

Report of	Meeting	Date
Corporate Director (Neighbourhoods) (Introduced by the Executive Member for Business)	Executive Cabinet	8 January 2009

## **SHORT STAY CAR PARKS – RESPONSE TO PETITION/NOTICE OF MOTION**

### **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1 A notice of motion was considered at the Council meeting of 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2008 which expressly requested the Executive to respond to the petition previously received on 4 hour parking on short stay car parks.
- 2 Whilst the motion was not supported, a short life task group was convened to consider the issues and respond on the recommendation, as was approved at its meeting of the Executive Cabinet of the 4<sup>th</sup> September 2008 that a report is submitted to a future Executive Cabinet meeting regarding this matter.
- 3 A request had been received to consider the extension of the free parking currently afforded Blue Badge holders on Council car parks and this was also considered by members of the short life task group.

### **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 4 To reject the suggestion to extend parking to 4 hours on short stay car parks at a premium rate.
- 5 To reject the suggestion to relocate staff car parking from Hollinshead Street car park to Water Street car park and re-designate the Hollinshead Street car park to a long stay car park.
- 6 To re-designate the Portland Street car park from a short stay to a mixed stay tariff.
- 7 To continue to provide free parking for up to 3 hours for Blue Badge holders. The matter of free parking provision be considered at a county level and is referred to the District Parking Forum.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT**

- 8 The report outlines the response to the issues raised by the notice of motion submitted to Council on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2008.

*“The Council calls upon the executive to respond to the petition for up to 4 hours parking on short stay car parks by:*

1. *Introducing the ability to park for up to 4 hours on short stay car parks at a premium rate.*

2. *Relocating staff car parking from the Hollinshead Street car park (adjacent to the Union Street offices) to Water Street and designating the Hollinshead Street car park as a long stay car park."*
- 9 A Car Park Strategy Group was convened to consider these and other issues pertaining to car park designations and tariffs. Membership of the group included Executive Members, Elected Members and officers of Chorley Council and representatives from the Chamber of Trade and local retail outlets.
- 10 It was agreed by the group that, due the impracticality of implementation, the potential tariff for premium rate and the current usage and occupancy rates of the car parks, it could not recommend the introduction of parking for up to 4 hours at a premium rate. In addition, the change in designation of the Hollinshead Street car park to a long stay car park would not create any additional parking provision as staff could continue to utilize Hollinshead Street car park with a long stay permit. Based on occupancy rates, it was proposed however, that Portland Street car park, adjacent to Flat Iron car park, could be re-designated as a mixed tariff car park, providing for short stay and long stay car parking.
- 11 Blue badge holders are currently permitted 3 hours free parking in Chorley. The group considered a request to extend this provision but agreed, based on the permissions of the overall scheme, occupancy rates and the consistency with on-street permissions, not to increase the 3 hours free parking and seek consideration of the matter at the District Parking Forum.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)**  
**(If the recommendations are accepted)**

- 12 A Car Park Strategy Group was established to look at the particular issues raised via the original petition and the Notice of Motion submitted to Council. The group considered information pertinent to the relevant issues and debated and agreed upon a representative position on this basis.
- 13 There is no evidential support to change the current tariff policy for short stay car park provision, including the Blue Badge scheme, or to re-designate the Hollinshead Street car park to long stay car parking.

**ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

- 14 The Car Park Strategy Group requested and considered information of car park schemes and parking tariffs from other local authorities. This included consideration of a free parking trial introduced by Chesterfield Borough Council where it hadn't achieved the objective of increasing new visitors but encouraged a behavioral change in parking times of existing visitors. In addition, considerations were given to the trials on schemes of using mobile phones to make car park payments in York and Cornwall. A 10% commission rate is charged by the phone company which would not make this scheme cost effective for Chorley.

