

DECISION TAKER: Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency, Councillor Kelsie Learney

REPORT TITLE: CAR PARKING – EVENING AND OVERNIGHT CHARGES.

9 OCTOBER 2023

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WARD(S): TOWN WARDS

PURPOSE

The Winchester Parking and Access strategy aims to:

- Manage parking through charging to ensure efficient parking and traffic management
- Use parking assets to the best advantage through pricing, promotion and information
- Maintain investment in parking and traffic management in order to support an efficient, effective and modern service
- Actively promote alternatives to driving into the centre – such as cycling, walking and bus services.

Charging is an important mechanism to achieving those ends – encouraging a continued reduction in carbon emissions through reducing city centre traffic and supporting healthier lifestyle choices – especially walking and cycling, while protecting sustainable growth.

To support these aims, overnight charging was part of a number of tariff changes introduced within the zone 1 city centre car parks in July 2023. This report summarises the results of targeted engagement undertaken to fine tune the charging options available to better support specific businesses and voluntary organisations in the city centre while still ensuring the overall purposes outlined above are achieved.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the introduction of an additional parking tariff for up to 1 hour between 7pm and 8am to be charged in line with the daytime rate (currently £1.80) be agreed in the zone 1 central car parks.
2. That a virtual volunteer parking permit system as set out in paragraphs 11.2 and 11.3 below be agreed for organisations that rely on volunteers to provide services to the community within the city centre.

IMPLICATIONS:

1 COUNCIL PLAN OUTCOME

- 1.1 In line with the council's aspirations for carbon neutrality and improved air quality, the introduction of overnight tariffs within the city centre are designed to promote a shift towards a reduction in parking in zone 1 while maintaining the current provision in zones 2 & 3 and encouraging active travel for improved health and wellbeing whilst not impacting on the importance of visitors and residents to the economy and well-being of the city centre.

2 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 Financial implications will be modelled and included in the medium term financial strategy once the affect of the new parking charges policy has been assessed. The cost of changing signage due to the recommendations set out in this paper will be managed within the existing budgets.
- 2.2 Due to the small number of volunteer organisations likely to apply for the new volunteer permit, there is likely to be a very small impact on parking income from this proposed change.
- 2.3 The net effect of the introduction of an additional 1-hour evening tariff is likely to be minimal but will be monitored.

3 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Any changes to the evening parking charge will be advertised in line with legislation and signed appropriately in affected car parks.

4 CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

- 4.1 Initial consultation for the tariff changes applied in July 2023, was undertaken through attendance at a meeting of the strategy group of the Hampshire chamber of commerce, which comprises the Winchester BID, and Hampshire Chamber of Commerce. Hampshire County Council and relevant Winchester City Council Members were also consulted.

- 4.2 Following the introduction of the new tariffs in July 2023, further targeted engagement has been undertaken with specific groups who have reportedly been affected by the introduction of overnight charges. These have been primarily those who run subscription-based businesses such as gym operators and those who rely on volunteers to provide services to the community.
- 4.3 This engagement was to organisations identified by working with the Winchester BID, in relation to the subscription-based businesses, and through Community First who act as the volunteer bureau for the district, in respect of the voluntary and community sector (VCSE) organisations. E-mail and follow up phone calls with surveys were sent to those who met the following criteria:
- a) Operating a subscription-based business within the city centre (parking zone 1) with opening times between 7pm and 8am
 - b) Organisations that use volunteers to deliver community services within Winchester city centre (parking zone 1) and operate between 7pm and 8am.
- 4.5 The results of this engagement are in Appendix A.

5 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 The Parking and Access Strategy has been designed to support growth in visitor numbers to Winchester City Centre, whilst also limiting impacts on air quality and carbon emissions due to the reduction of trips around the one-way system.
- 5.2 Decongesting the city centre in the evenings while still providing over 1,000 free parking opportunities in the evenings within a radius of 10 minutes walking distance to the city centre, provides a more pleasant environment for city centre users during the evening and enhances the appeal of active travel options.
- 5.3 The introduction of a number of volunteer permits and a 1-hour tariff will not be sufficient to undermine the efforts outlined above. The Council's aim remains to improve the environment of the city centre for the benefit and health of the community.

6 PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

- 6.1 Report DD64 contained the equalities impact assessment as Appendix 2. There is not significant change to proposals, so a further EIA is not required. A link to the EIA is provided in background documents at the end of this report.

