

ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER C

Staff Comments Staff Car Parking

Essential Use

If charges are introduced should be a discount for those staff who are obliged by either their job description or terms of service to have a car available as part of their role

Placing a levy on parking automatically disadvantages members of staff who are required to bring a vehicle with them to work to carry out their duties. The car user allowances are intended to reimburse staff for the full cost of providing a car to perform their role. If a parking charge is placed upon these staff, it could be strongly argued that the car allowances would need to be increased to compensate for this unavoidable additional motoring cost. At present a parking permit is issued to staff required to use their vehicle for work to avoid them being subjected to parking charges around the district.

Members of staff who do not require a vehicle during the working day for council business have the choice of paying to park, or finding alternatives such as public transport and car sharing. There is additional inconvenience, but the cost is hypothetically avoidable for these staff if they wish to find alternatives.

I am required to use my car as part of my duties and the time that will be incurred in finding/travelling to and from a parking space would not, in my view, appear to be the most appropriate use of my time.

An issue I would like to raise is that, we have to be on 24 hour stand by call for dangerous structures. In normal working hours we have to respond to the police and fire service and be in attendance within 1 hour. It is vital we access our cars immediately.

My comments regarding charging for car parking at Wallfields specifically target those who are required to provide a vehicle for the purposes of executing their role.

In the event the Council decide to charge for parking on site, these members of staff would face an unavoidable charge. As the Council have a car user allowance scheme to reimburse these members of staff for the cost of providing a vehicle for the purposes of executing their role, it would seem only fair that any additional unavoidable car parking charges incurred at Wallfields or Gascoyne Way be reimbursed as part of the essential car user allowance.

I think that it would be unfair to charge staff for parking, especially staff that have no choice and have to use a car for their job.

This intimates that charges for car parking will be implemented at some stage, on top of all the other cuts to pay and conditions. I feel particularly resistant to the idea of having to pay to park, when I am expected to provide a car, to use to carry out work for the Council - especially when that car is The Councils' own (lease) car!

My contract of employment requires me to have a car available for the business of the Council, so I may appear to be a soft target. However I can find no requirement in my contract to park that vehicle within a given distance of Wallfields. Accordingly if a charging system were to be introduced I would have to seriously consider joining the number of colleagues scouring the local streets for parking, despite the annoyance to local residents. This would, of course, mean that my frequent site visits would be less efficient, given the time it would take to travel to and from my car. I don't like to appear so negative but that is, I believe, the reality of the situation.

Equality Impact

A 'no charge' at Hertford car parks option would avoid all the many and varied problems that will otherwise ensue.

Charges could have a disproportionate effect on part-timers where their working arrangements are dictated either by needs of their service or for childcare or other responsibilities so that they work over more than two or three days (e.g. those that work school hours over five days but are only contracted for 18.5 hours a week). When added to the length of time walking from car park they may be having to pay almost as much, or indeed as much, as a full timer to park.

Those working part time will suffer yet again. For example, if you pay per day or even per week to park in Gascoyne Way for example, it works out cheaper than paying by hour. Yet for many the reason they work part time is to accommodate school hours. They will never be able to benefit from the economies of scale of cheaper long stay parking. This also applies for those who may be able to leave the car at home or car-share but on some occasions will need to drive in.

In the event of an annual fee this should take account of annual leave and be pro-rata for part-time staff

Charging could detrimentally effect service flexibility where part timers are prepared to come in for extra meetings etc on days not normally worked but will be disinclined to do so if they have to pay for extra parking.

Charging could have a huge effect on those on a low salary.

If following the review, it is decided to implement charges for staff parking; surely such charges would have to apply to the rostered places in the staff car

park at Wallfields as well as public car parks? Staff who do not have designated spaces should not be placed at a disadvantage to others.

I know the staff who work at Wallfields have parking in the car park there or a pass at Gascoyne Way, but do not have to pay. I know that we can park at Grange Paddocks at the moment it is free but surely for the amount of people who work at Charringtons House (some who are part time like me) why can't we have a pass for one of the long stay car parks? Either Northgate End or Link Road which are both Long Stay car parks and which are never full! It is unfair if staff at Wallfields are getting free car parking and staff at Charringtons will have to pay!!

I also believe that if some staff are to have free parking in the Wallfields car park, then all remaining staff should have a free parking permit if they have to park in one of the Council's Pay & Display car parks. I understand that staff having to park in Gascoyne Way car park are issued with a free pass, and assume that the same kind of pass will be issued to staff at Charringtons House for use in Grange Paddocks once that becomes chargeable from 1st April - perhaps this could be raised at the committee meeting.

Custom and Practice Issues

This is terms and conditions issue, all other changes to terms and conditions have had a manner of compensation or a protection period. A period of consultation at least should occur. Free parking should be provided for staff until the decisions made are equitable and agreed.

Has the equitability of this proposal been considered in the light of all the other pay cuts, costs, freezes and loss of benefits? At the end of the T&C 3 year period I will have lost circa £3,000 worth of benefits. Is this reasonable?

Impact in Time

If staff have to spend 30 minutes at least of their own time travelling to and from external parking spaces, for some staff this may mean having to work an additional day or half day to work their hours within an inflexible time constraint, this is at their own cost.

