

DECISION-MAKER:	CABINET
SUBJECT:	Change to Parking Tariffs and Charging Hours in Suburban Car Parks
DATE OF DECISION:	28 January 2025
REPORT OF:	COUNCILLOR KEOGH CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT

<u>CONTACT DETAILS</u>			
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STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY		
N/A		
BRIEF SUMMARY		
<p>The Council has consulted upon new parking tariffs for the Suburban Car Parks which includes the removal of the free 2 hour parking period, and the extension of the charging period from Monday to Saturday 8am - 6pm to Monday to Sunday 8am - Midnight. The policy goal of the proposal is to manage the turnover of vehicles within the car parks for the benefit of local businesses, encourage alternative travel modes for the benefits of reduced congestion, and to cover the operating costs of the car parks. This report sets out the response to the consultation on these proposals and recommends that the proposals are implemented with amendments to the charging period and provision for the school drop offs/collections where car parks are adjacent to schools. It is also recommended that officers monitor and review the changes and provide a briefing paper to the Cabinet Member in October 2025 on the impact of these proposals on footfall within the District Centres.</p>		
RECOMMENDATIONS:		
	(i)	To approve the removal of the 2 hour free parking period and the subsequent implementation of the proposed parking tariffs for the named Suburban car parks as outlined in Appendix 5.
	(ii)	To approve the implementation of a new charging period within the named Suburban Car Parks of Monday to Sunday 8am - 8pm as outlined in Appendix 5.
	(iii)	To delegate authority to determine all future parking tariff charges for the Suburban Car Parks to the Executive Director – Residential Services following consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member(s)

	(iv)	To instruct officers to monitor and review the parking demand and footfall within the District Centres between 01/04/2025 and 30/09/2025 and make a recommendation to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport on whether the parking tariff and charging periods should be further amended.
	(v)	To instruct officers to develop a permit that be used for limited periods at set times in Suburban Car Parks adjacent to schools to enable use for “Park-and-Stride” to school.

REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1.	To encourage drivers to consider alternative forms of transport
2.	To more effectively manage parking demand within the Suburban Car Parks
3.	To cover the costs of operating and maintaining these sites
4.	To manage parking demand within the Suburban Car Parks during periods not currently covered by the charging hours
5.	To enable future parking tariff changes for Suburban Car Parks to be carried out via the standard process
6.	To assess whether the changes to the parking tariff and charging periods are having a discernible impact on trips to the District Centres such as may affect the commercial viability of local businesses within these areas
7.	To enable parents to continue using Suburban Car Parks as Park and Stride sites during school drop offs/collections

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

8.	To not implement the proposed parking tariff structure and charging hours as outlined. This would not address the aim of managing parking demand to reflect the impacts of car trips across the wider Southampton area and the Council would have to cross subsidise the operation of these sites using revenue generated from other sites.
9.	To have the parking tariffs apply in the named Suburban Car Parks between 8pm and Midnight. After consideration of consultee comments, a charging period of 8am to 8pm would better accommodate community groups meeting in the evening period when parking for the majority of commercial demand within the District Centres has been managed.
10.	To continue a process of approving parking charges and charging periods for the Suburban Car Parks via Cabinet which constitutes an inflexible approach for implementing new policies based around parking tariffs.
11.	To not have a formal monitoring period in place. After consideration of consultee comments, a formal monitoring period would address concerns that drivers may determine to visit alternative retail locations rather than pay the tariff or adopt alternative forms of transport.

DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)

12.	The Suburban Car Parks are defined as the 17 car parks serving the Bitterne, Portswood, Shirley and Woolston District Centres as shown in Appendix 1. They provide a parking amenity for visitors to these District Centres which in turn supports the local businesses operating in these areas. Like all car parks where there is frequent and sustained demand, a means of encouraging
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	<p>turnover within the facilities is required to ensure that the spaces don't become dominated by any one user or group of users to the exclusion of other visitors. Parking demand within these car parks is currently managed by one of two methods;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) A parking tariff that applies Monday to Saturday 8am to 6pm with the option of a free 2 hour ticket ii) A free 2 hour limited waiting period that applies Monday to Saturday 8am to 6pm
13.	<p>The Council has consulted upon removing the free 2 hour parking period in all of the 17 Suburban Car Parks and replace it with parking tariffs that operate Monday to Sunday 8am to Midnight. The proposed tariffs for the 17 sites can be seen in Appendix 2 – Public Notice. The proposed tariff is as follows;</p> <p>Up to 1 hour - £0.50 Up to 2 hours - £1.00 Up to 3 hours - £1.50 Up to 4 hours - £2.50 Up to 5 hours - £4.00 Up to 10 hours - £6.00 All Day - £8.00</p> <p>Five of the sites (Commercial Street and West End Road in Bitterne, Bright Glade in Shirley and Woodley Road North and Woodley Road South in Woolston) would have a maximum stay of 2 hours due to the high level of demand at these sites relative to their size, while Whites Road would have a lesser charge for the long stay tariff due to the lower level of demand seen at this site.</p> <p>The Council has also proposed that the existing Suburban Car Park Business Season Ticket charged at £250 per annum be replaced with a Suburban Car Park Season Ticket available to all drivers at a charge of £650 per annum or £340 for six months. This is to provide all users with a season ticket option, which may include residents and commuters. The cost is reflective of the season ticket option for residents in the City Centre with charge equating to £1.86 per day for the six month option and £1.78 per day for the annual season ticket.</p>
14.	<p>The aim of the proposals are as follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote further turnover within the car parks for the benefit of local businesses - Encourage alternative modes of travel, including use of public transport and car sharing for the benefit of reduced congestion - Ensure that the Council is covering the operating costs of the car parks

