

CABINET
5th September 2019

REVIEW OF CHARGING PERIODS FOR HIGHFIELD ROAD CAR PARKS

1. Summary

This report seeks the consideration of Members for continuing (or not) existing car park charging periods in the Town Centre area following public representations at the Joint Transport Board meeting of 11 June 2019 concerning the Highfield Road (Spring Vale) car park and a review of usage of the Highfield Road (South) car park.

2. Recommendations

That Members consider the content of the report and determine whether to continue or amend the charging regimes for Highfield Road (Spring Vale) and Highfield Road (South) car parks.

3. Background and Discussion

- 3.1 The extension of the hours of the Dartford Borough Council Town Centre Car Parks was approved as part of the Revenue and Capital Budget, Fees and Charges, to become effective from 1 April 2018 [GAC minute 82: 2017/18 refers].
- 3.2 The item was discussed at Cabinet on 24 May 2018 as there had been objections to the making of the relevant orders [Cabinet minute 11: 2018/19 refers] where it was confirmed.
- 3.3 The Dartford Borough Council (Off Street Parking Places) Order 2018 actually went 'live' on 14 May 2018. The order included the off-street car parks in the town centre area, namely: Overy Street (1 and 2), Highfield Road (Spring Vale), Acacia, Westgate and Westgate House. It subsequently included a "new" pay and display car park at Highfield Road (South). The new order amended the operational hours of the Car Parks from 0800-1830 to 0800-2000. As per statutory requirements, the order was advertised prior to any final decisions. Payments in all town car parks are up to 2hrs £1, up to 4hrs £2 and all day £5. These charges have been in place for the past 3 years and remain cheaper than every other borough in the County.
- 3.4 Running parallel with this new order, the (then) Principal Transport Planner for the Council undertook a procurement process to change the existing ageing stock of Metric Pay and Display machines in favour of new, (IPS) digital machines. This was complimentary to the order and was approved by Cabinet in April 2018.

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Highfield Road (Spring Vale)

3.5 At a meeting of the Joint Transport Board (JTB), held on 11 June 2019, the Board received a petition from local residents and users of the Gurdwara, requesting that the Council shorten the operational hours of the Car Park in Highfield Road (Spring Vale). Additionally the Board received a deputation from the petitioners supporting their request. It was noted that the operating hours of the car park had been extended from 1830hrs so that the charging period now ran up to 2000hrs. The deputation suggested that this extension had impacted heavily on users to the extent that the car park was now severely under - utilised during evening times. Having considered the petition and representations it was agreed by JTB that:

1. A report be prepared for the Cabinet detailing usage levels and revenues generated by Town Centre car parks generally, if possible broken down to indicated specific time periods, and;
2. Arising from consideration of this report the Cabinet would review charging periods and possibly reduce charging periods if justified by the usage levels.

3.6 Parking Services was subsequently unable to provide any specific information regarding car park usage from the old Metric machines Pay and Display machines. The new machines offered a little more in relation to time specific parking events but the data was only available for approximately 1 year making comparative analysis impossible. However, Officers have been able to extract some parking event information for Highfield Road (Spring Vale) and, by way of comparator, Overy Street 2. By drilling down into the back office system to isolate parking event data between 1830 hours to 0800 hours month on month from 01.06.18, the results are as follows:

Highfield Road (Spring Vale) (21 spaces)

Month	Parking Events	Month	Parking Events
June 18	24	Jan 19	5
July 18	2	Feb 19	14
August 18	15	Mar 19	15
Sept 18	14	April 19	25
Oct 18	16	May 19	42
Nov 18	17	June 19 (1 st -15th)	15
Dec 18	10		

Overy St (41 spaces)

Month	Parking Events	Month	Parking Events
June 18	56	Jan 19	141
July 18	101	Feb 19	171
August 18	91	Mar 19	151

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Sept 18	121	April 19	170
Oct 18	175	May 19	131
Nov 18	144	June 19 (1st-15th)	76
Dec 18	142		

3.7 The data suggests that the trend in town car parks over the past 12 months remains largely unchanged, indicating that there have been no significant factors that have affected parking events after 1830hrs but, of course, there is no comparative data prior to June 2018. It is clear that whatever the situation prior to June 2018, there is now reluctance to pay to park at Highfield Road (Spring Vale) after 1830hrs. Nonetheless there is a demand for parking provision, both from users of the Gurdwara and nearby residents. Members are invited to consider whether the current charging regime should be retained or amended. Income for Spring Vale (including mobile phone payments) for 17/18 £12691, 18/19 £8485 and 19/20 (April – July) £3523.

Highfield Road (South)

3.8 At its meeting on 24 May 2018, Cabinet considered objections to the proposal to create a formal pay and display car park at the informal off road parking area at Highfield Road (South). Cabinet determined to proceed with bringing Highfield Road (South) into the pay and display regime but asked that a review into usage and any displacement be undertaken after 6 months [Cabinet minute 11: 2018/19 refers].

3.9 Due to the need to undertake various preparatory works charging and associated enforcement did not commence at Highfield Road (South) until February 2019. Since implementation there have been 396 paid for parking events, an average of less than 3 per day. These parking events generated approximately £550 in fees. In the same period the number of Fixed Penalty Notices issued for non-payment or staying beyond the paid period was 8, 7 of which has been paid, the most recent going through due process.

3.10 Usage figures since implementation suggest that the car park had previously attracted a significant level of parking linked to residential properties, unauthorised long stay uses and by employees of commercial businesses. Whilst the demand for these uses is understood, it is not the purpose of publicly maintained car parks to provide free parking for residents or to subsidise employers with insufficient provision for their own staff. It is noted that whilst the car park has been little used, there has been no evidence of disproportionate displacement into adjacent residential streets with no complaints from residents or local Members.

3.11 As regeneration of the town centre continues apace the need for parking for town centre shoppers and visitors is likely to increase. For these reasons, Officers consider that it would be prudent to retain pay and display provision at this location Monday to Saturday, between 0800hrs and 1630hrs, but to enable the car park to be used, free of charge, by the local community during the evening and overnight, between 1630hrs and

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0800hrs the following day. Members may also wish to consider the allocation of a number of spaces for a residents' parking scheme for the benefit of local households with no off-street or convenient on-street parking provision. This would be subject to local consultation and would conform to the same terms and conditions as other residents' permit parking schemes in the borough.

3.12 If Cabinet choose to change the arrangements for either of the Car Parks the existing Off Street Parking Places Order would need to be amended. This piece of work could be undertaken in-house, dependant on Officer resource. Costs could be absorbed within current budgets. Sufficient time should be allowed to advertise any changes across the relevant car parks, on the Council's website and in the local press.

4. Relationship to the Corporate Plan

**STRATEGIC AIM: TO PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY SERVICES THAT REFLECT
PUBLIC ASPIRATIONS AND DEMONSTRATE
IMPROVEMENT**

5. Financial, legal, staffing and other implications and risk assessments*

Financial Implications	Officer time and minimal costs for signing and advertisement can be contained within current budgets.
Legal Implications	The Road Traffic Management Act 2004 and The Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984
Staffing Implications	As set out in the body of the report.
Administrative Implications	None
Risk Assessment	None

6. Details of Exempt Information Category
Not applicable

7. Appendices
None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

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Documents consulted

Date /
File Ref

Report Author

Section
and
Directorate

Exempt
Information
Category

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Parking
Services,
External
Services

N/A