## CORPORATE PRIORITIES

15 This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Put Chorley at the heart of regional economic development in the central Lancashire sub region	X	Improved access to public services	X
Improving equality of opportunity and life chance		Develop the character and feel of Chorley as a good place to live	
Involving People in their Communities	X	Ensure Chorley is a performing Organisation	

## BACKGROUND

- 16 Following presentation of a petition and subsequent Notice of Motion to Council, a Car Park Strategy Group was convened which included Elected Member, Council officer, Chamber of Trade and local retail representatives. The group met on two occasions to clarify the issues to investigate, identify information required to debate and agree upon recommendations.
- 17 At the initial meeting, the group discussed the information, including occupancy rates and patterns of stay, pertaining to the petitioned extension of the 3 hour maximum limit for parking on short stay car parks. The maximum stay was included as part of the new strategy introduced on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008. It was reconfirmed, through presentation of research findings, that a significant majority of car park users on short stay car parks do actually stay for less than 2 hours, with the remainder staying no longer than two and a half hours. Overall, 99% of users stayed less than two hours.
- 18 Other issues with regards to the extension of the stay period were discussed and included the matter of 'Pay on Exit', the practical operation of a four hour stay period and the introduction of a premium rate payment for the fourth hour.
- 19 On the issue of 'Pay on Exit' it was understood by the group that there would be significant costs incurred in the establishment of a barrier operation on the car parks and costs incurred through the need for new pay kiosk machines. Importantly, it was recognized that a restrictive access/exit barrier system would have unmanageable implications which would impact on the traffic flow around the town centre.
- 20 The group considered the application of an additional hour on top of the 3 hour short stay period. There were two factors to take into consideration. The practical ability of the machines to buy four hours and the possible charge for four hours. The machines can accommodate any period of ticket purchased but what it cannot prescribe for is the ability to 'meter feed'. Even if a premium rate fourth hour tariff was introduced, users of the car park would be able to 'meter feed' so that they would avoid a premium rate payment for the fourth hour.
- 21 Other issues considered by the group included signage and information, payment schemes, free parking after 4pm, and the Blue Badge holder scheme.

- 22 Lancashire County Council was approached with regards to the provision of additional signage to the car parks. They considered that the town centre was well served with signage but would receive any additional comments/suggestions back from the group in the future on specific areas which they thought required to be looked at. In addition, the group suggested the use of 'colour-coded' signage to indicate short and long stay car parks and which would be considered in any future re-design of tariff boards and maps.
- 23 The issue of free parking was raised and whether or not an off-peak 'free' period of operation would attract additional visitors to the Town Centre. During the period between the group meetings, the parking manager undertook an exercise on monitoring usage of the Flat Iron car park between the hours of 8am and 10am and 4pm and 6pm. Ticket sales made during this period equated to 20% of the total ticket sales for the days of operation. If this time was permitted free stay and if it was to be replicated over a full year period it would account for, based on 2007/08 income figures, a revenue loss of £180,000. In addition, the group was provided with feedback on a free car parking trial underway in Chesterfield. The objective was to increase the number of visitors to the town centre but what had been observed was that this was not the case and that people were indeed changing the times they came into the town with a resulting loss in income from parking charges.
- 24 The group discussed a request that had been made to consider the extension of the Blue Badge scheme currently operated in Chorley. At present, the scheme allows badge holders up to 3 hours free parking in the town centre car parks. In addition, the badge holders are not restricted to the disabled bays but the concession also allows for parking in any bay. This is not the case in other local authorities, for example Fylde, and indeed some local authorities are introducing charges for Blue Badge holders, for example Coventry. It was also considered that the on-street concession allows for 3 hours stay and it would be prudent to maintain a consistency on time of concessions. Whilst the group recommended no change to the scheme at this stage they suggested that a more strategic approach be appropriate and referred any future discussion to the District Parking Forum which covers the Lancashire area.
- 25 The matter of the re-designation of Hollinshead Street car park to a long stay car park was considered. Members of staff would still be able to utilize their long stay parking permits on this car park and therefore there would be no material change on usage which would create options for other car park users. However, and based upon overall occupancy rates, it was proposed that the tariff of Portland Street car park – which is adjacent to the Flat Iron car park – is changed to that of a mixed tariff. This would operate on the same basis as Farrington Street and would offer both short stay and long stay car park provision. Current ticket sales for Portland Street, when compared to the same period last year, indicate an ability to accommodate additional vehicles.

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