

Cabinet

8 December 2020

Parking Services Phase 1 Project Report

For Decision

Portfolio Holder: Cllr R Bryan, Highways, Travel and Environment

Local Councillor(s): All Councillors

Executive Director: J Sellgren, Executive Director of Place

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Report Status: Public

Recommendation:

This report recommends that the Cabinet approves the following changes to parking charges/charging hours:

- A. Increase the all-day charge from £2 to £4 in Lyme Regis and West Bay without delay.
- B. Extend morning charges in Purbeck to 8am without delay.
- C. Implementation of Sunday charging without delay.
- D. Extend the evening charges to 8pm without delay.

Reason for Recommendation:

- A. The current charge has not been reviewed since 2014; hence the charge has not risen with inflation and does not meet the current costs. The areas are tourist destinations; therefore, the impact of the charge will primarily be on tourists and not on Dorset Council residents. There are car parks in the area that charge per hour, thus parking can be achieved locally at a lower cost for those not wanting to pay an all-day rate.
- B. Purbeck is the only part of Dorset Council that parking charges current start at 10am, this is inequitable and there is no indication of a need for charges to

start later in this area. The 10am charging period appears to be the legacy of an assumption that locals in Purbeck shop early in the morning before tourists arrive, but this could be true of other popular tourist destination areas and therefore now needs to align with all car parking in Dorset area.

- C. Introducing Sunday charging across the Dorset Council area brings parity and consistency. Further research and impact analysis will be undertaken in phase 2 of the transformation project.
- D. Extending evening charges across the Dorset Council area aligns Dorset Council with neighbouring local authorities (some of whom charge for 24 hours). Further research and impact analysis will be undertaken in phase 2 of the transformation project.

1. Executive Summary

During the Shaping Dorset Programme, the Interim Section 151 Officer requested a paper on aligning off-street parking across the Dorset Council area, this decision was deferred for day one implementation. The parking service now needs to deliver on the first phase of the original alignment plans as a first step to convergence, enabling future transformation. The scope of the Phase 1 Project consists of:

Item	Income 2019/20	Estimated Additional Income*	Cost (for project delivery costs and running cost)	Estimated Additional Income less Costs	Total Revenue for Parking Services	Rationale
Increase 'all day' charges in long stay car parks in Lyme Regis and West Bay from £2 all day to £4 all day	£457,000	£365,600	£3,000	£362,600	£819,600	To address inconsistencies in charging compared with other areas of Dorset Council
Introduce charging to towns where parking is currently free on Sundays	£0	£119,000	£23,000	£96,000	£96,000	To bring parity and consistency to Sunday parking across Dorset Council Car Parks
Extend evening charges from 6pm-8pm in all car parks. For Purbeck to extend charging from 8am - 8pm (currently charges from 10am)	£0	Minimum of £407,200	Minimum of £77,000	Minimum of £330,200	£330,200	To bring parity and consistency to evening parking across all Dorset Council car parks
Totals	£457,000	£891,800	£103,000	£788,800	£1,245,800	

* These figures are approximate and are based on assumptions, forecasting in parking is problematic because it is affected by weather and seasonal variations

1.1 Dorset Council Legal Duty

Legal advice was sought to confirm if the proposed changes needed to go to public consultation. The advice was that, as per Section 35 of Road Traffic Regulation Act the Council may make an order about parking spaces, including charges for use. Section 35C of the Act gives the Council the power to vary parking charges by notice. Sunday charging, extending charging until 8pm and increasing charges at Lyme and West Bay are parking charge changes, and so can be achieved on notice of intention.

1.2 Notification to Town and Parish Councils

A notification letter was emailed to Town and Parish Councils with a request for queries and comments to be received within four weeks. A number of queries were received and have been answered.

There were 215 letters sent via email to the Town and Parish Councils, from that there were 15 comments received from either the Councils or from others through the Councils. The comments can be seen in Appendix 1 (full text) and Appendix 2 (analysed text).

The main perceived concerns raised were with regards to the impact on local business/high streets (19.4% of comments) and the lack of consultation (16.7% of comments). There were other perceived concerns, these can be seen in Appendix 2.

Due to the comments being from 15 out of 215 Town and Parish Councils, it cannot be used to reflect the views of all Town and Parish Councils.

1.3 Public Response

Although there was not a request for public feedback, comments were received through:

- Dorset Council news website (47 comments).
- Dorset Council Facebook page (186 comments).
- Dorset Echo website (151 comments).
- Direct emails to Elizabeth Murray (8 comments).

The total comments received were 395 (this equates to 0.13% of the population of Dorset Council that are over 16 years old). The perceived issues raised in the comments were:

- The negative impact on local businesses (35.1%).
- General complaints about the Council (13.2%).
- Displacement caused by people parking in roads without charges (7.8%).
- The negative impact on evening business/leisure (6.8%).
- The negative impact on residents (5.4%).
- Lack of consultation on the proposed changes (4.4%).

There were other perceived issues, these can be seen in Appendix 2.

There were supportive comments regarding the change, these amounted to 5.4% of the total comments.

