 3.
2. Session 2 was held on 8th June 2016 and clarified issues that had been raised in session 1 with Officers. The rest of the session the group discussed elements of the Corporate Plan that affect car parks, the Christmas parking scheme, the Fylde Resident's Parking Scheme, extending the motorhome scheme and the potential for installing electric vehicle charging points on car parks. Members formulated their recommendations for each issue and asked for a questionnaire to be drafted for the Christmas parking scheme to be presented at the next session.
3. Session 3 took place on 1st July 2016. The group discussed the potential for extending existing car parks and the creation of new ones, car park fees and charges and two additional queries about enforcement hours and the potential for taking on the responsibility for on-street enforcement activity from Lancashire County Council. The group formulated recommendations for each issue, including the request for the calculation of the impact of increasing parking fees which would be considered via email by group members. The group also reviewed the questionnaire to be sent out regarding the Christmas parking scheme. The session concluded by reviewing all recommendations.
4. The following report details each area of parking services that the working group discussed and their recommendations. Some of the recommendations have already been acted on while others require committee and/or full Council approval to proceed.

Corporate Plan

5. Within the Corporate Plan there are three references that relate to parking services. These are:
 1. A Vibrant Economy – Priorities: 'Improving car parking'
 2. A Vibrant Economy – Actions: 'Enforce car parking regulations and review car parking options'
 3. A Great Place to Live – Actions: 'Build on the success of the Residents' Car Parking Scheme'

Officers sought member guidance on what action was expected to deliver these actions.

Working Group Recommendations:

With regard the first two items 1 and 2 above: **To continue car parking enforcement as currently delivered with an option to review the contract with NSL when it is up for tender in 2018. The working group would review future car parking options.**

With regard the third item this was discussed as part of the Fylde Resident's Permit Scheme (please see below).

6. In addition to the three items directly relating to car parks members identified two further Corporate Plan priorities which the car parks could contribute towards. These are:

A Great Place to Live – Priorities: ‘Deliver and support quality events throughout the Fylde’

A Great Place to Live – Actions: ‘Improve information in and about tourist areas’

The first item was discussed with relation to the public events that occur/impact on different car parks as detailed in Appendix 1. For the second item Members considered how better road signage can direct tourists to different car parks. Members were advised that this signage is owned/controlled by Lancashire County Council as the Local Highways Authority so any suggested improvements would be reliant on their approval and funding.

Working Group Recommendations:

Members felt that signage identifying locations of car parks, long stay and short stay, throughout the borough needed to be reviewed.

To request an audit on car parking signage within the borough identifying the current location of signage and a schedule of recommended improvements to be put to Lancashire County Council.

Christmas Parking

7. At the Operational Management Committee Meeting of 24th November 2015 a request was made by one of the committee members for a review to be carried out on the Christmas free parking scheme. Since 2008 some form of concession has been granted on parking in the lead up to Christmas. This was originally established to help support local retail businesses in the wake of the recession. Since 2010 this included allowing free parking on all car parks on the three weekends leading up to Christmas. It is estimated that this scheme costs Fylde Council in the region of £8,000 to £9,000 per year in lost income.
8. The final questionnaire was agreed by the group in session 3 (see Appendix 4) and subsequently sent out towards the end of July 2016 to all businesses located close to Council-owned pay and display car parks using business names and addresses supplied by the Business Rates section. A deadline for responses was set at 15th August 2016. 668 questionnaires were sent out. 36 were returned undelivered due to businesses having closed/moved premises or the address details were incomplete. 79 businesses responded, a 12% response rate.
9. The results from the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 5. The majority of respondents (60%) are retail-based with 54% being in business for over 10 years. 81% believe their business is impacted by Council-owned car parks. 63% were aware that the council operated a Christmas parking scheme; hopefully the remainder will now be aware of this going forward.
10. Three questions were asked regarding whether businesses opened on Saturdays and Sundays while the scheme was in operation. Some respondents did not answer this, though most of these were office-based businesses. A key outcome from these questions is that about a third of businesses that open on Saturdays do not open on Sundays with little difference from before the Christmas parking scheme started to what businesses have planned for the future. As such it appears that some businesses have not fully taken advantage of the free Sunday parking during the Christmas period.

