

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

LOCAL JOINT PANEL – 13 JUNE 2012

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 11 JULY 2012

REPORT BY PROGRAMME HEAD

STAFF AND MEMBER CAR PARKING ARRANGEMENTS

WARD(S) AFFECTED:

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**Purpose/Summary of Report**

To invite the Local Joint Panel to determine a policy for staff parking from the options presented and based on the findings detailed in this report.

<b><u>RECOMMENDATION FOR LOCAL JOINT PANEL:</u></b>	
(A)	<b>That the Council adopt a policy for staff and member parking that:</b>
<b><u>RECOMMENDATION FOR HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE:</u></b>	
(B)	<b>Agree the policy determined by the Local Joint Panel as the Council's on-going policy for staff and member car parking.</b>

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Council staff moves to the Wallfields site in Hertford ended in August 2011. The car parking facilities on site are insufficient to cater for everyone's needs.
- 1.2 The Grange Paddocks car park in Bishops' Stortford, currently free to use, will become a charging long stay car park in the summer of 2012 in line with the Council's approved Medium Term Financial Plan and Fees and Charges Policy. Any policy on car parking provision must include staff working and visiting Bishops' Stortford.

- 1.3 A report to the Local Joint Panel (LJP) and Human Resources Committee (HRC) on 13 July outlined options for staff and member car parking at the Wallfields site, and those unable to be accommodated on site. LJP and HRC agreed that no change to the provision of car parking (at no cost to staff) should be made in the current financial year, allowing staff and members to park at no charge when unable to be accommodated at the Wallfields site. This was subject to a review of occupancy and use in December 2011 to be presented to LJP and HRC in February and March respectively to determine the policy on member and staff parking provision.
- 1.4 All employees have received revised terms and conditions which includes a reduction in the local award from 5% to 2% linked to national pay awards.
- 1.5 Given inflation and the current pay freeze in local government, wages are reducing in real terms.
- 1.6 The provision of free parking, whilst not contractual, may be considered as an implied term in the contracts of employment of those who have had the benefit for many years through custom and practice. Any change to this provision may therefore constitute a breach of existing contracts and be subject to challenge requiring consultation and agreement in the change to work conditions or termination of contracts and re-engagement.

## 2.0 Report

### Current Position - Hertford

- 2.1 All staff have the benefit of free car parking consisting of rostered access to the Wallfields' car park and permitted overflow use of the Hertford long stay and mixed use car parks, Gascoyne Way being the most used.
- 2.2 Members are permitted to park free of charge in the visitor car park at Wallfields on display of a permit.

### Current Position – Stortford

- 2.3 All staff have the benefit of parking in Grange Paddocks, a non-charging car park.

- 2.4 Visitors for meetings and members have access to seven spaces located at the Charringtons House office. These are for short stay and disabled customer use.

#### Vehicle Numbers

- 2.5 Currently there are 348 staff. Approximately 30 work at Charringtons House in Bishops' Stortford and 31 are 'home workers'. 75% of workers choose to drive to get to work (Source: Staff Survey December 2011) leaving an absolute maximum number of 215 staff that may drive to work at the Wallfields site. This includes full, part-time, remote and occasional home workers.
- 2.6 The Wallfields staff car park has 127 spaces so the maximum number of vehicles unable to park at the Wallfields site would be 88. It was estimated that the number of cars to be accommodated within the Hertford long stay car parks would be closer to 65 taking account of different working patterns, home and mobile working.
- 2.7 A survey of car park use by staff was undertaken on three separate occasions in December 2011. These counted 16, 8 and 6 vehicles with Council passes in the long and mixed use car parks in Hertford. This implies that many staff have opted to use uncontrolled on-street parking and increased the amount of ad-hoc home working (less than 3 days per week) when they have no rostered access to the Wallfields staff car park.
- 2.8 The review of the car parking provision in Hertford and occupancy levels presented to LJP and HRC in July 2011 determined that on a typical day the long stay and mixed use car parks have up to 239 empty car parking spaces, far in excess of the actual use of between 16 to 6 vehicles.