Due to the comments being from 0.13% of the population, it cannot be used to reflect the views of all of Dorset Council residents.

1.4 West Dorset Liberal Democrats Petition

In early November a petition was started by the West Dorset Liberal Democrats Party asking for Dorset Council to withdraw the plans to extend evening and Sunday parking charges. The number of signatures for that petition is not known at the time of writing this report.

1.5 Shoppers' Permits

It was originally planned to withdraw the West Dorset Shoppers' Permits as part of this project, however a consultation was started to investigate the potential to extend the permit across the Dorset Council area rather than to withdraw it. The consultation is ongoing, early signs and feedback is telling us that it has been well received.

2. Financial Implications

The projected income from the original proposed changes is £788,800. The calculations for the projected income are reserved, reflecting a reduction of people choosing to park in the car parks.

3. Well-being and Health Implications

There is an intuitive risk that motorists may choose to drive around in search of cheaper/free parking but there is no empirical evidence to support this and could be true of any car park charges. If this happened, it could cause an increase in pollution hence impact on people's health. Although the report writer has not identified any other well-being and health implications, further implications have been raised by the public and Town and Parish Councils; these can be seen in Appendix 2.

4. Climate implications

Research has shown that reducing the number of cars on the road help the climate by reducing harmful emissions. Recommendations A and B possibly support the climate, as the public may be persuaded to use green transport rather than using their vehicles and pay for parking. However, should drivers choose to drive around in search for cheaper/free parking then it could cause an increase in pollution thus have a negative impact on climate.

5. Other Implications

Although the report writer has not identified any other implications from the recommendations in this report, some have been raised by the public and Town and Parish Councils. These can be seen in Appendix 2.

6. Risk Assessment

A full risk assessment has been undertaken. All risks are low.

7. Equalities Impact Assessment

A full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for this project and can be viewed in Appendix 3. The assessment found that there were no negative impacts on Dorset Council residents' protected characteristics.

8. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Responses from or through the Town and Parish Councils.

Appendix 2 - Response Analysis.

Appendix 3 – Equalities Impact Assessment

Appendix 4 – extract minute of Place and Resources Committee (to follow)

9. Background Papers

There are no background papers for this recommendation.

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.

Responses from or through the Town and Parish Councils

- **Bridport Business Chamber**

This is a totally unacceptable increase in parking charges and in bringing in charging between 6pm and 8pm and on Sundays. It is also a completely inappropriate time to bring in these increases.

On behalf of the Business Chamber and all the businesses in Bridport, we are absolutely appalled. Please reconsider this irresponsible, inconsiderate proposal. This sends the message that there is no empathy from Dorset Council regarding the significant issues facing the local business community.

Quite frankly, we are horrified!

While we understand that a review of parking was underway before COVID-19 struck, it seems that no account has been taken of the toll on business that lockdown and social distancing measures have taken since March 2020.

Many, many businesses as well as Dorset Council have seen revenues hit dramatically – many businesses may not survive.

While so many people are putting so much effort into making towns like Bridport thrive despite the difficulties, it is astonishing that one councillor should see fit to approve these measures, without any consultation and without even the courtesy of informing local ward councillors before the announcement.

Bringing in evening and Sunday charges in Bridport will certainly affect business, particularly in the hospitality sector. There will also be a very significant cost to Dorset Council in policing these additional hours.

We are aware that parking in Bridport is perhaps the number one issue to be dealt with to allow business growth. Making these proposed changes at this time will do nothing to help and will certainly make it more difficult for local business to survive these difficult times.

I strongly urge the Council to reconsider.

- **Dorchester Town Council**

I imagine this may not be the first email you will receive about upcoming changes to parking charges.

Nick from the Access group has raised the following query:

"What is proposed for disabled parking? I have a pass that was originally issued by WDDC because my vehicle is tax exempt and I am receipt of the higher level of pip for mobility. W and P DC don't recognise this, so I have to pay to park there?"

Can you tell us if the needs of people with disabilities have been considered - and what the changes will mean for people who have previously had parking permits?

- **Monsignor Keith Mitchell, Parish Priest, Bridport Catholic Parish**

It has been brought to our attention that from the New Year, it is proposed to bring in Sunday parking charges for the Bridport Town Centre car parks. Whilst we fully understand the need for increased revenue at the present time, I wonder whether I might share the concern of myself and some of our parishioners with you?

The Catholic Church is in Victoria Grove and we only have two very small car parks with a combined capacity of about 12 parking spaces. We have a large number of elderly parishioners, most of whom depend on Wykes Court car park, in Rax Lane in order to attend Mass at 10am on Sundays. On the whole, it is church attendees who are about the only users of the car park on a Sunday morning and possibly, some car users who attend the Baptist Church, also in Victoria Grove. Not to have the free use of the Wykes Court car park might lead to more congestion in an already congested Victoria Grove causing distress to local residents and possible obstructions by parishioners looking for free parking spaces there.

We would be most grateful if you would consider charging only from 12noon onwards on a Sunday thus allowing free parking for worshippers and less congestion in the residential roads around us.

