

REFERRAL OF DECISION TO FULL COUNCIL

- 1.1 The Proper Officer reports that, pursuant to Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 15 (b), a requisition has been received in the names of Cllrs C I Black, C J Lumley and R A Oatham requiring that the decision of the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation on Car Parking – consideration of the recommendations of the Review Committee, be referred to Full Council.
- 1.2 A copy of the decision document is attached.

Albert Bugeja

Head of Legal, Estates and Member Services

Background Papers:-

None

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If you would like this report in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 546366.

EXECUTIVE DECISION BY PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION

SUBJECT: CAR PARKING – CONSIDERATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REVIEW COMMITTEE (REPORT PUBLISHED APRIL 2010)

1 DECISION MADE

- 1.1 The following decisions relate to solely to those matters within Review Committee's report that are proposed for implementation. The findings and conclusions with regard to the remaining recommendations of the Review Committee are explained, in full, in section 2 of the report from the Head of Planning and Transportation to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation (copy attached). For completeness, decisions taken with regard to an earlier interim report of the Review Committee (January 2010) are also set out below.
- 1.2 Car park charges and charging bands – no change to car parking charges for 2010/11 or to the current charging bands, this decision being subject to an assessment of the implications of the proposed change in the rate of VAT, which comes into force in January 2011.
- 1.3 Parking dispensation – details of the dispensation scheme to be included in a 'did you know' article in RDM, and that leaflets explaining the scheme be provided at the Rochford and Rayleigh receptions, along with display notices if practicable.
- 1.4 Residents parking permits – Members to be consulted biennially to establish whether there is a need for consideration to be given to a residents parking permit scheme.
- 1.5 The Approach car park – an investigation be carried out on the options for alternative uses of the car park, to be completed and reported by March 2011.
- 1.6 An interim report of the Review Committee (12 January 2010 – minute 2) with recommendations about the Approach car park was the subject of an Executive decision on 11 February 2010. The decisions taken relate to recommendations 12 and 13 in the main report as follows:-
 - That annual and quarterly season tickets be issued for use in the Approach car park only at the rate of £700 and £200 respectively, subject to a Notice of Variation amending the car parking order; and
 - That a letter be sent to all previous ticket holders for the last five years at the Approach car park who have not renewed their tickets, advising them of the new charges.

2 REASON FOR DECISION

- 2.1 The Review Committee's report on car parking in the district is welcomed and the recommendations have been carefully considered. The decisions taken are those that will not result in the loss of car parking income in particular, but will contribute positively to the enhancement of the service.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 3.1 The decisions taken relate to the Review Committee's recommendations on car parking and therefore no alternative options have been considered.

4 NAME OF PORTFOLIO HOLDER

- 4.1 Cllr KH Hudson

5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 5.1 None.

6 LEAD OFFICER

- 6.1 Shaun Scrutton, Head of Planning & Transportation.

I confirm that the above decision does not depart from Council policy and that appropriate consideration has been given to any budgetary and legal implications.

Portfolio Holder Signature: Cllr K H Hudson

Date of Decision: 2 July 2010

REPORT TO PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR PLANNING & TRANSPORTATION

REPORT FROM HEAD OF PLANNING & TRANSPORTATION

SUBJECT: CAR PARKING – CONSIDERATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REVIEW COMMITTEE (REPORT PUBLISHED APRIL 2010)

1 DECISIONS BEING RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 The following recommendations relate solely to those matters within the Review Committee's report that are proposed for implementation. The findings and conclusions with regard to the remaining recommendations of the Review Committee are explained, in full, in section 2 of the report. For completeness, decisions taken with regard to an earlier interim report of the Review Committee (January 2010) are also set out below.
- 1.2 Car park charges and charging bands – no change to car parking charges for 2010/11 or to the current charging bands, this decision being subject to an assessment of the implications of the proposed change in the rate of VAT, which comes into force in January 2011.
- 1.3 Parking dispensation – details of the dispensation scheme to be included in a 'did you know' article in RDM, and that leaflets explaining the scheme be provided at the Rochford and Rayleigh receptions, along with display notices if practicable.
- 1.4 Residents parking permits – Members to be consulted biennially to establish whether there is a need for consideration to be given to a residents parking permit scheme.
- 1.5 The Approach car park – an investigation be carried out on the options for alternative uses of the car park, to be completed and reported by March 2011.
- 1.6 An interim report of the Review Committee (12 January 2010 – minute 2) with recommendations about the Approach Car Park was the subject of an executive decision on 11 February 2010. The decisions taken relate to recommendations 12 and 13 in the main report as follows:
 - That annual and quarterly season tickets be issued for use in the Approach car park only at the rate of £700 and £200 respectively, subject to a Notice of Variation amending the car parking order; and
 - That a letter be sent to all previous ticket holders for the last five years at the Approach car park who have not renewed their tickets, advising them of the new charges.