11. Most respondents took the opportunity to provide written feedback, though a lot of these do not directly relate to either the Council's car parks or specifically to the Christmas scheme itself. Of those responses that do relate to this scheme the responses are varied, with requests for extending free parking to other times to introducing nominal flat rate fees during this period to scrapping the scheme all together. The need to advertise the scheme was mentioned on several occasions as was the fact that often business owners/staff use the scheme to obtain free parking for themselves instead of allowing customers to benefit.
12. A decision is now sought from members, taking into account the feedback from businesses, as to how the Christmas Parking Scheme is progressed in future. Should the scheme remain the same? Should it be altered (e.g. extend to other days, alter days/times it operates, introduce lower charges during this period, etc)? Should the scheme cease?

Working Group Recommendations:

The results and options relating to Christmas parking should be discussed by the Operational Management Committee

Fylde Resident's Parking Scheme

13. Members reviewed the current scheme and considered how the scheme could be improved in light of the expectation of the Corporate Plan to build on the scheme's success. Details of the current scheme are set out in Appendix 1 under 'Previous Decisions'

Working Group Recommendations:

It was agreed to recommend an increase in time allowed on certain ¹long stay car parks from two hours to four hours from 1st November to 20th March, being in the off peak season. It was agreed that a price review would not apply this year and that the scheme shall be referred back to the committee in the event that 1,000 permits have been applied for.

14. In addition to this recommended amendment there is a further adjustment that is suggested as part of a separate report to this committee on extending the use of the Public Offices Car Park in light of the reduced use of the associated buildings. This would allow scheme permit holders to use the Public Offices Car Park 7 days a week as opposed to just at weekends and bank holidays, thereby allowing users to access the centre of St Annes during peak daytime hours.

Motorhomes

15. In light of the continued growth in popularity of the overnight motorhome parking scheme on St Annes Swimming Pool Car Park members were asked to consider whether the scheme could be extended to other locations. North Beach and St Paul's Avenue Car Parks were identified as being quieter locations (something some motorhome users had raised as an issue with the Swimming Pool Car Park location which can be noisy in the evenings). Lytham Station was mentioned as an equivalent alternative to St Annes Swimming Pool Car Park (close to the town centre with some protection from neighbours) though in this location the neighbouring residential properties are a lot closer.

¹ Long stay car parks that an increase in time would apply to are North Beach, North Promenade, St Annes Swimming Pool, Fairhaven Road, St Paul's Avenue, Stanner Bank, Lytham Station, Bath Street, Town Hall (weekends and Bank Holidays only) and Public Offices (weekends and Bank Holidays only dependant on decision as set out in point 14).

Working Group Recommendations:

Members were in favour of proposing that the scheme be extended to other car parks and to proceed with consultations with residents. The North Beach car park was identified as the potential location. The top end of St Paul's car park was also identified but was noted that this would be for a future consideration once the planned coastal defence works had been carried out (2017-19).

Electric Vehicle Charging

16. Lancashire County Council (LCC) have been able to secure funding to install a network of electric vehicle charging points across Lancashire. The aim of this is to put in place the infrastructure to enable electric vehicle owners to recharge whilst travelling around, thereby increasing their range and encouraging others of the viability of owning electric vehicles and increasing their uptake in ownership. The County Council are asking all Districts whether it would be possible to install these charging units on public car parks with one unit operating over two neighbouring parking bays.
17. Details of the proposal for this scheme can be found in Appendix 3. Key points for the committee to be aware of are:
 - LCC will have full liability for the cost of installing, operating and maintaining the units.
 - LCC envisage that the cost of charging would be the same across Lancashire. Payment would be made at the unit using a swipe card with the fee covering electricity used and maintenance of the units with any surplus to fund future units. At this time it is expected that the scheme will be cost neutral.
 - Use of the bays would be limited to electric vehicles that are on charge with a time limit (e.g. 3 hours) in place to stop all day parking.
 - LCC are requesting that districts supply the parking bays on car parks for free. There may be scope to negotiate on this though any fee that the Districts can negotiate is likely to be lower than our current charges.
 - Use of these bays would be enforceable by individual Districts. A change to legal orders would be required to enable this.
 - An agreement would need to be established for the minimum number of years the units would be in place for, likely to be the expected operational lifetime of the units.
 - If suitable off-street locations are not identified with Districts then LCC will consider installing units at on-street locations of their choosing.

Members discussed potential locations, identifying those that would most suit the scheme with negligible/minimal impact on car park operation/income.