Thank you for your and colleagues time in considering this request.

- **Holwell Parish Council**

It seems we walk again into a position that an operational matter, which as a fact has an outcome having a wider economic effect, (ie fewer people will park and use shopping) going against its classification as "operational".

The longer period for charging is a direct increase taken on users' annual basis of total parking costs.

Our residents have to travel to shop and so parking charges are to the forefront as is the ease of paying from them – despite in Sherborne Waitrose free parking and Sainsbury at 50p.

Dorchester has been taken off the shopping trip for many especially after M&S demise.

Sherborne's shopping supply has decreased as has the footfall.

- **Shaftesbury Chamber of Commerce**

We are alarmed to hear of proposed changes to Shaftesbury's car parking without any local consultation. It is our view that parking cannot be determined on a countywide basis as each town has its own unique challenges.

As a small tourist town limited by its unique topography, lack of car parking has always been an issue in Shaftesbury, especially since we lost the old cattle market site.

Whilst we appreciate the financial challenges that Dorset Council are facing, finding a remedy to those should not be at the expense of small-town centres. We are trying to build our Sunday and evening economy and one positive has been that parking is free. It is a huge disappointment to hear that you intend to extend charging to 8pm and on Sundays. This will be a blow to many of our members especially those in the struggling hospitality sector.

We ask you to reconsider or, at the very least, consult with us and our Town Councillors before implementing any changes.

- **Bridport Town Council**

Thank you for your email. I will table the proposals for a Town Council committee meeting on 26 October so that we can provide formal feedback. The four-week period does not allow for the matter to be tabled for our next Full Council meeting on 17 November which is disappointing.

I should add that I have already received several complaints from members about the lack of discussion about the proposals before a public announcement. We have a good operational working relationship with the Parking Team and have worked closely with Paul Hutton on COVID-19 matters in recent months, so it is disappointing that we have not been engaged before now on changes to parking charges. In addition, the Town Council runs two car parks in Bridport and have traditionally allied our charges to yours. It would seem sensible to involve us from that perspective. We are also working with Dorset Council on an Access & Movement Study for Bridport town centre, and parking charges will I am sure be an issue for consideration in setting out future plans.

I gather from a discussion with a Dorset Council ward member today that the proposals were only advised to them this morning. I am told also that they did not receive the email below from you, inviting comments within four weeks. Bearing in mind Dorset Council's stated intention that its members to be the 'key link' between the Council and local communities, it is rather unfortunate that I find myself giving information to them of which they were not aware.

I appreciate the need to address the shortfall in funding and the fact that some charges have not been reviewed for several years, and I do want to be helpful in encouraging town councillors to engage constructively. I do feel however that my task is made much more difficult when the first they hear of it is via a public announcement.

I am sorry for sounding rather negative, but this reflects the ear-bending I have received so far today. I have also been asked a few questions:

- Have the changes been approved by Dorset Council members? If not, what is the process for finalising the proposals?

- Have the changes been assessed against Dorset Council's transport and economic strategies to determine the impact on town centres and on tourist destinations, and on travel preferences?
- Can any member of the public and/or community organisation submit comments to you in response to the invitation below?
- Is it intended that Sunday charging will also apply to on-street parking?

I would also ask whether the period for comments can be extended so that the changes can be considered by all town councillors at their Full Council meeting on 17 November (7pm).

- **Dorset Council Co-Member Wareham Ward**

Why no consultation with local Members & T&PC's on this as we used to do with our District/Borough Councils? This is step too far... In the Wareham Ward this affects 5 Car Parks and will mean a huge step change for elderly locals who have always relied on the 9 am – 10 am free slot for their shopping, and it will affect the younger people who will have to pay to go to the Pub before 8pm. Sunday free parking was always TABOO for those wishing to visit at weekends and for church service folk too. The Retailers and businesses have been hit already – please don't kick them when they are down!

I am very upset at this, as it affects the whole community, without anyone having an input.

SHAME

Please explain... Thank you

- **Dorchester Town Council Member**

Please see the communication below concerning proposed parking changes. I am absolutely amazed that there appears to have been no consultation either with local members or Town/Parish Councils concerning these quite significant changes to car parking policy.

I can quite understand about the need for common policies but to just impose them without any meaningful consultation is surely against the principles of how we want to be running Dorset Council.

I would very much like to request that you intervene to stop these changes taking place until a proper consultation process can be undertaken.

- **Dorchester Town Council**

As the successor body to West Dorset District Council, unless you have changed their policy, the Town Council would expect you to follow their long-standing policy of consulting Town and Parish Councils before implementing changes to car parking charges. Your e-mail this morning makes no reference to consultation, only a

consultation on shoppers permits and the legal notices that you are required to introduce shortly before implementing the changes.

I need to report to my Council on the subject. Should I report to the Council that Dorset Council does not intend to consult affected towns in the long observed tradition, or was your e-mail misphrased and you actually meant it as the start of a consultation process with Town Councils on the main charges?

