

Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee

30 July 2024

Trial reduction in car park charges

For Review and Consultation

Cabinet Member and Portfolio:

Cllr J Andrews, Place Commissioned Services

Local Councillor(s):

All councillors

Executive Director:

Jan Britton, Executive Lead for Place

Report Author: Matthew Piles

Job Title: Corporate Director Economic Growth and Infrastructure

Tel: 01305 221336

Email: matthew.piles@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report Status: Public

Brief Summary: On 1st July 2024, a trial of reduced car park tariffs was commenced in three level 3 car parks. The process for undertaking this change has been requested to scrutiny for review by the Scrutiny Chair and Vice-Chair.

Recommendation: The committee are asked to review the information as shown in this report to give clarity to the decision process to trial a tariff reduction.

Reason for Recommendation: By request of Scrutiny Chair and Vice-Chair.

1. Report

1.1 Background

- i. From April 28th 2023, the parking tariffs for level 3 locations¹ were increased as part of our annual budgetary process.
- ii. At Full Council on 13th July 2023, a petition was submitted by Mr Sims-Duff asking to reduce the new charges to match those of other Dorset Council towns. Full Council agreed refer the debate about parking charges to Cabinet.
- iii. At Cabinet on 5th September 2023, the decision was made to review the charges at Scrutiny Committee at a later date in the 2023/2024 financial year.
- iv. On 3rd May 2024, following local elections, the new Council Leader Cllr Nick Ireland requested a review of the parking tariffs with an aim to support Dorset residents and businesses.
- v. An operational review paper was written, with options for change and the cost of each included.
- vi. From this review paper, the decision was made to implement a trial reduction of tariffs in three level 3 car parks: West Bay Road in West Bay, Charmouth Road in Lyme Regis and Swannery in Weymouth.
- vii. Legal advice was sought to ensure that the process for implementing the trial did not contravene Dorset Council Rules of Procedure.
- viii. On 18th June 2024 an Executive Decision notice detailing the trial was signed by Cllr Jon Andrews, Cabinet Member for Place Services.
- ix. On 1st July 2024, a trial of a reduced car park tariff was commenced in the three level 3 car parks as listed above.

¹ Charmouth (level 3 in summer only), Lyme Regis, Portland, West Bay, West Bexington (level 3 in summer only) and Weymouth.

1.2 Trial Review

The trial in 3 car parks will be evaluated using data from the parking machines and from customer surveys (advertised in the car parks). The machine data and customer feedback will be used to inform a complete review of parking charges following the trial.

2. **Legal**

- 2.1 The trial change to the tariff in three car parks was advised not to be a key decision and accordingly could be made by the relevant Cabinet member acting individually, without the need for a collective decision at a Cabinet meeting.

3. **Financial Implications**

- 3.1 If car park usage levels remain the same as 2023, then the budget impact is estimated to be an income reduction of £276k. This is based on the average customer spend in each of the three reduced car parks being deducted from the income received for the same period in 2023.
- 3.2 The reality is that price isn't the only factor that determines car park income. Car parking usage is also variable from one year to the next due to seasonal and weather patterns. An early spring and good summer can significantly increase income. Consequently the actual budget impact will be monitored throughout the year, and if necessary any income shortfall will be mitigated by a budget transfer of lead member allowances combined with other operational efficiencies from within the £104M Place Directorate budget.

4. **Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications**

- 4.1 The overall vision of the Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3) includes creating sustainable travel patterns which involves providing a greater choice of realistic alternatives to the car. There is also a focus on setting parking policies in town centres that consider the impact on local economies, and which encourage long stay commuters to use public transport alternatives.

- 4.2 The aim is to promote sustainable access to visitor attractions and developing transport facilities, such as the Park & Ride in Weymouth and Purbeck (park & train) in Corfe Castle.

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

The trial parking charges will help improve health and wellbeing by supporting the reduction of cost pressures for Dorset residents and businesses.