7 RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 Risks are set out in the table below.

Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
Financial Exposure	Tariffs only implemented in central car parks, which significantly limits risk of financial impact	New season tickets and evening tariff, offer the opportunity to support parking investment to improve service further.
Exposure to challenge	We have engaged with Winchester BID, business owners, charity organisations and service providers over these options, and signage and legal notices would be in place before implementation	
Innovation		Volunteer permits allow for continued services to operate within the city centre.
Reputation	All changes will be well signed and advertised through the legal process in advance.	Potential to further enhance efforts to improve climate change impacts
Achievement of outcome	All changes will be monitored to assess impact on residents of and visitors to Winchester	Introduction of new charge to achieve policy objective whilst responding to specific issues within the context of the Council plan.
Community Support	Continue to listen to the needs of businesses and the community while balancing our commitment to reducing the impact of climate change, improving air quality, and reducing city centre congestion.	

8 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

8.1 The parking service aims to support several strategies, (including the Air Quality Action Plan, the Winchester Movement Strategy and the Parking and Access Strategy) and the overall objectives of the city council. The changes since COVID-19, our continued challenge with air quality and the increased emphasis on climate change have required amendments to how we manage parking across Winchester in order to continue offering a high-quality service.

9 Overnight charging in Winchester city centre

9.1 As part of the approval of the General Fund Budget (CAB3374) it was agreed that charging periods in Zone 1 (City Centre) car parks would be extended to include Sundays, Bank Holidays and overnight, to be developed following further engagement with businesses.

9.2 It was further agreed that an overnight charge (DD64 Decision Day 5TH June 2023) be introduced at a flat rate level equivalent to the 2 hour charge (£3.30) from July 2023 in the central car parks only, which would allow parking from 7pm to 8am in the morning, or for any period in between. There is only one payment required, so for example if a visitor paid to park for an hour at any point between 6pm and 6:59pm the fee calculation would take this into account and the ticket would automatically roll-over to 7:59am the following morning without any additional charge.

9.3 Sunday, evening, and bank holiday charges apply only in the central car parks (zone 1), including;

Zone 1 Car Parks	Spaces
Colebrook street	86
Cossack Lane	39
Friarsgate	72
Gladstone street	105
Guildhall Yard	43
Jewry Street	44
Middle Brook Street	142
St Peter's	165
Tower Street	515

9.4 Zone 2 Park and walk car parks and Zone 3 Park & Ride car parks, which are those close to the city centre but outside of the central parking area remain free when open on Sundays and overnight to support visitor access to the city without impacting upon air quality and carbon emissions. Durngate car park operated by the County Council also remains free in the evenings.

Zone 2 park and walk car parks: (all a 5-10 min walk into the city)	Spaces
Cattle Market car park	202

Chesil Car Park	616
Coach Park	100
River Park	182
Worthy Lane car park	150
Total	1250

Zone 3 park and ride car parks	Spaces
East Winchester (Barfield)	195
East Winchester (Barfield II)	276
East Winchester (St Catherine's)	583
Pitt	199
South Winchester	884
Total	2137

9.5 Following the implementation of the new tariffs the city council were contacted by a number of organisations to discuss some suggested improvements to the parking policy in order to mitigate the impact.

9.6 These suggested improvements led to further engagement on two areas: parking tariffs related to volunteer organisations which deliver core community support, and subscription-based businesses.

11. Volunteer organisations which deliver core community support

11.1 Where new evening charges have been introduced, further engagement has identified the introduction of a permit that Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations could apply for to allow free parking for core members of those organisations during the evenings. These could, for example, be organisations catering at an evening café for vulnerable people, for whom the cost of parking may put off their volunteers.

11.2 Our proposal, based on the results of the further engagement, summarised below is to offer a virtual volunteer permit on an application-only basis to charities/ voluntary organisations operating in the city centre in the evenings/overnight. Successful applicants would need to demonstrate that:

- a) the VCSE organisation directly provides services within central Winchester and zone 1 parking zone to the community that align with our Council Plan,
- b) The VCSE organisation is located in a position where the closest free parking is not practical and paying for closer parking is not affordable for volunteers in the evenings,
- c) they do not have sufficient existing parking available to their core volunteers,

- d) they will properly manage the operation of permits within their organisation.

11.3 Our survey suggested a small administration fee would be levied to offset the cost of producing the permits. Following feedback from consultees and a review of the best way of managing the permits we confirm that because these permits can be managed virtually and no paper permits will be issued, the council will offer these free of charge to qualifying organisations on the basis that volunteers park only in their approved car park(s) (closest to their operation) and that a maximum of 10 permits (or as agreed with the Parking Operations Manager) are in use for any one organisation per night. This will allow volunteers to continue to support the community and will reduce the burden of administration for both charities and the council.

