

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 23 FEBRUARY 2016

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

CAR PARK FEES AND CHARGES TRIAL

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- To assess the results of the two year trial of new car park charges that began in September 2014.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

That:

(A)	the outcomes of the trial of new car park charges that began in September 2014 be noted; and
(B)	a proposal to make the trial permanent and continue with the current charges until the end of March 2017 be supported.

1.0 Background

1.1 A two year trial of new car park ‘pay and display’ charges in Hertford, Bishop’s Stortford and Ware began on 8 September 2014. The modified charges and charging structure set out to promote the economic wellbeing of the three towns. (Modified charging arrangements were put in place in Sawbridgeworth and Buntingford car parks and Stanstead Abbots car park currently operates free of charge thanks to third party sponsorship).

1.2 The principal elements of the trial were:

- An initial 30 minutes free parking
- 50% additional parking time for the same charge on ‘short stay’ tariffs
- A flat rate parking charge of £1 between 1600 and 1830

2.0 Report

Outcome of Fees and Charges Trial

2.1 Officers have been monitoring the trial along three lines:

- Impact on the 'pay and display' revenue budget
- Impact on the overall number of car park visits
- Impact on the average duration of stay

2.2 The table below shows that 'pay and display' revenue has remained broadly the same as the budget, suggesting the reduction to individual tariffs has been offset by an increased number of individual parking acts.

Year	Budget £	Actual £	Variance £	Percentage of Budget
2010/11	3,113,800	2,979,000	134,800	96
2011/12	2,969,000	3,012,260	(43,260)	101
2012/13	2,962,450	3,057,027	(94,577)	103
2013/14	3,208,600	3,090,248	118,352	96
2014/15	3,048,600	3,026,275	22,325	99
2015/16	2,708,300	2,890,000	(181,700)	107

2015/16 'Actual' figure is estimated

2015/16 'Budget' figure includes Bircherley Green (£166,900)

2.3 **Essential Reference Paper 'B'** confirms the number of individual parking acts in East Herts car parks averaged around 170,000 a month in the year leading up to September 2014 and increased to an average of around 210,000 a month after that date. Evidence, albeit largely anecdotal at this stage, suggests this 23% increase in car parking acts in the three towns may lead to current capacity coming under strain with increasing regularity.

2.4 **Essential Reference Paper 'C'** shows the total number of parking hours purchased each month in each of the trial towns in 2014 and

2015 (excluding 'RingGo'). It shows growth in each town and demonstrates that the total parking hours purchased increased from around 460,000 a month before the September 2014 tariff change to approximately 500,000 a month the following year – an increase of around 10%.

- 2.6 When 'RingGo' transactions are included the total parking hours purchased in a typical month increased from around 510,000 in 2014 to around 580,000 in 2015 – an increase of around 13%.
- 2.7 It would appear the change in tariffs and tariff structures introduced in September 2014 has generated a step change in use of most East Herts car parks. This can be regarded as a positive proxy indicator for the success of the trial's primary objective – to promote the economic wellbeing of our main towns. There is however evidence that car park capacity in our main towns is coming under increasing strain. In respect of Bishop's Stortford this was confirmed in a report completed in 2015, which will be used to inform decisions on future developments in the town. Officers propose to commission similar studies in Hertford and Ware in the next two years.

Proposal to Make Trial Permanent

- 2.8 The two year trial is due to end on 7 September 2016. Given its apparent success the Committee is invited to support both making the new tariff structures permanent and the continuation of current charges until the end of March 2017. The latter would restore the connection with the Council's financial year. Fees and charges proposals for April 2017 onwards will be prepared as part of the Council's service planning cycle.

Background Papers

Interim Report on Car Park Fees and Charges Trial – Executive, 8 June 2015

Contact Member:

Councillor G Jones – Executive Member for Economic Development
gary.jones@eastherts.gov.uk

Contact Officer:

Neil Sloper – Head of Information, Customer and Parking Services
extn. 1611
neil.sloper@eastherts.gov.uk

Report Author:

Andrew Pulham – Parking Manager
andrew.pulham@eastherts.gov.uk