I would add that there is a significant advantage to consultation with local Councils on the impact of changes to charging; in Dorchester for example my Councillors have a wealth of experience of the issues that will occupy your In Box should you not do so, some of which may help explain the local idiosyncrasies that no doubt exist countywide.

I would be grateful for an early response on this issue. I would also welcome confirmation that local Dorset Council ward members were consulted before the change was implemented.

Please do not take this response as an indication of opposition to the changes that are proposed. At this stage I do not know the views of my Members, or indeed yours, as consultation hasn't taken place.

- **Councillor Dorchester East**

I have a press release today saying there will changes to car parking costs doesn't mention the whole of DC area but talks about increases and longer charging hours and paying on Sundays.

Well where did this all come from? Previously we as WDDC councillors discussed a car parking policy that would work its way through the Council cycle of meetings. I assumed that all other Districts would previously do the same. Consultation was undertaken, especially with Town & Parish councils.

I will only talk about my ward. Due to the fact of the delays to the residents parking schemes, which we were told would be on hold due to the need to undertake a parking strategy for Dorchester which we would ALL be involved with --- The residents will be up in arms they already cannot get back into their streets to park anywhere near home as people working in the town refuse to pay parking charges and park in those streets. [Our staff included].

I am not saying the fees do not need to change or I am against change, but I am against, as a member, not being consulted- involved - not being told the long awaited Dorchester parking strategy has gone out the window and the residents of the Victorian streets near the station have patiently waited for their residents parking scheme and they will have to put up with workers in the town taking up the places the minute they move their car.

I have seen a letter sent to our Town Clerk here in Dorchester so good idea Town Councils know but why were all members not told?

The press release does not mention Weymouth or Purbeck so maybe they are not affected so didn't need to be involved but certainly should have been told and been involved.

- **Stourton Caundle Parish Council**

I am concerned with the suggestion that car park charges will apply until 8:00pm and on Sundays. At a time when the hospitality industry is on its knees, discouraging evening activity in town centres seems perverse.

At a practical level, I spent my entire working life as a traffic and transport planner, and I have observed (and been involved in) many parking schemes. Evening and Sunday charging simply does not work unless on-street parking is similarly restricted. This begs the question, does the Council intend to change on-street parking regulations as well, in order to match these changes? I believe that in Sherborne, for example, on-street spaces are free after 6:00pm and on Sundays, and single yellow lines generally only apply for the same periods. Without a complete change to regulations, I foresee a lot of parking simply shifting to the street. This is certainly what occurred when West Dorset tried to extend charging into the evening a few years ago and visitors to the Digby Hall simply avoided the car park there.

- **Weymouth Town Council**

My Councillors have now had opportunity to discuss the changes and asked me to send up the following comments to you:

- Members are deeply concerned about the impact of the changes to evening parking charges on local businesses. Business are struggling to recover and survive and this will have a negative impact on them.
- Parking charges in Weymouth should remain the same until the rest of Dorset catches up, or that if parking charges are not increased in other areas then Weymouth's parking charges should be brought in line with others.
- Concern was raised regarding the environmental impact of fossil fuelled vehicles, and that use of public transport should be encouraged. However, it was acknowledged that this is difficult given the current pandemic as public transport is running at a reduced capacity.
- It was highlighted that most Weymouth car parks are located in the most deprived areas of the town and many residents use the car parks as they cannot park on the street. If residents have to pay until 8pm then this will obviously have a financial implication for them. Secondly, a lot of health workers visit the area to support Weymouth's most vulnerable residents. They do not have parking permits and would therefore have to pay to park.
- The suggestion of a shopper's permit is generally supported by Members.
- If additional funds are going to be raised from car parks, then the money raised should be spent on improving transport and bus services as well as repairing roads. Local residents cannot travel into the town centre in the evening as most bus services have been cancelled. Weymouth park and ride should be a priority for funding.

- **Gillingham Town Council**

On Monday 2nd November the General Purposes Committee of Gillingham Town Council considered your email of 16th October 2020 and concerns were raised as a result of which I am instructed to forward this letter by way of a response.

In common with many towns Gillingham`s High Street is suffering from the economic downturn with many businesses having closed with the threat of more closing. There are currently six retail outlets vacant, one small office premises and of course the former Co-op store. There are three charity shops.

Both the Council and Gillingham`s Town Team are giving urgent consideration as to how businesses can be encouraged to invest in the High Street. There is a recurring reference to the issue of parking and the wish to encourage shoppers to visit the High Street and not just the large supermarkets, Waitrose, Asda, Lidl, Iceland and Aldi, which each have their own car park and which are free to park for at least ninety minutes. The car parks which are under the control of Dorset Council are of course not free and consequently offer no incentive to potential shoppers in the High Street. The charges act as a disincentive. The charges simply add to the cost of shopping.

It is the case that the more shoppers and visitors there are to the High Street, the more attractive it would become to potential businesses wishing to invest in the High Street. This Council feels strongly that the imposition of any parking charges, let alone increased charges, is detrimental to the integrity and financial wellbeing of the High Street.