Impact on Staff

I am strongly opposed to being charged for car parking. It would represent a considerable cut in salary at a time when morale is very low anyway. Also, if we have the number of empty parking spaces suggested, surely it would be cost neutral to allow those of us who do not get granted a place at East Herts, to be given a free parking space in the town. I don't envisage a public outcry over this. There are many instances of other large organisations that have free staff parking.

Whilst I appreciate that the Council does have to make savings and consider opportunities to generate income, the charging of staff to park, especially where Officers vehicles are required for Council duties, is not appropriate in this case, and will significantly impact on the moral of staff.

In response to the possibility of charging staff to park, I consider this to be yet another kick in the teeth for us workers who have already undergone significant changes and cuts with regard to reactions to changes in the economy.

It is my opinion that in these difficult times the Council should be looking for ways to empower their staff and not encourage changes that would drag down morale.

Many feel that this would really be the 'final straw' on top of the other financial cutbacks imposed by the Council i.e. loss of the 5% local award, loss of retention payments etc.

When looking at the impact of the current policy on the parties, emphasis should be placed on the accumulative effect of staff hardships already incurred in recent times - specifically, the real loss of earnings that all members of staff have suffered. I do not think that we should be asked to contribute any more.

Following on from the detrimental effects of the new terms and conditions, the imposition of parking charges for staff and the resultant effective salary cut would cause serious resentment amongst our staff for their employer. Managers like us are left with the task of maintaining service delivery with a demoralised workforce.

At a personal level I believe that free parking is a basic provision and I'd be angry to see it taken away.

Free parking is going to be a particular issue with staff as we are already all struggling financially. This feels just like a way for the council to cut our wages – any money generated from charging staff would be new money – they have never earned any money from our car park and Gascoyne way is never full so for the council coffers this would be extra but for staff this will have a severe impact. This could work out at about £1000 a year and as a lot of staff are probably earning less than £25k a year this is a major cut to their wages.

I note the possibility of free car-parking being scrapped for staff, and feel that this would be a very poor move by the members, as it would demoralise the staff even further. Staff are already on a pay freeze, and so to expect them to then have to find another £85-£90 per month in order to park would make life very difficult for many members of staff.

As I have quite a distance to travel to and from work each day, I do find the additional time to walk across to the car park a little frustrating sometimes. I am often juggling finishing something off at work with trying to get home by a certain time. I regularly work more than my 37 hours, often prioritising work

over evening activities. Again though, at least being able to park in one place means that I know how long to allow to reach my car. The alternative of “walking the streets” to wherever I am able to leave it would be far more difficult.

In relation to withdrawal of a number of benefits recently for me and other staff across the Council, such as essential user allowance withdrawal, time and a half reverting to straight time for the periods work between 6.30pm to 10.30pm on weekdays - it would be helpful to reflect the dedication and hard work of the staff and members by not charging for car parking.

Given the pay freeze staff have endured for the last two years, the loss of parking could be seen as an extra impact on staff wages

Local Impact

If I am asked to pay to park at the Council Officers or other car parks I, amongst other colleagues, will have to consider finding alternative on-street parking in the vicinity of the Office which, I am sure, will have an impact on local roads.

I believe that if these charges were to be introduced, the only outcome will be the workers scouring the streets for free parking spaces, much to the annoyance of local residence.

If charges are imposed, staff will probably park elsewhere – people will always find a way to do this. This would seriously delay our response time and lay the council open to yet more public criticism.

If they are worried about the impact on the local residents they should consider the impact of more staff parking in side roads because staff can not afford to pay for the car park (or wont). There will be lot more congestion locally with staff looking for areas to park. In the 80's there was a major problem with County Hall when they suddenly didn't have enough parking and they started parking in side streets – this led to yellow lines in the local area but then meant staff went further a field looking for free parking, it didn't stop the problem just increased the area affected.

I use the Gascoyne Way car park when necessary and find it extremely useful. Whilst I recognise that many people now have to pay to park if they work in a town centre, I will always try to find a free space somewhere if I can. Human nature and financial pressure require no less! Providing a Council parking facility free of charge avoids the inevitable congestion to the residential areas near our offices where I and others would otherwise park.

My observations are (under the current arrangements) that there are still always plenty of spaces available for the public.

The council office car park is unsuitable to be opened to the public, therefore the impact of this policy is likely to be considered in terms of the use of the

public car parks by those staff not allocated an office car park space on any given day. Car park occupancy in the long stay car parks in Hertford are such that the staff using those car parks are easily accommodated without displacing paying customers (for example, the top floor of Gascoyne Way car park is rarely more than 30% full, with lower floor long stay areas operating at an approximate average of 75 - 80% occupancy)

Councillor Parking

Will the visitor car park (or certain spaces within it) be subject to the parking levy? The reason for asking is that under the new arrangements some of the spaces in the visitor car park will be used by councillors. It would be manifestly unfair, that if the "staff car park" was subject to the levy but councillors didn't have to pay (at least a pay and display charge). Furthermore, will the visitor car park become pay and display to bring it into line with all other council car parks?

If we have to pay everyone should pay (Councillors included).