

Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee

26 January 2023

Post implementation review of the Phase 2 Parking Charges Transformation Project

For Review and Consultation

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

Local Councillor(s): All

Executive Director: J Sellgren, Executive Director of Place

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Report Status: Public

Brief Summary:

In November 2021 Cabinet approved the proposed Parking Charging Strategy, which included four recommendations for change:

1. Align the day rate in the main tourist locations car parks during peak and low season
2. Align charges in all other car parks (rural and town locations)
3. Align on-street parking charges in areas that already have on-street pay & display
4. Withdraw all current car park permits and introduce a long stay and short stay car park permit for residents and workers in the Dorset Council area

Recommendation:

That the committee notes and comments on the review information provided in this report.

Reason for Recommendation:

This report provides a review of the impact of the changes to parking charges and gives information of further work that has been done in Parking Services, as requested by the Chair of Place & Resources Scrutiny committee.

1. Background

- 1.1 During the Shaping Dorset Programme, the Interim Section 151 Officer requested a paper on aligning off-street parking across the Dorset Council area. The aim of this was to bring parity and consistency to charges.
- 1.2 The first stage of the alignment was completed in April 2021. This included increasing the day rate in Lyme Regis and West Bay, extending the morning charges in Purbeck and implementing Sunday charging. These changes have been implemented without issue. There had been a plan to extend evening charging in car parks, but it was decided not to implement this due to the feedback received and covid economic recovery.
- 1.3 Prior to implementing the second phase of the tariff changes, Parking Services sought legal advice to ensure that the legal duty was met, and the legal process followed correctly.
- 1.4 One hundred and seventy-four Town and Parish Councils, all BIDs and Chambers of Commerce were notified and given the opportunity to feedback and influence the changes. Twenty-seven responses were received from Town and Parish Councils and one each from the BIDS and Chambers.
- 1.5 Although there was no legal duty to undertake public engagement, there were meetings with local stakeholders to provide updates and to receive feedback throughout the project. The public were also given the opportunity to email comments/queries to the Parking Transformation Team.
- 1.6 The Executive Director of Place confirmed the 'minded to' Recommendation to Cabinet, under delegated powers on behalf of the informal meeting of the Place and Resources Overview Committee.
- 1.7 Cabinet members indicated that their view was "minded to" support the proposals (as listed in the summary of this report) including the additional recommendation added by the portfolio holder:

1.7.1 That Purbeck Park car park at Nordon be moved from level 2 to the level 1 parking tariff.

2. **Phase 2 Parking Charges Transformation Review**

There are several themes that have arisen since the implementation of the recommended changes as part of the Phase 2 Charges work. The most commented on is with regards to the new Short Stay permit, but also about the car park restrictions.

2.1 Flexi and Short Stay Permits

The feedback shows that customers were finding the application process for the new permits difficult. To resolve this, the application process has been simplified. The MiPermit Flexi Stay application pages have been updated to have a separate button for residents and workers/businesses to make the criteria clearer. The application criteria has been reduced.

After feedback from stakeholders, all Dorset Council car parks have been included in the Short Stay permit, so there is no confusion for customers where they can use the permit. The MiPermit App has been simplified to make it more customer friendly.

A physical permit is available for customers who do not have access to a mobile or smart phone. MiPermit will be administering the paper version of the permits, which will make the customer journey smoother and quicker.

There has been new information received regarding the need for the Flexi Stay permit in car parks that they currently cannot be used in. Each town and car park has been reviewed and where it has been found that a change is necessary, it has either been done or is in the process of being changed along with the update of the Parking Order.

2.2 Weekly Permits and Hotel Scratch Cards

The removal of weekly permits and hotel Scratch Cards received some consternation from holiday makers and guest accommodation businesses. Discussions have taken place between businesses, Dorset Council officers and the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment to look for a solution. A multiple day ticket will be implemented; the tariff is the same as paying for each day individually but stops the need for customers to go back to the pay and display machine daily (if they do not have the parking payment app) to top-up payments.

