

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 13 JULY 2011

REPORT BY PROGRAMME HEAD

STAFF CAR PARKING ARRANGEMENTS

WARD(S) AFFECTED:

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**Purpose/Summary of Report**

- To request that the HR Committee consider the available options for staff car parking in Hertford and select the most appropriate solution.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

<b>(A)</b>	<b>That the HR Committee review the alternatives for staff parking arrangements and select the most appropriate solution.</b>
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1.0 Background

- 1.1 The project to consolidate Council staff on to the Wallfields site in Hertford will be completed at the end of August. Given the anticipated number of staff travelling to Hertford by car, the car parking facilities on site will be insufficient to cater for everyone's needs.
- 1.2 A report to Corporate Management Team on 29<sup>th</sup> March agreed the basis upon which the finite car parking spaces at Wallfields were to be fairly allocated across services for staff use. The car park will be zoned and spaces allocated to services based on the number of occupied desks. Broadly this results in one space for every two occupied desks. The Wallfields car park has 127 spaces, supplemented by the visitor car park with 30 spaces. Each Head of Service is responsible for the allocation of their spaces on a fair and non-discriminatory basis. The agreed procedure is attached as Essential Reference Paper B. This procedure takes into consideration provision of parking for staff with mobility difficulties, special needs or a disability.

## 2.0 Report

### Current Position

2.1 Currently all staff can take advantage of no charge car parking when attending work in designated car parks. In Wallfields, the current level of office occupancy allows all staff to gain entry and use the car park. In Bishops' Stortford staff can take advantage of no charge parking at Grange Paddocks. These provisions, whilst not contractual, are considered as custom and practice. Any change to this provision will therefore be subject to challenge requiring consultation and agreement in the change to work conditions.

### Vehicle Numbers

2.2 Currently there are 348 Council employees. Approximately 40 staff will work at Charringtons House in Bishops' Stortford and 31 staff are permanent 'home workers'. 80% of workers drive to work (Source: Staff Travel Survey October 2006) so there is a maximum of 221 staff who might seek car parking at any one time at Wallfields. This includes full, part-time, remote and occasional home workers.

2.3 Given the Wallfields car park can accommodate 127 cars, the maximum number of vehicles unable to park at the Wallfields site would be 94. The actual number will be lower due to annual leave, sickness absence, car sharing, workers that use alternative transport and different working patterns. It is estimated that the number of cars to be accommodated outside the Wallfields car park would be closer to 65 taking account of these factors.

2.4 The Council is about to join a regional car sharing scheme which includes businesses and local authorities which will give staff greater flexibility in identifying car sharing opportunities. This may further reduce the demand for staff car parking.

2.5 As the Council implements more shared service working, extends mobile/remote 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 may well decrease.

2.6 A review of the public car parking provision in Hertford (shown as Essential Reference Paper C) indicates that on a typical day the

long stay and mixed use car parks have about 239 empty car parking spaces. This will be reduced in peak periods but is far in excess of the estimated 65 spaces needed to accommodate all staff if they drove to work. There is therefore no cost in allowing staff to park without charge in Gascoyne Way or London Road on work days and no current users would be impacted.

## Bishops' Stortford

- 2.7 At present staff working in Bishops' Stortford can park at Grange Paddocks, which is currently no charge for all. Grange Paddocks will become a charging long-stay car park from April 2012. The decision regarding the basis upon which car parking is available to Council staff will therefore also apply in Bishops' Stortford. There is no basis on which to judge whether permitting staff to use this car park without charge would displace other users with a potential loss of income to the Council.
- 2.8 At Charringtons House the Council has seven associated parking bays. Unlike Hertford, the number is insufficient for use by rota. These spaces are designated purely as for those with mobility difficulties, special needs or a disability and those visiting the premises for short meetings. The parking operates on the same basis as the Hertford visitor car park.

## Main Options

- 2.9 Essential Reference Paper D details three main options for staff car parking with the potential impact on staff and associated risks:
- Ongoing provision of a no charge car parking benefit to all staff when attending work in designated car parks, whether at Wallfields, one of the Council's car parks in Hertford which are long stay or mixed use (London Road, Gascoyne Way) or in the Grange Paddocks long stay car park in Bishops' Stortford.
  - Grant no charge 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.
  - Grant parking provision at a reduced charge to all staff when attending work. This would be equally payable whether staff are parked in the Wallfields car park or using Gascoyne Way, London Road or Grange Paddocks. Funds generated by such a

levy might be ring fenced to support transportation improvements including environmentally friendly solutions.