2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 In this section of the report, each of the Review Committee's recommendations on car parking, as set out in their report published in April 2010, is assessed and considered.

2.2 ***Review Committee Recommendation No. 1***

It is recommended that the availability of tradesmen parking permits is given more publicity.

Comment

The Council does not run a permit scheme specifically for tradesmen to allow parking in a street with a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO). In fact, the Council is permitted, in principle, to issue a dispensation to any driver to allow parking on a single yellow line or a limited waiting bay.

Dispensations are only issued if it is necessary for a vehicle to be parked in the specified location and not just for convenience. Whilst the scheme is not tradesmen specific, in reality it is most likely that applications will be received from tradesmen carrying out works to houses or shops, etc. Such dispensations cost £15 for the first day and £5 per day thereafter, and cannot be issued on double yellow lines or for any location likely to cause an obstruction or danger to other road users. The charge for a dispensation is set by Essex County Council.

Full details of how to apply for a dispensation and the charges are to be found on the Council's website.

It is concluded there is value in highlighting the existence of the dispensation by placing a short 'did you know' article in the next edition of RDM. In addition, leaflets can be provided within the Rochford and Rayleigh receptions and a notice put on display, subject top space being available.

2.3 ***Review Committee Recommendation No. 2***

It is recommended that the car park charges should apply from 7am – 6pm.

Comment

In the current economic climate, any loss of income must be carefully considered, and it expected there would be a loss, albeit relatively modest, arising from this change. In this instance it is concluded that car parking charges should continue to apply from 7am to 7pm.

2.4 ***Review Committee Recommendation No. 3***

It is recommended that a 30 minute time band for parking is introduced.

Comment

The 30 minute time band was removed in 2005 following complaints from motorists being issued with PCNs as a result of their return being delayed.

At present, about 60% of motorists purchase the cheapest one hour tariff and reintroducing a 30 minute band is expected to result in a loss of income of about £40,000.

Taking into account the projected loss of income and that the reason for removing the 30 minute tariff in 2005 still remains, it is recommended that a 30 minute time band is not introduced.

2.5 Review Committee Recommendation No. 4

It is recommended that the car parking charges for the one and two hour bands remain at the current level.

Comment

This recommendation is accepted, but it is considered the situation should be kept under review.

The pending change to the rate of VAT announced in the recent budget will have implications for income that need to be considered later in the year.

2.6 Review Committee Recommendation No. 5

It is recommended that if recommendation No 3 is agreed then the car parking charges for the 30 minute band is 40p.

Comment

Since recommendation 4 is not accepted, this recommendation is not accepted and thus no action is required on this recommendation.

2.7 Review Committee Recommendation No. 6

It is recommended that the car parking charges for the following bands are:

Up to three hours - £2.00

Up to four hours - £2.60

Up to five hours - £3.20

Comment

As so few tickets are purchased in these time bands, there is little benefit to income as a result of the suggested change.

2.8 Review Committee Recommendation No. 7

It is recommended that officers consult with Ward Members on an annual basis to establish whether there is a need for any residents' parking scheme.

Comment

There have been two recent comprehensive assessments in 2005 and 2007 of the need for the introduction of a residents' parking scheme. In both cases, it was concluded there was no justification to introduce a residents' parking scheme and for the moment that same view prevails.

However, it is accepted that it is reasonable to keep the matter under review, but biennially and not annually, as suggested by the Review Committee.

2.9 Review Committee Recommendation No. 8

It is recommended that an investigation is instigated with Essex County Council to develop an affordable residents parking scheme.

Comment

There is no doubt that, as evidenced in previous investigations, few residents would actually benefit from a residents' parking scheme. It is not clear that, taking account of software, administration and other costs, including relining and resigning streets that any scheme would be affordable. Furthermore, since the majority of residents in the district benefit from off street parking, there is no guarantee whatsoever that any significant number of permits would be sold.

In any event, taking account of the conclusions on recommendation 7, there is no requirement for further action on this recommendation. It is accepted that if, at a future date, a decision was taken to introduce a scheme it must of necessity be affordable.

2.10 Review Committee Recommendation No. 9

It is recommended that additional full time Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) are employed.