11.4 The results of our engagement on this option of volunteer permits

- (i) 28 organisations met the criteria listed above to participate in this survey. Following multiple contacts and phone calls, 21 responses were received from 9 different organisations.
- (ii) Winchester BID responded to this survey as they have been contacted by charities that have raised concerns about the effects of evening charges on their volunteers / staff and the services they provide. The BID 'strongly agree' the proposal to create a volunteer permit and were pleased that the council were listening to community concerns.
- (iii) The result shows that there is strong support for the introduction of a volunteer permit with 90% agreeing with the proposal.

43% of respondents indicated that they would require multiple permits and would benefit from a bulk discount.
- (iv) The survey allowed respondents to leave comments on how they would like the volunteer permits to be administered. The council's responses to these comments are included in the appendix below. This has been accounted for in the recommendations and will be used to help determine how the volunteer permit is to be set up and managed.

11.5 An e- petition was raised by a community choir on the 2/7/2023 and ran to the 24/9/2023 asking for the overnight charges to be scrapped. The petition received 501 signatures and will be considered under the Council's procedure. The group also responded to the specific targeted consultation and their response is included in the appendix.

12 **The impact on subscription-based businesses**

12.1 Where the new evening charges have been introduced, some subscription-based businesses, of which the most common type is gym and fitness

operators, have expressed concern for those who may attend such a facility during the evenings and overnight past 7 pm.

- 12.2 Subscription-based businesses are different from the majority of commercial operations in Winchester as they potentially rely on individuals attending their facilities regularly during the early morning or early evening and paying in advance, rather than making occasional visits such as attending a restaurant or any other similar business.
- 12.3 The existing tariffs, set out on signage in car parks and on RingGo do not require the payment of both day and overnight tariffs, so visitors who arrive in Winchester between 6pm and 6:59pm do not have to pay any additional evening charge if they have paid the daytime charge up to 7pm.
- 12.4 Free parking is available at the following car parks in the evenings as little as 5 to 10 minute walk away from the city centre, however some customers may choose not to park further away or may find this unattractive for a variety of reasons. Blue Badge holders remain unaffected by overnight and evening charging and can still park in zone 1 car parks as before. It should be noted in the case of the Middlebrook Street barrier controlled car park that free disabled parking is available at the un-barriered section of the car park at Cossack Lane.

Zone 2 park and walk car parks: (all a 5-10 min walk into the city)	Spaces
Cattle Market car park	202
Chesil Car Park	616
Coach Park	100
River Park	182
Worthy Lane car park	150
Total	1250

- 12.5 Our proposal, based on the results of the further engagement, summarised below is to introduce an additional tariff period at city centre car parks that is available to all visitors who arrive after 7pm and remain for up to one hour. This new tariff period would be set at the same rate as the daily tariff charge (currently £1.80).
- 12.7 Results of consultation on the introduction of a 1-hour evening parking tariff:
- (v) Of the 6 subscription-based businesses we approached that met our criteria, 5 have completed the survey.
 - (vi) The result showed that there is support for the introduction of an additional 1-hour parking tariff with 60% of participants strongly agreeing the proposal.
 - (vii) Winchester BID completed the survey for this category as they represent multiple businesses within the city. The BID was supportive of the 1-hour tariff and 'strongly agreed' with the

proposal which they believed addressed the concerns raised by businesses within the area who were concerned about the potential effects of the overnight tariff.

- (viii) Those that strongly disagreed with the proposal (the remaining 40% of respondents) expressed a desire for evening parking charges to be removed entirely. The Council's policy is designed to reduce city centre traffic for the benefit of the environment and the community that lives and works within parking zone 1. There remains free parking nearby and to further support businesses, we have proposed an additional tariff that is equal to the normal daily charge and benefits those choosing to stay longer than 2 hours in the evening with an overall cost that is lower than that charged during the daytime.
- (ix) The survey provided participants with an opportunity to comment on the proposal and provide any ideas on how the council could continue to support city centre businesses. These comments and our responses are included in Appendix A.

13 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 13.1 The removal of any evening charge, or the extension of daytime charging further into the evening was considered and rejected as this would not align with the council's desire to maintain accessibility into the city centre, whilst reducing emissions and improve air quality within the city centre nor would it meet policy objectives.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

Previous Cabinet/Committee Reports or Cabinet Member Decisions:-

General Fund Budget Options & Medium Term Financial Strategy (Pages 9 - 44)
(CAB3374)

[Cabinet Public Documents Pack CAB3374](#)

5th June 2023 DD64 Winchester Residents off-street parking season tickets and evening parking charge rate. This includes the Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA).

[Document for Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency Decision Day, 05/06/2023 DD64](#)

Other Background Documents:-

Parking and Access Strategy - [CAB3224 - APDX 1 CAR PARKING STRATEGY 2020.pdf \(winchester.gov.uk\)](#)

APPENDICES: Appendix A – Parking charges consultation results