2.3 Motorhome Parking

Comments have been received concerning the limited amount of 6m plus long motorhome parking in some of Dorset Council car parks. Work has already been completed to install a motorhome area in Portland and West Bay. Future towns to have 6m plus motorhome parking are Dorchester and Weymouth. It is expected that this will resolve the shortage of spaces and support the ability for visitors in larger vehicles to enjoy Dorset.

2.4 Maximum Stay

The maximum stay was reduced in some car parks to keep an availability of spaces for customers who need to make short trips to local shops etc. Feedback has been received that the maximum stay limits do not allow enough time to undertake certain activities, such as visiting the hairdresser or having lunch. Hence, the maximum stay of 2 hours is being increased to either 3 or 4 hours in all of Dorset Council car parks.

2.5 Phase 2 Parking Charges Transformation Myths

There has been feedback received regarding the size of vehicles permitted in different car parks. This is not a change that was implemented as part of the Phase 2 project; Dorset Council car parks have always had a 4.8m restriction on the length of vehicles to avoid oversized vehicles causing an obstruction and safety issue in car parks. Signage was amended to make the restriction clearer as part of the Phase 2 work, this has since been removed from most signs as it was causing confusion for customers.

There have been comments in relation to the removal of cash as a payment option for Dorset Council pay and display machines. This has not been done, cash payment is still available.

3. **Further Feedback**

There are two themes that have arisen from the Phase 2 Transformation that were not part of the project but should be reported on. These are pay and display machines and car park maintenance.

Within the last six months, nineteen new pay and display machines have been installed to test that they work in situ and meet requirements. All further pay & display machines will be replaced at a cost of £1.4m. Seventy machines will be ready for installation by the summer, with the remaining being installed in stages and completed by early 2024. The new

machines accept cash payment, as well as contactless bank card and Apple/Google Pay. A parking payment app will still be available.

A programme of maintenance works has commenced in Dorset Council car parks. This includes routine maintenance and inspection of all vegetation and trees, and the testing of car park lighting and reactive repairs. The condition of car park surfaces is to be assessed so that the cost of resurfacing can be estimated. This work will come together as an asset management plan.

4. Customer Transformation

Parking Services is focused on improving the customer journey. Work has commenced on transferring non-complex queries to Customer Services, so that Parking Services can concentrate on queries that need specialised knowledge, such as parking and highways legislation. This change has reduced the time that customer queries are answered and has enabled the office to reduce a backlog in responding to Penalty Charge Notice challenges.

A further review is due to start soon considering the full customer journey. Opportunities to work in a one council way will be explored, which in turn will free up time for more challenging customer needs. It is planned to work with customer services to provide a more joined up experience at the point of contact; enable the customer to self-serve via the customer account, improve information published to our customers, consolidate some of our technology and processes into a one council way of working.

5. Financial Implications

Parking Services has been monitoring parking usage since the implementation of the new charges. The number of customers parking does not appear to have reduced and revenue is as expected. Surplus revenue will be reinvested in parking and highways services as per the Traffic Management Act 2004 section 95 and the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 section 55.

6. Environmental Implications

It has been recognised that locations that see an increase in parking charges may show positive climate impact, as the public may be persuaded to use green transport rather than using their vehicles and pay for parking. It is planned to use some of the surplus revenue to support the

local public transport network. Any charging strategy review will be aligned with the Local Transport Plan, to ensure that it supports carbon reduction.

7. **Well-being and Health Implications**

There are no well-being and health implications to report.

8. **Other Implications**

There are no other implications to report.

9. **Risk Assessment**

9.1 The level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

10. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

8.1 A full Equalities Impact Assessment was completed prior to the Strategy implementation and is published on our website:

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/parking-charges-transformation-project-phase-2-eqia>

8.2 When customers do not have access to the internet or a mobile phone, a physical permit is available for their use in place of the Flexi Stay and Short Stay virtual permits.

8.3 Pay and Display machines have card and coin payment, thus they do not require customers to have a smart phone or internet connection.

11. **Appendices**

There are no appendices in this report.

12. **Background Papers**

12.1 Links are provided to the previous Overview and Cabinet reports and decisions:

- <https://moderngov.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/mgChooseDocPack.aspx?ID=5182>
- <https://moderngov.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=740>