Working Group Recommendations:

Members were in favour of supporting the scheme and were in agreement on the following locations:

Mill Street car park, Kirkham - 1 charging points/2 bays

Orders Lane car park, Kirkham – 1 charging point/2 bays

Pleasant Street car park, rear section, Lytham – 1 charging point/2 bays

Lytham Station car park, Lytham – 1 charging point/2 bays

North Promenade car park, St Annes – 1 charging point/2 bays – *would need LCC to confirm that the performance of the units would not be adversely affected by the sea air.*

Town Hall car park, St Annes – 1 charging point/2 bays - would need to explore with LCC if they restrict the use to the public as currently permits holders only Mon to Fri.

New Car Parks

18. A regular concern raised with Parking Services is that there is not enough parking available, particularly in town centres. Members were asked to consider whether existing car parks could be extended to create new spaces, whether new car parks could be created on existing Council-owned land or whether new land could be acquired to build new car parks.
19. The main problems occur in the town centres, though in these locations there is no space to extend existing car parks and property values are prohibitively high to purchase new land to create new parking. There was some discussion regarding the possible under-utilisation, particularly at weekends, of some edge-of-town car parks (Lytham Station, Town Hall and Public Offices car parks) as well as the half-opened, privately operated multi story car park on St Georges Road in St Annes.

Working Group Recommendations:

It was agreed to await the result of the signage review so as to ensure existing car parks are fully utilised especially sites like Lytham Station Car Park.

It was recommended that officers engage in informal enquiries with the owner of the multi storey car park in St Annes regarding its future use and to report back to the full committee on the outcome of these discussions.

Parking Fees and Charges

20. In April 2010 the car park fees structure was significantly altered and increased. In January 2011, to take into account the increase in VAT rates from 15% to 20%, the fees were further raised. These fees remained the same until April 2014 where slight amendments were made including the introduction of a cheaper shorter time tariff and multi-day tariffs at Lytham Station Car Park and for motorhome parking on St Annes Swimming Pool Car Park. All other fees have remained the same. Members noted that Fylde Council's parking fees are at the higher end of the scale in Western/Central Lancashire apart from Blackpool. Details of the current fees can be found in Appendix 1 with a comparison of fees with other districts in Appendix 2.
21. Members were asked to consider whether the Council should consider increasing current fees and whether fees should be extended to car parks that are currently free. Members were advised that any changes to fees would incur costs associated with changing legal orders and associated public notices, changes to all tariff board signs and updates to the pay and display machine software.

Working Group Recommendations:

Following a detailed discussion members agreed to defer any tariff introduction on the currently free car parks.

An increase on the tariffs over the initial parking period was suggested and a request was made to Officers to produce, and circulate to members of the working party, an example of amended charges based on an average of 5% and 10% increases prior to making a recommendation to committee.

22. Subsequent to session 3 calculations associated with an average 5% and 10% increase were circulated to group members by email (see Appendix 6). This set out baseline figures using the amount of income and ticket sales supplied by each pay and display machine for 2014/15 (the more recent 2015/16 data has incomplete information as a result of machine replacement). Income figures shown in Appendix 6 are inclusive of VAT as charged to the customer. The information provided shows the actual income collected against assumed income calculated from tickets sold. These figures slightly vary due to some people overpaying for different tariffs (e.g. paying £1 for an £0.80 tariff). For comparison purposes the assumed income has been used to calculate the changes in tariffs.
23. Members had previously stated that first period tariffs should remain the same. All other tariffs have been rounded to the nearest £0.10 to be as close to either 5% or 10% increase. The table below shows the total annual fee income exclusive of VAT for each of the scenarios, i.e. 5% or 10% increases:

Assumed total Income at current fee levels	Assumed total income - 5% Increase in fee levels	Additional income at 5% Increase in fee levels	Assumed total income - 10% Increase in fee levels	Additional income at 10% Increase in fee levels
£529,441	£556,427	£26,986	£579,082	£49,641

As shown in the table above an average 5% tariff increase would result in an estimated £26,986 increase in annual income. An average 10% tariff increase would result in an estimated £49,641 increase in annual income. This has been calculated based on the same number of users as in 2014/15. However it is likely, perhaps just for a short period, that some customer's current habits will change as a result of any price increase; people may decide not to use Council-owned car parks at all, some may use them less often and others may choose a lower tariff. This is likely to lead to a reduction in the number of users and a subsequent impact on potential income. This potential impact has been calculated as a 2.5%, 5% or 7.5% drop. This potential reduction needs to be considered as part of the decision making process.