6. **Other Implications**

None

7. **Risk Assessment**

- 7.1 The risk that needs to be assessed is whether a reduction in parking charges will affect Parking Service's ability to cover the Highways costs that have been budgeted for this financial year.

HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

8. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

Not applicable

9. **Appendices**

Appendix One: Executive Decision Notice

10. **Background Papers**

None

Appendix One

Executive Decision Notice

Date of Decision	18 June 2024
Decision Maker	Cabinet Member for Place Services
Designation	Place commissioned services
Decision:	<p>To trial the reduction of charges in three car parks, one in each of the main coastal towns that have tier three charges. The charges will reduce from peak rates to off peak rates, from 1 July through to the 31 October 2024.</p> <p>1st April to 31st October (peak)</p> <p>Up to 30 minutes £1.50 Up to 1 hour £3 Up to 2 hours £4.50 Up to 3 hours £6 Up to 4 hours £7.50 Up to 10 hours £15</p> <p>1st November to 31st March (off peak)</p> <p>Up to 30 minutes £0.80 Up to 1 hour £1.50 Up to 2 hours £2.30 Up to 3 hours £3.30 Up to 4 hours £5.30 Up to 10 hours £9</p> <p>The car park affected are:- Swannery – Weymouth West Bay Road – West Bay Charmouth Road – Lyme Regis</p>

	<p>To extend the short stay permit in Dorset Council car parks from 2 to 3 hrs. Existing terms and conditions apply.</p>
<p>Reasons for the decision</p>	<p>The Council is trialling a reduction in charges following the concerns raised by local communities and businesses. It will help us to understand the impact that the increase in charges in 2023 has made to occupancy and length of stay in car parks. This increase was introduced during the 2023 budget setting process and implemented on 28 April 2023 as part of the fees and charges increases. It will also help make a case for using charging to drive behaviour, moving users from the town centre car parks to ones further out.</p> <p>This decision is taken in accordance with the delegated authority for Cabinet Members set out in Article 6 (and its Annex) within Dorset Council's constitution.</p> <p>The reason for this not being a key decision is that the financial impact is less than £500k for this financial year and it does not have a significant effect on multiple wards.</p>
<p>Alternative options considered and rejected</p>	<p>Reducing all tier three car parks to off peak prices – the financial implications of this would be beyond what could be covered in the financial year.</p> <p>Reducing all or some tier three car parks to tier two prices – this would mean a larger change to signs, orders and systems and would not be possible in a timely manner to make an impact on this summer.</p> <p>Reducing tier three car parks to 2022 prices - this would mean a larger change to signs, orders and systems and would not be possible in a timely manner to make an impact on this summer.</p>

	The rationale for the trial is to understand the impact through evidence of occupancy, impact on the highway network in addition to the financial impact set out in the budget implications.										
Consultees	<p>Matthew Piles, Corporate Director Economic Growth and Infrastructure</p> <p>Michael Westwood, Service Manager for Parking Services</p> <p>Local ward members for Melcombe Regis, Bridport, Lyme Regis and Charmouth.</p>										
Budget Implications	<p>Decrease in budget estimated to be £276,259.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="662 758 1102 1037"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>From 1st July Change</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Swannery</td> <td>144,133</td> </tr> <tr> <td>West Bay Road</td> <td>61,007</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Charmouth Road</td> <td>71,118</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>276,259</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The budgetary impact will be mitigated by savings identified elsewhere (£100k lead member allowances) and with the balance made up from income and operational efficiencies across the Place Directorate.</p> <p>This is an operational decision and is not a fundamental change to budget framework. The overall council budget will not be impacted. The decision is for a 'pilot' rather than a permanent change.</p>		From 1st July Change	Swannery	144,133	West Bay Road	61,007	Charmouth Road	71,118		276,259
	From 1st July Change										
Swannery	144,133										
West Bay Road	61,007										
Charmouth Road	71,118										
	276,259										
Legal Implications	N/A										
Any Conflict of Interest?	N/A										
Reference Documents	N/A										

Publication date: 18/06/2024