#### Bishops' Stortford

- 2.9 At present staff working in Bishops' Stortford can park in the free Grange Paddocks' car park. This will become a charging long-stay car park in the summer of 2012.
- 2.10 Charringtons House, has 7 associated parking bays, an insufficient number for use by rota. These bays are reserved for those with mobility difficulties, other special needs, a disability and those visiting for short meetings. The bays are managed by the landlord.

2.11 A maximum of 30 staff work in Charringtons House. As not all drive to work, an estimated maximum number of 20 vehicles would need to be accommodated in the Council's long stay and mixed use car parks in Bishops' Stortford. Bishops' Stortford has 820 long stay car parking spaces.

#### Car Sharing

2.12 The Council is joining a regional car sharing scheme which includes business and local authorities which will give staff greater flexibility in identifying car sharing opportunities. Currently 13% of staff travel to work within a car sharing arrangement. This could be increased to 28%, an additional 27 staff, subject to support measures including guaranteed transport home in an emergency and preferential parking (Source: Staff Survey 2011).

2.13 As the Council implements more shared service working, extends mobile working and continues to restructure its services to reflect the strategic priorities identified by the Council, the number of employees and hence vehicles unable to park at the Wallfields site will continue to decrease.

#### Options

2.14 The main options for staff car parking with their potential impact on and associated risks were presented to LJP and HRC in July 2011. These are enclosed again as Essential Reference Paper B. These remain the key policy choices:

- 1) Ongoing provision of a free car parking benefit to all staff that ensures short-term parking is not disadvantaged consisting of:
  - Hertford - Rostered access to Wallfields staff car park, supplemented by long-stay designated parking in car parks.
  - Members – provision of free car parking in the Wallfields visitor car park.
  - Stortford - parking in long-stay designated parking in car parks.
- 2) Grant free car parking only to those parking at Wallfields on a rota basis. Those unable to park at Wallfields would pay to park in the Council's car parks. Under this option the staff working in Bishops' Stortford would also have to pay for their parking.

- 3) Grant parking provision at a reduced charge to all staff based on a work place parking levy, set lower than the full pay and display cost of parking. This would be equally payable whether staff are parked in the Wallfields car park or using one of the Councils pay and display car parks (in Hertford or Stortford). Funds generated by such a levy should be ring fenced to support transportation improvements including environmentally friendly solutions.

The risks and implications of these choices are provided in **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**.

## Equality

- 2.15 If the existing provision of free car parking is not maintained for all, additional administrative processes will be required to manage the car parking of employees. This will be required given the financial cost of not gaining a rostered place in the Wallfields car park to ensure individuals are not disadvantaged and to ensure fair, equitable and non-discriminatory access to the finite parking resource. This would include potential impacts on part-time workers, parents, flexible workers, and different grades of staff.
- 2.16 A decision to maintain free car parking only at the Wallfields site may lead to disproportionate impacts on part-time and flexible working arrangements. These are a key element of Council services' efficiency targets and allowing the consolidation of the Council to the Wallfields site, thereby achieving the savings from the closure of the Causeway offices and its extensive refurbishment costs.
- 2.17 A decision to maintain free parking only at the Wallfields staff car park would disproportionately impact staff based at Charringtons House as they would always have to pay for parking in Bishops' Stortford.
- 2.18 Should staff have to pay for parking, appropriate considerations for members would need to be made, particularly if a workplace levy is considered. This applies to Charringtons House as this is a short term visitor only car park for short term use/meetings at the site.

## Potential On Street Parking Issues

2.19 The Council has received no correspondence regarding staff parking and associated increases in congestion as a result of staff parking where traffic controls are not in place.

### 3.0 Recommendation

3.1 The Panel/Committee is invited to determine a policy for staff parking from the options presented in 2.14 and based on the findings detailed in the report.

### 4.0 Implications/Consultations

4.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

4.2 The 2011 Staff Survey included questions on car parking provision to assist in the formulation of this report.

4.3 A number of staff comments regarding the provision of car parking facilities have been provided as background information in **Essential Reference Paper C**.