It is understood that Dorset Council considers that car park charges are not consistent or fair. This Council considers that there should not be a broad-brush approach. Consideration should be given to each town. What might be appropriate in Dorchester may not be appropriate in Gillingham. It is not fair to increase the financial burden of residents who are already suffering financially. They are being discouraged from frequenting and supporting an already ailing High Street.

It is accepted that the car park charges bring an income to Dorset Council but how much is the income which is generated from Gillingham`s car parks?

What is the cost of maintaining the car parks?

How much would the income be reduced if there were free parking on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays?

It is noted that there is a consultation on the issue of the Shoppers Permit which is most welcome. Why has there been no similar consultation on the issue of parking charges?

Your e-mail talks of "fairness", given the impact on the pockets of our residents and on the High Street surely it is "fair" to consult, to provide the information and reasoning for the decision. It is not too late to consult the Town and Parish Councils affected by this decision. Dorset Council would benefit from the goodwill generated by consultation even at this late stage and you are urged to do a u turn and consult.

If there is an unwillingness to consult on this occasion, then please confirm that Gillingham Town Council will be consulted PRIOR to any further proposed changes regarding car park terms and conditions

As a separate issue, Gillingham has not used its allocation of five free parking days this year as there have been no events this year because of Covid. Can the five free days be offered for the 4th, 5th, 11th, 12th December and 19th December? This would give a timely boost to the High Street and the Town generally following the current lockdown.

- **Blandford Forum Town Council**

Dorset Council Car Park Changes

Blandford Forum Town Council is opposed to the changes in the hours for parking charges to be levied from January 2021 for the following reasons:

Business confidence and the evening economy

Following the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown and now yet further restrictions for at least a month, the town's early evening economy has and will struggle to regain economic traction – even with free parking during lockdown and latterly after 6pm. Businesses as diverse as takeaways, cafes, in town convenience stores, restaurants and public houses are all affected. We believe that the imposition of parking charges up to 8pm will continue to erode business confidence and consumer footfall, perhaps to an irreversible 'tipping point'. Furthermore, the right to be able to choose any of the Saturdays in December as free parking days will have a negative effect on businesses in town leading up to the busy Christmas period. There is insufficient free on and off-street parking to accommodate the needs of those who might wish to visit the town at this time.

Traffic flow and overnight parking

Free parking during the full Covid-19 lockdown was widely welcomed in Blandford (post lockdown Town Centre Survey) and resulted in fewer people seeking one of the limited number of free on-street parking spaces when they came into town. Over 50% of all respondents to the recent Town Centre Survey stated that they wished to see less traffic in the town centre - it would appear self-evident that these proposals would see an increase in traffic in the early evening as motorists cruise around looking for any free on-street parking available rather than pay in the car parks. This in turn would result in yet more slow-moving lines of traffic through town and a consequent increase in damaging pollution.

There were hopes that the chargeable period might be reduced to encourage residents unable to find parking near their homes (of which there are large numbers) when they returned from work to use the car parks more overnight. The current free car park in the Stour Meadows is insufficient to accommodate these needs and too distant for many commuters living in the town centre and the older Victorian and Edwardian parts of the town. This also applies to Sunday parking. Because public

transport has been cut in recent years leaving many local people unable to get to and from work in need of using their own cars.

It is Blandford Forum's wish to increase the footfall, for the town centre and local amenities on Sundays thereby supporting the businesses that open on a Sunday and also supporting local churches. Under these proposals, church attendees will need to pay for parking.

Cllr. Byron Quayle, one of Blandford's Dorset Council Councillors has spent a considerable amount of time and effort on a Blandford Parking Review which has led to firm recommendations. It seems a gross oversight to ignore not only this but the B+ NP (Blandford Plus Neighbourhood Plan which supports measures to increase town centre footfall) and the work and findings of our town centre regeneration group, where 80% of respondents are seeking pedestrianisation of the Market Place.

Resident Parking Permits

Blandford and other towns in North Dorset do not have the attractions of the Jurassic Coast and therefore the tourist footfall is far less than the coast and the coastal towns. Even if the proposed parking permits were free (which is unlikely and raises other issues of affordability during the pandemic) the proposals would almost certainly lead to a diminution of outside visitors to the town – particularly on a Sunday, but also in the evenings with more local 'hinterland' visitors. We do not therefore believe that parking permits is the solution. Rather keeping the status quo, and if necessary increasing parking charges modestly when the economic circumstances allow, would be the way forward. We are confident, however, that many local people would be in favour of the status quo on parking times, whilst welcoming the opportunity to buy a parking permit for limited daytime parking.

Summary

In 2012, Mary Portas recommended a diminution or removal of town centre parking charges in order to save and perhaps increase the economic viability of town centre businesses. The current proposals are not only contrary to her findings and recommendations but indeed ignore the philosophy and principles upon which they are based.

The proposals are also contrary to the spirit of the National Planning Policy Framework (July 2018).

86g) 'support diversification and changes of use where town centres are in decline, as part of a clear strategy for their future, while avoiding the unnecessary loss of facilities that are important for meeting the community's day-to-day needs.' And 'respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries'.