Comment

It is estimated that set up and salary costs for one additional CEO would be about £25,000 and that, taking account of a likely reduction in the overall number of PCNs issued by all CEOs, additional fines would be about £25,500.

Therefore, in the first year, there would be a small surplus of income over expenditure, and a case might therefore be made to appoint one additional CEO.

It is also important to bear in mind that whilst a CEO presence at schools might avoid some of the parking, congestion and road safety problems, it is unlikely many PCNs would be issued since parents more often than not simply drive away.

On balance, whilst there is a marginal business case to be made for the appointment of one additional CEO, it is felt that it would not be appropriate to do so at present pending the ongoing County Council review of agency agreements.

Depending on the outcome of the parking review and the new arrangements for enforcement from April 2011, it may be appropriate to revisit this decision.

2.11 Review Committee Recommendation No. 10

It is recommended that an investigation is carried out into the possibility of out-sourcing parking enforcement within the District.

Comment

This is a matter best considered at a later date, given the ongoing review of

on street parking enforcement by the County Council and the likelihood of new arrangements from April 2011.

2.12 *Review Committee Recommendation No. 11*

It is recommended that an investigation is carried out into the way that the money from the parking machines is collected on a daily basis.

Comment

Cash collections from the pay and display machines are completed three times a week on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. The machines in the busy car parks are emptied on each of these days, but those in the less busy car parks once or twice a week. On the busiest day, collections take about two hours to complete.

Overall, it is considered that the modest length of time taken by two CEOs to empty the machines on three days is cost effective. It is important that CEOs spend as much of the working day as possible on patrol, but investigations of the costs and problems associated with passing this task to a private contractor indicates the current arrangement is the most cost effective way of carrying out cash collections.

2.13 *Review Committee Recommendation No. 12*

It is recommended that a season ticket for the Approach car park only is issued at a reduced rate of £700 per annum with a quarterly ticket being reduced to £200 and a monthly ticket being introduced at a rate of £75. The daily rate of this car park should be reduced to £3.

Comment

A reduction in the annual and quarterly season ticket charges for The Approach was agreed by executive portfolio decision on 11 February 2010.

2.14 *Review Committee Recommendation No. 13*

It is recommended that if recommendation No.12 is agreed, all previous season ticket holders for the last 5 years at the Approach car park that have not renewed their tickets be advised of the new pricing structure.

Comment

This was agreed by executive portfolio decision on 11 February 2010, and letters were sent to all previous season ticket holders on 15 April 2010.

2.15 *Review Committee Recommendation No. 14*

It is recommended that existing Approach season ticket holders that introduce another person who purchases a quarterly or annual season ticket from the Approach are awarded a week's free parking.

Comment

Whilst the suggestion to reward existing season ticket holders for introducing another person is a commendable idea, there would be implications for other car parks across the district, and an administrative burden of handling the change.

2.16 Review Committee Recommendation No. 15

It is recommended that if the reduction in charges for the Approach car park does not attract sufficient additional users within a six month period from introduction then alternative uses for the car park should be explored.

Comment

Consideration is being given to the potential for using part of the car park for the provision of some small 'start-up' employment units. A report will be prepared at a later date, to enable a decision to be reached by the end of March 2011.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 3.1 This report specifically considers the findings and recommendations of the Review Committee and no alternative options have therefore been considered.

4 OTHER SALIENT INFORMATION

- 4.1 Essex County Council is carrying out a review into the arrangements for enforcing on-street parking controls.
- 4.2 At present, Rochford appoints staff to patrol the streets and issue and administer parking contravention notices on behalf of the County Council; the detailed arrangements are set out in an agency agreement.
- 4.3 From 1 April 2011, new arrangements are expected county wide but, as yet, no agreement has been reached. Further consideration of the recommendations of the Review Committee, as explained in section 2 of this report should wait until there is certainty about the future arrangements for enforcing on-street parking controls.
- 4.4 The level of usage of the Approach car park remains of concern, notwithstanding the changes made to charges for annual and quarterly season tickets. The situation will be closely monitored while an assessment is made of the options for alternative uses for the car park.

5 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no particular risk implications arising from the report's recommendations, though several of the recommendations from the Review Committee are considered to have risks, particularly with regard to loss of income.

I confirm that the above recommendation does not depart from Council policy and that appropriate consideration has been given to any budgetary and legal implications.

SMT Lead Officer Signature: Mr S Scrutton

Date: 2 July 2010

Background Papers:

Car Parking Issues Review – Review Committee, April 2010

Interim Report on Car Parking – Review Committee, January 2010