15.	<p>The purpose of the existing tariff approach for Suburban Car Parks has been to provide a competitive parking environment when compared to the City Centre and other regional retail centres. However, the Suburban Car Parks generate relatively low revenue. All car parks have costs, which include maintenance, operating costs of Pay and Display machines and annual business rates. The revenue currently generated by the Suburban Car Parks is not covering the cost of their operation. The table below shows 2022/23 Suburban Car Park revenue income against the business rate costs for that year. This leaves the Suburban Car Parks with an operating loss of £54K even before other costs are deducted.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>P&D Revenue</th> <th>PCN Revenue</th> <th>Total Revenue</th> <th>Business Rates</th> <th>Difference</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>£61,917.03</td> <td>£22,502.29</td> <td>£84,419.32</td> <td>£138,422.35</td> <td>£54,003.03</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Costs of maintaining car parks (repairing pot holes etc) will vary from year to year, but the general cost of doing repairs have increased significantly in recent years.</p>	P&D Revenue	PCN Revenue	Total Revenue	Business Rates	Difference	£61,917.03	£22,502.29	£84,419.32	£138,422.35	£54,003.03
P&D Revenue	PCN Revenue	Total Revenue	Business Rates	Difference							
£61,917.03	£22,502.29	£84,419.32	£138,422.35	£54,003.03							
16.	<p>In developing these proposals, the Council carried out a bench marking exercise looking at similar retail areas across the region, both within large urban areas and also smaller towns and districts. This is attached as Appendix 3. It is highlighted that the tariffs put forward as part of this proposal have been kept at a nominal rate in contrast to many of the locations examined as part the bench marking exercise. The purpose of doing so is to ensure that the District Centres remain competitive with other similar retail destinations and also to minimise any displacement onto neighbouring residential areas. It is also highlighted that many Local Authority car parks which are providing parking amenity for local retail centres are operating parking tariffs with no evident impact to the adjacent businesses.</p> <p>It is noted that some Local Authorities in the region such as Fareham Borough Council maintain free parking for some of their local retail areas, including Stubbington and Portchester.</p>										
17.	<p>Provision for making amendments to parking tariffs is held under the Officer Scheme of Delegation within the Council constitution under Section 12.16. Therefore amendments to parking tariffs and charging hours would usually be done under delegated authority with oversight by the administration. It has been determined that the principle of removing the 2 hour free parking period and extending the charging period warranted a Cabinet decision. However it is recommended that Cabinet delegates all future amendments of parking tariffs and tariff structures to the Executive Director for Resident Services (or equivalent post). This will maintain a more flexible process for the amendment of parking tariffs going forward.</p>										
18.	<p>The Council has carried out a consultation on the proposals between 29th November 2024 and 20th December 2024. 2072 responses were received in total.</p>										

	<p>2001 responses were logged as objections to the proposals 31 responses were logged as supporting the proposals 40 responses were logged as comments</p> <p>A summary of the objections and officer responses is included as Appendix 4.</p> <p>A table of all the representations submitted is included as Members Rooms Document 1.</p> <p>It is the officer's view that no objections have been raised that constitute any material overriding consideration to the underlying principle of proposals. However, officers have recommended a number of minor amendments to the proposals in response to the consultation, as set out below.</p>
19.	<p>It is noted that the predominant concern expressed by respondents was the potential for drivers to choose to travel to alternative retail locations with a potential impact to local businesses. This has been assessed as part of the officer response and within the bench marking exercise that has been carried out looking at similar local retail districts. However, officers will monitor and review the parking demand and footfall within the District Centres between 01/04/2025 and 30/09/2025 to assess whether the changes to the parking tariff and charging periods are having a discernible impact on trips to the District Centres. A discussion paper on these findings will be presented to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport in October 2025 to include recommendations on any further changes to the Suburban Car Park parking tariffs and charging hours as appropriate.</p>
20.	<p>Another concern that was raised by a noticeable number of respondents, was that the proposed parking charges would deter the use of some car parks as Park and Stride facilities by parents dropping off and collecting children to and from schools. Park and Stride facilities can play a key role in encouraging parents to park safely and not in locations on the highway close to the school where this may cause an obstruction or obscure sightlines, to children crossing the road. However, the Council could not make provision for Park and Stride within the car parks that would undermine the purpose of the tariffs as proposed by being used for trips not related to Park and Stride. It is recommended that officers develop proposals for a permit that can be used for short periods in nominated Suburban car parks in close proximity to schools at set times. Provision for permits is made within the Suburban Car Parks Off Street Parking Order.</p>
21.	<p>It is further noted that members from a number of local community groups submitted representations expressing concern on the potential for the proposed charges to discourage participation in community meetings and leisure activity such as theatre groups or running clubs, within the evening period. Many of the impacts associated with making a car journey (emissions, deterioration of highway/car park surface, congestion) occur regardless of the time of day that the trip is made, so parking tariffs should still be used to</p>