We would submit that this proposal palpably, albeit indirectly, does not support diversification in our town centre but actually makes the town a less attractive proposition for new evening and Sunday economy businesses; this is a loss of a facility which helps to meet our communities day to day needs and is completely the wrong way to respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries brought about by Covid-19.

This appears to be a decision based purely upon finances. It also appears to be a move for administrative convenience rather than the economic benefit of Dorset towns. It ignores the wishes of local communities, and is therefore undemocratic, will harm Dorset's recovery, especially during a global pandemic; will drive yet more residents to the free edge of town supermarket car parks and will ultimately be counterproductive. It amounts to an extra tax on the motorists of Blandford and Dorset at a time when thousands of local and Dorset residents can ill afford it.

Rather than ask the question 'How can we meet this shortfall in funding?' The question perhaps should be: 'How can DC support Dorset town centres to be economically viable into the future (particularly post Covid-19)'; 'How will this support the climate change debate?', and 'How can fair parking charges can be part of that vision?'

- **Sturminster Newton Town Council**

My Council has asked that I respond to your notice regarding the proposed changes to parking charges. Some time ago the council successfully secured the agreement to have the time for charges in the Station Road Car Park changed to be between 9-3 to allow parents to park and take children to school pre 9am and after 3pm. This reduced the number of parents dropping off their children and collecting them later in the day at the William Barnes School. This had the benefit of:

- Securing a safe route to school for children attending the William Barnes School.
- Reducing the volume of cars in the pinch points and the hazard of cars parking and dropping off in Bridge Street.
- Free parking before 9 and after 3pm at the Station Road car park allowed parents to catch buses at the Bus Park in Station Road, taking children to schools & colleges out of the town.

The Council wishes to draw your attention to the impact of the proposed changes which will reduce the number of visitors to Sturminster Newton who take advantage of the free parking to access amenities including the railway. The increased footfall supports the economic development of the town. Sturminster Newton population profile is low income and has a higher than average elderly population. The proposed changes to the charging regime will have a disproportionately high impact on these groups. The council recognises the need to review charges periodically, however, there cannot be any comparison between Sturminster with Shaftesbury, Gillingham or Blandford or any of the other coastal towns. Due to the size of the population Sturminster does not have leading high street brands, limited facilities and the scope to attract further footfall in the town. We also note that the increased revenue will be used in part to create electric vehicle charging points, unfortunately we have been told that the town is not eligible for the scheme.

The Council has used the five free allocated parking days effectively in recent years and had appreciated the ability to deploy them to best effect and is very disappointed with the proposed changes.

The Council recognises the merits of shoppers permits in some of the larger destination towns such as Dorchester and Weymouth but does not see the implementation as beneficial to Sturminster Newton.

Response Analysis

Analysis of Town/Parish Councils Comments	Number of comments	%
Charities parking	1	3.7
Church goers	2	7.4
Disabled	1	3.7
Displacement, narrow roads, traffic flow	2	5.6
Elderly people	2	5.6
Green travel should be promoted	1	3.7
Impact on evening leisure	3	8.3
Impact on local business/high streets inc. Sunday	7	19.4
Lack of consultation	6	16.7
Lack of local public transport	1	3.7
Low income area	1	2.8
Positive comment regarding shoppers' permit	1	3.7
Negative comment regarding shoppers' permit	2	5.6
Residents parking	3	8.3
Suggest free Christmas parking	1	3.7
Timing of changes (Covid)	1	3.7
Weymouth is more expensive than anywhere else	1	3.7

Analysis of Public Comments	Number of comments	%
Church goers	3	1.5
Disabled	1	0.5
Displacement, narrow roads, traffic flow	16	7.8
Female CEOs working alone at night	1	0.5
General complaints about the council	27	13.2
Green travel should be promoted	1	0.5
Impact on evening leisure	14	6.8
Impact on local business/high streets inc. Sunday	72	35.1
Lack of consultation	9	4.4
Lack of enforcement after 6pm and overnight	4	2.0
Lack of maintenance in car parks	3	1.5
Lack of parking for new developments	1	0.5
Lack of local public transport	3	1.5
Positive comment regarding the charge changes	11	5.4
Positive comment regarding shoppers' permit	2	1.0
Previous evening and Sunday charges dropped	1	0.5
Residents parking	11	5.4
Standardise costs at a lower rate	1	0.5
Suggest free Christmas parking	1	0.5

Suggest free parking/at weekends/first or second hour	5	2.4
Suggest a transferrable ticket	1	0.5
The change will cause a reduced or no extra income	5	2.4
Timing of changes (Covid)	3	1.5
Weymouth is more expensive than anywhere else	7	3.4
Visitors to residents/carers/mental health	2	1.0

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Initial Information

Name:	Paul Hutton Emily Hallett Elizabeth Murray
Job Title:	Service Manager for Parking Project Manager
Email address:	p.hutton@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk e.hallett@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Elizabeth.murray@dorsetcc.gov.uk
Members of the assessment team:	Paul Hutton, Emily Hallett, Susan Ward-Rice
Date assessment started:	06/07/2020
Date of completion:	28/09/2020
Version Number:	V0.2 09/09/2020

Part 1: Background Information

Is this (please tick or expand the box to explain)

Existing	
Changing, updating or revision	/
New or proposed	
Other	

Is this (please tick or expand the box to explain)

Internal (employees only)	
External (residents, communities, partners)	/
Both of the above	

What is the name of your policy, strategy, project or service being assessed?