## Staff Morale

- 2.10 During a period of change and uncertainty removal of access to no charge car parking will impact on morale.

All employees have recently received revised terms and conditions which include a reduction in the local award from 5% to 2% linked to national pay awards and removal of the car lease scheme.

Given inflation and the current pay freeze in local government, wages are reducing in real terms. The government proposals on pensions represent a further reduction in remuneration.

Some staff are also impacted by relocating to Wallfields office and are subject to increased time and cost to relocate. The Disturbance Allowance Policy supports this change.

A full consultation process will need to be carried out with staff and Unison should a change be made to the current custom and practice of no charge parking.

## Delivery of Changing the Way We Work Benefits

- 2.11 A decision to maintain no charge car parking only at the Wallfields site may lead to disproportionate impacts on Charringtons House staff, part-time and flexible working arrangements. These are key to the Council delivering its 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.

## Potential on Street Parking Issues/Public view

- 2.12 Should a decision to require staff to pay for car parking in part or full be made, it must be noted that staff will seek opportunities within both towns to park for free. This may cause congestion in residential areas where traffic controls are not in place.
- 2.13 The public perception of access to no charge parking for staff within our car parks is anticipated to be negative, when other users must pay to park.

- 2.14 An increase in uncontrolled parking by staff in residential areas may give rise to adverse commentary and demands for residents permit zones.

### Essential Car Use

- 2.15 A number of staff are designated as essential car users or drive Council owned vans. The Council would lose productive time of these employees if they are required to park in an alternative location other than the Wallfields car park, approximately 10-15 minutes every time access to a vehicle is required. Allocating no charge spaces at Wallfields to these users would impact on those required to park elsewhere, particularly if they were required to pay in part or full for their car parking.

### Member Parking

- 2.16 Member parking for Executive members is designated within the zoning of the Wallfields car park. Other members are able to utilise these spaces when they are free. The Wallfields visitors' car park has 20 parking spaces for visitors during business hours, 10 of which will be available for member/staff use. These spaces are for short term parking only. The seven spaces at Charringtons House will operate on the same basis for members.
- 2.17 Should staff have to pay for parking, appropriate considerations may need to be made for members unable to use the Wallfields car park, particularly if a workplace levy is considered. This applies to Charringtons House in Bishops' Stortford as well as this is a short-term visitor only car park for short term use/meetings at the site.

## 3.0 Implications/Consultations

- 3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.
- 3.2 Additional comments received from staff regarding the alternative options are enclosed as Essential Reference Paper E for consideration by the Local Joint Panel.

### Background Papers

Contact Member:

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## ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'A'

<p>Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/ Objectives:</p>	<p><b>Fit for purpose, services fit for you</b>  <i>Deliver customer focused services by maintaining and developing a well managed and publicly accountable organisation.</i></p>
<p>Consultation:</p>	<p>Heads of Service have been consulted on the alternative options and paper.</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>Legal:</p>	<p>There are implied contractual implications, through custom and practice. Full consultation would need to be carried out with Unison and staff if current practice is changed.</p>
<p>Financial:</p>	<p>There is no cost to the Council of providing a benefit of no charge car parking to its staff within the Council's own car parks.</p> <p>Subject to the reservations noted in the report concerning Grange Paddocks, the Council will not lose income from displaced motorists as a result of staff parking no charge within its own car parks..</p> <p>If a benefit of no charge 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 an administrative cost in order to facilitate staff parking within the Council's car parks at reduced cost. The burden will be greater if the Wallfields parking is 'no charge' and overflow parking is charged. This can be minimised by utilising electronic monitoring methods removing the needs for passes. A nominal cost of registration may be put forward as a cost to the user.</p>
<p>Human Resource:</p>	<p>Removal of no charge parking for Council employees would be a departure from current practice. It is considered that the provision of no charge parking is custom and practice and therefore would be subject to formal challenge should any change be made.</p> <p>During a period of uncertainty and change removal of access to no charge parking will reduce staff motivation and may result in industrial action.</p> <p>Not maintaining access to no charge parking to staff will be seen</p>

	<p>as a further reduction in pay following the recent terms and conditions changes.</p>
<b>Risk Management:</b>	<p>The public perception of access to no charge parking to staff within our car parks is anticipated to be negative.</p> <p>An increase in uncontrolled parking by staff in residential areas may give rise to adverse commentary and demands for residents permit zones.</p> <p>The risks of inconvenience to other users through staff use of car parks is very low as the occupancy figures show capacity in excess of that required to accommodate even the most generous estimates of staff use.</p>