4.4 The Union have commented on the current temporary arrangements:

'As we understand it the current car parking arrangements in Wallfields are working well, with no adverse reactions to the free parking from the public or local businesses. Therefore we see no reason why any changes need to be made.

As we now have a similar situation in Bishops Stortford, with Grange Paddocks becoming a pay and display car park in March we believe the council should now be issuing permits to park for free, to staffs who work in Charringtons House. Thus ensuring all employees, receive comparable benefits.'

### Background Papers

CMT Paper 29' March 2011 –

Car Parking Procedure

Local Joint Panel/Human Resources Committee 13 July –

Staff Car Parking Arrangements

CMT 11 October –

Update on Staff and Member Parking Arrangements

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## ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'A'

<p>Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/ Objectives:</p>	<p><b>Prosperity - Improving the economic and social opportunities available to our communities</b></p> <p><b>Objective:</b> Continue the streamlining of back office functions in order to ensure an efficient and sustainable Council for the future</p> <p>The consolidation of offices and accommodation of staff to a single site was a key part of reducing the Council's on-going costs, car parking provision is a related requirement.</p>
<p>Consultation:</p>	<p>The C3W Staff User Group meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup> June included a workshop to review the options, risks and impacts included in this report.</p> <p>A meeting was held with Unison on 22<sup>nd</sup> June to brief them on the production of the paper and to enable them to draw a paper together for a special Local Joint Panel meeting.</p> <p>Staff views are presented in Essential Reference Paper C.</p> <p>The Union have commented on the operation of the current scheme in 3.4 of the report.</p>
<p>Legal:</p>	<p>Free parking, whilst not contractual, may be considered as an implied term in the contracts of employment of those who have had the benefit for many years through custom and practice. Any change to this provision may therefore constitute a breach of existing contracts and be subject to challenge requiring consultation and agreement in the change to work conditions or termination of contracts and re-engagement.</p>
<p>Financial:</p>	<p>There is no cost to the Council of providing a benefit of free car parking to its staff within the Council's own car parks.</p> <p>The Council will not lose income from displaced motorists as a result of staff parking free of charge within its own car parks as the levels of empty spaces more than accommodate the potential volume of parking. The actual impact being much less than estimated.</p> <p>If a benefit of free parking remains in place there are no taxation implications of this benefit as it is not assigned to an individual.</p> <p>There will be a small administrative cost in order to facilitate staff parking within the Council's car parks in the form of permit issue and control. This can be minimised by utilising electronic monitoring methods removing the need for passes.</p>
<p>Human Resource:</p>	<p>The implications of no longer affording free parking to Council employees will be a departure from current practice. It may be considered that the provision of free parking is custom and practice and therefore be subject to formal challenge should any change be made.</p>

	<p>During a period of uncertainty and change removal of access to free parking will reduce staff motivation and may result in industrial action.</p> <p>Not maintaining access to free parking to staff will be seen as a further reduction in pay following the recent terms and conditions changes.</p>
<p><b>Risk Management:</b></p>	<p>The public perception of access to free parking to staff within our car parks is anticipated to be negative, when other workers in the town pay to park. However, actual staff use will be below 20 spaces in Hertford and Stortford on any day.</p> <p>An increase in uncontrolled parking by staff in residential areas may give rise to additional bad press exposure and demands for residents permit zones. As highlighted in Essential Reference Paper B, the experience of other Councils is that staff will seek to park on unrestricted roads following the introduction of any blanket charging. Based on the experience of East Lincolnshire Council the Council could reasonable expect up to 100 staff seeking parking in the town at no charge.</p> <p>The risks of losing car parking income through staff use of car parks is identified as extremely low, as the occupancy figures show capacity in excess of that required to accommodate the minor staff use.</p> <p>Advice has been provided from the Council's Risk Management Team that it can be preferable that the Council should not specify a single location for parking. By ensuring members of staff have choice over location (for example in the event of adverse weather conditions) the staff member can make the best decision for themselves regarding where to park, like any other motorist.</p>