Phase 1 Car Park Charging Alignment

What is the policy, strategy, project or service designed to do? (include the aims, purpose and intended outcomes of the policy)

The outcome of this project is to deliver greater consistency for our customers, from aligned charging and opening times across the Dorset Council car park estate. The change in charging will bring in additional income to the parking service which will be used in accordance to Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984 section 122 which stipulates the statutory purpose of the imposition of traffic regulation orders, including the imposition of charges, is: “to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic (including pedestrians) and the provision of suitable and adequate parking facilities on and off the highway...”.

The scope of the project is as follows:

Change	Rationale
1. To align parking charges in car parks on Sundays, specifically, to introduce charging towns where parking is currently free on Sundays	To bring parity and consistency to Sunday parking across all Dorset Council Car Parks.
2. To extend evening charges from 6pm-8pm in all car parks. For Purbeck to extend charging from 8am - 8pm (currently charges from 10am)	To bring parity and consistency to evening parking across all Dorset Council car parks.
3. To stop the issue of shoppers permits across Dorset Council	These permits are only offered in West Dorset and not other former Dorset District Council areas and therefore their proposed withdrawal allows Dorset Council not to differentiate between its former District areas.
4. To increase the ‘all day’ parking charges in the long stay car parks in Lyme Regis, West Bay and Charmouth from £2 all day to £4 all day	To address inconsistencies in parking charging prices at these locations compared with other areas of the Dorset Council.

What is the background or context to the proposal?

Since the formation of Dorset Council, aligning parking charges has been a key priority to bring consistency across the former council areas. This project was put on hold due to Covid-19 parking changes.

The portfolio holder, Cllr Ray Bryan, has requested this project be reinstated to kick start the harmonisation of charges. Consultation on these proposals will take place during September/October with a decision being made at committee in

October or November.

The future aim for parking charges is to create a two-tiered structure across the Dorset Council parking estate. This project is the first phase of the wider programme of harmonisation.

This equalities impact assessment will be used for the whole harmonisation programme and updated as harmonisation phases finish, before a new phase commences. The parking service now needs to deliver on most of the original harmonisation plans as a first step to convergence, enabling future transformation.

Part 2: Gathering information

What sources of data, information, evidence and research was used to inform you about the people your proposal will have an impact on?

There is currently no data available for evaluating the impact of increased charges for 1, 2, 4. These car parks are open to the general public, all of the impacted car parks have Blue Badge bays.

Data of the location of places of worship in relation to car parks has been obtained and analysed.

The West Dorset Shoppers Permit database contains personal information on customers, which includes names, addresses, telephone numbers, however detail about customers protected characteristics are not known.

Car park charges have been compared to similar locations across the UK. Staff contracts already span the extension to evening and Sundays.

What did this data, information, evidence and research tell you?

Of the 66 places of worship analysed, the results are as follows:

3%	High impact - will be charged over £2 for 2 hours
30%	Med impact - will be charged under £2 for 2 hours
61%	No impact - has own parking/can park for free
6%	Place of worship closed

Although there is some cost impact on visitors to places of worship, this does not prevent them from attending services and activities.

Is further information needed to help inform this proposal?

Part 3: Engagement and Consultation

What engagement or consultation has taken place as part of this proposal?

Engagement will take place on changes 1, 2 and 4 with the following groups:
Towns and Parish Councils.

Local Business Improvement Districts (BIDs).

This engagement will be undertaken by the Parking Manager and Project Lead during September 2020.

Public consultation will take place on change 3 in September/October 2020, it will be undertaken by the Consultation Lead with support from the Project Lead.

How will the outcome of consultation be fed back to those who you consulted with?

Comments and any objections from the engagement for change 1, 2 and 4 will be collated into a report and will go to committee for final sign-off in October/November 2020.

The outcome of the public consultation on change 3 will be collated into a report and will go to committee for final sign-off in November/December 2020.

Please refer to the Equality Impact Assessment Guidance before completing this section.

Not every proposal will require an EqIA. If you decide that your proposal does **not** require an EqIA, it is important to show that you have given this adequate consideration. The data and research that you have used to inform you about the people who will be affected by the policy should enable you to make this decision and whether you need to continue with the EqIA.

Please tick the appropriate option:

An EqIA is required (please continue to Part 4 of this document)	Yes
An EqIA is not required (please complete the box below)	

This policy, strategy, project or service does not require an EqIA because:

Name: Elizabeth Murray Job Title: Strategic Parking Projects Officer

Date: 09/09/2020

Please send a copy of this document to [Diversity & Inclusion Officer](#)

Next Steps:

- The EqIA will be reviewed by Business Intelligence & Communications and if in agreement, your EqIA will be signed off.
- If not, we will get in touch to chat further about the EqIA, to get a better understanding.