	<p>encourage people to give consideration to choosing an alternative means where feasible (e.g. car sharing, public transport). However, it is recognised that the level of demand generated by commercial activity would be greatly reduced in the evening period within the District Centres, relative the City Centre, and that reduced exposure to tariffs may assist in encouraging community participation within these areas. Therefore, it is recommended that the proposed charging hours be amended to Monday to Sunday 8am to 8pm. As this results in a maximum stay period of 12 hours, it is further recommended that the all day tariff be removed and that the £6 tariff be amended from applying for stays of up to 10 hours to applying for stays of up to 12 hours.</p>
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RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Revenue

<p>22.</p>	<p>Parking charges are not implemented or amended to raise income, but to further policy goals as outlined in the proposal. It is projected that these proposals would nonetheless have an impact on parking income which is set out below.</p> <p>The impact on income has been assessed by applying the tariff proposals to average usage data on affected car parks to assess the likely changes to income, with a general assumption that there will be a reduction in usage as a result of the implementation of the change. Where a car park does not have existing usage data (e.g. car parks currently operating with a limited waiting period), the nearest equivalent site in capacity was used to provide an estimate.</p> <p>The overall projected increase in income is expected to be £0.56M per year from 2025/26. .The implementation of suburban car parking charges has been included in the budget planning as part of the Parking and Traffic Management transformation project and the increased income is included within proposed transformation savings.</p> <p>Off-street parking income is a general fund income stream and is budgeted at an appropriate level within the Council’s annual revenue budget. Any income generated above the budgeted level can be used to offset pressures in other Council budget areas. It can also reduce the need to transfer income from the on-street parking reserve into the off-street budget to pay costs such as maintenance (on street revenue can be used for off street costs). This allows funding from the on-street reserve to be used on key areas such as home to school travel, concessionary bus fares and upgrades and improvements to the highway network.</p>
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Property/Other

<p>23.</p>	<p>None</p>
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LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:

24.	Local Authorities have powers to set parking tariffs and charging structures under Part IV of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984
Other Legal Implications:	
25.	Equalities Act 2010, Crime and Disorder Act 1998, Human Rights Act 1998
26.	The proposals in this report are supported by an Equalities Impact Assessment (Members Room Document 2) that Members are asked to have regard to in reaching their decision in order to comply with their duties under s.149 Equality Act 2010 (the 'Public Sector Equality Duty').
RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS	
27.	It is noted that there is potential for drivers to migrate to alternative retail destinations, which if occurring in significant volumes would put some of the policy goals at risk. It is believed that the majority of users would still use the district centre that was closest to their destination as the charges have been set at a nominal level. The bench marking document in Appendix 3 shows that there are many similar smaller retail centres in the region with chargeable Council car parks that are situated a short drive away from large retail parks with free parking. To fully address the risk, Council officers will be monitoring footfall and car park usage with a discussion paper produced for the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, outlining the findings.
POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS	
28.	The proposal is supportive of Policies I3 – Smart Parking (removing the free parking period and expanding the charging period supports the broad policy goal), R1 – Well Managed Highway (through encouraging the use of alternative travel modes to reduce the impact of the car on the highway), A3 – environment and Policy, Z1 – Zero Emission City (through encouraging drivers to consider alternatives to car use), Policy HA3 – Walking (by encouraging people, particularly those who live close to the district centres, to walk to those retail areas), HA4 – Smarter Travel Choices (by encouraging the use of alternative travel modes), in Connected Southampton, the Council's Local Transport Plan. The proposal can also be considered a clear policy response to challenges noted in 2.4.2 of the Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan.

KEY DECISION?	Yes
WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	All Wards
<u>SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION</u>	
Appendices	
1.	Location of Suburban Car Parks and Existing Tariffs
2.	Suburban Off Street Parking Places Public Notice
3.	Tariffs in Local District Centres Benchmarking
4.	Summary of Objections and Officer Response
5.	Amended Suburban Car Parks Tariff and Charging Hours Proposal

Documents In Members' Rooms

1.	Consultation Responses in Full	
2.	DDN & ESIA	
Equality Impact Assessment		
Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA) to be carried out.		Yes
Data Protection Impact Assessment		
Do the implications/subject of the report require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) to be carried out.		No
Other Background Documents		
Other Background documents available for inspection at:		
Title of Background Paper(s)	Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)	
1.		
2.		