24. Although Fylde Council operates Lowther Gardens Car Park, the area is actually owned by Lowther Garden's Trust with an income and cost sharing arrangement in place. As such, any changes to the tariffs on this car park will need to be approved by the Trust. Currently the first hour's parking is free which results in a lot of tickets being wasted each year by some people repeatedly pressing the machine's ticket issue button. This waste comes at a cost. There is also the confusion that is caused to some users who receive a PCN for not displaying a ticket who believe they didn't need to as the first hour is free. As such members were asked whether a nominal fee should be introduced to stop this potential waste and confusion.
25. An additional item was put to members to consider whether the car park operating hours should be extended. Currently charging hours are between 9am and 6pm. previously charging hours were extended for a year in 2006/07 to between 8am and 8pm. Appendix 7 shows the minutes from meetings which led to the decision to revert to the shorter time period, though we cannot locate information relating to the 'considerable amount of criticism' that was received.

Working Group Recommendations:

The members who responded to the emails relating to changing tariffs unanimously recommended

To increase car park tariffs by an average of 5% as per Appendix 6, which would generate an estimated increase in income of £26,986 assuming user numbers remain the same.

To recommend to Lowther Trust to introduce a nominal £0.20 charge for the first hour's parking.

To retain the existing car park charging hours.

Additional Queries Raised

26. The working group considered two other queries during its final session:

- That there was not enough enforcement carried out at weekends and it was suggested that the enforcement service would benefit from being provided on an annualised hours basis, whereby the hours were directed at times of greater need.
- Whether it would be beneficial for Fylde Council to commission or deliver directly a joint on-street and off-street parking enforcement service.

27. The Working Group were advised for the first point that weekend are enforced. It was noted that currently under the existing contract Enforcement Officer time is charged at a premium on Sundays. Members were advised that the provision of Enforcement Officers is currently under contract until September 2018 after which any change may be negotiated with the current contractor. Any change of this nature may result in either higher costs or a reduction in overall enforcement time due to the additional costs of increased weekend working.

28. The second point relates in part to on-street parking enforcement which is controlled by Lancashire County Council. As the Local Highway Authority they would have to offer the enforcement of on-street parking to all Lancashire Districts for which all Districts would need to agree to accept responsibility. It should also be noted that on-street enforcement operates at a financial loss. The suggestion being made would see a return to the previous Parkwise arrangement which operated for several years until 2009 and resulted in significant reputational damage to the Council due to being responsible for enforcement but not the maintenance of the signs and lines which enforcement action relies upon. The proposal for an in-house enforcement team is not viable due to the size of Fylde Council and the requirement for officers to be specially trained which limits the ability to ensure sickness cover.

Working Group Recommendations:

To investigate prior to the commencement of the next enforcement contract beyond September 2018 different working patterns and the possibility of annualised hours.

To retain the current arrangement of Fylde Council being responsible for off-street parking enforcement and Lancashire County Council being responsible for on-street parking enforcement.

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	This report requests that the Committee consider a number of proposals relating to car parks and parking charges within the borough. In respect of car parking fee levels the report requests that the Committee recommend to Council an increase car park tariffs by an average of 5% (as detailed in Appendix 6 of the report) which would generate an estimated increase in income of £26,986 assuming user numbers remain the same.
Legal	The report recommends a number of changes to car parking policies. Where appropriate, legal procedures will be invoked to implement any changes agreed.
Community Safety	None
Human Rights and Equalities	None
Sustainability and Environmental Impact	None
Health & Safety and Risk Management	None

LEAD AUTHOR	TEL	DATE	DOC ID
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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Name of document	Date	Where available for inspection

Attached documents:

- Appendix 1: Parking Services Background Information
- Appendix 2: Additional Information Requested by Members
- Appendix 3: Issues to be Explored By the Car Park Working Group
- Appendix 4: Christmas Parking Questionnaire
- Appendix 5: Christmas Parking Scheme Survey Results
- Appendix 6: Calculations for Proposals to Increase Car Parking Fees
- Appendix 7: Previous Decisions Regarding Extended Car Park Operating Hours