Part 4: Analysing the impact

Who does the service, strategy, policy, project or change impact?

- If your strategy, policy, project or service contains options you may wish to consider providing an assessment for each option. Please cut and paste the template accordingly.

For each protected characteristic please choose from the following options:

- Please note in some cases more than one impact may apply – in this case please state all relevant options and explain in the ‘Please provide details’ box.

Positive Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the proposal eliminates discrimination, advances equality of opportunity and/or fosters good relations with protected groups.
Negative Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protected characteristic group(s) could be disadvantaged or discriminated against
Neutral Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No change/ no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups
Unclear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision.

Age:	<i>Neutral</i>
What age bracket does this affect?	None
Please provide details:	There is no data held on the number of car park users who fall into each protected category, so we cannot establish the scale of this impact for different groups. The changes will affect all residents, visitors and businesses in the affected car parks.

Disability: (including physical, mental, sensory and progressive conditions)	<i>Unclear and Neutral Impact</i>
Does this affect a specific disability group?	None
Please provide details:	Disability exemption permits/ blue badge permits are not being changed therefore there is no impact to this group. Disabled bays are available in all car parks and the issuing of relevant permits for those with disabilities will not change at the present time.

Gender Reassignment & Gender Identity:	<i>Neutral Impact</i>
Please provide details:	There is no data held on the number of car park users who fall into each protected category, so we cannot establish the scale of this impact for different groups. The changes will affect all residents, visitors and businesses in the affected car parks.

Pregnancy and maternity:	<i>Neutral Impact</i>
Please provide details:	There is no data held on the number of car park users who fall into each protected category, so we cannot establish the scale of this impact for different groups. The changes will affect all residents, visitors and businesses in the affected car parks.

Race and Ethnicity:	<i>Neutral Impact</i>
Please provide details:	There is no data held on the number of car park users who fall into each protected category, so we cannot establish the scale of this impact for different groups. The changes will affect all residents, visitors and businesses in the affected car parks.

Religion or belief:	<i>Possible Negative Impact</i>
Please provide details:	Car parks near places of worship that currently do not charge on a Sunday will be impacted. This may therefore impact any visitors to those car parks who are attending a place of worship who used to park for free. Included within this report is a full breakdown of affected places of worship.

Sexual orientation:	<i>Neutral Impact</i>
Please provide details:	There is no data held on the number of car park users who fall into each protected category, so we cannot establish the scale of this impact for different groups. The changes will affect all residents, visitors and businesses in the affected car parks.

Sex (consider both men and women):	<i>Neutral Impact</i>
Please provide details:	There is no data held on the number of car park users who fall into each protected category, so we cannot establish the scale of this impact for different groups. The changes will affect all residents, visitors and businesses in the affected car parks.

Marriage or civil partnership:	<i>Neutral Impact</i>
Please provide details:	There is no data held on the number of car park users who fall into each protected category, so we cannot establish the scale of this impact for different groups. The changes will affect all residents, visitors and businesses in the affected car parks.

Carers:	<i>Neutral Impact</i>
Please provide details:	Carers who are supporting the disabled will not be affected as they are no changes to the blue badge permits or Carers permits.
Rural isolation:	<i>Possible Negative Impact</i>
Please provide details:	The changes could impact those living in rural villages outside of towns as an increase in parking could deter them from visiting.
Single parent families:	<i>Neutral Impact</i>
Please provide details:	There is no data held on the number of car park users who fall into each protected category, so we cannot establish the scale of this impact for different groups. The changes will affect all residents, visitors and businesses in the affected car parks.
Social & economic deprivation:	<i>Possible Negative Impact</i>
Please provide details:	The changes could deter those from using car parks due to the increase in costs.
Armed Forces communities	<i>Neutral Impact</i>
Please provide details:	There is no data held on the number of car park users who fall into each protected category, so we cannot establish the scale of this impact for different groups. The changes will affect all residents, visitors and businesses in the affected car parks.

Part 5: Action Plan

Provide actions for **positive**, **negative** and **unclear** impacts.

If you have identified any **negative** or **unclear** impacts, describe what adjustments will be made to remove or reduce the impacts, or if this is not possible provide justification for continuing with the proposal.

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by
Shoppers Permits	To consider an alternative permit that could benefit people living in the Dorset Council area.	Paul Hutton	October/ November 2020
Sunday Charging	Mapping of places of worship and car parks.	Susan Ward-Rice	July 2020
All changes	Communication with Parish/Town Councils and BIDs.	Paul Hutton	September 2020
No data on car park users	Surveys to be completed in car parks. Shoppers permit consultation to include Equality and Diversity questions.	Elizabeth Murray	March 2021

EqlA Sign Off

Officer completing this EqlA:	Elizabeth Murray, Paul Hutton	Date:	09/09/2020
Equality Lead:	Susan Ward-Rice	Date:	05/10/2020
Equality & Diversity Action Group Chair:	Bridget Downton	Date:	06/10/2020

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