

PART A

AGENDA
ITEM **4C**

Report to: COUNCIL FUNCTIONS COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting: 4 December 2006
Report of: CORPORATE DIRECTOR – BETTER WATFORD
Title: Introduction of car parking charges for staff and
councillors and parking space allocation policy

1. **SUMMARY**

As part of the Council's Green Travel Plan, it is proposed to introduce car parking charges for staff and councillors for use of the Town Hall car park, Avenue car park, Sutton and Radius House car parks. This report sets out the proposed scheme and explains that charging will cover the costs of additional parking at Sutton car park and fund the Green Travel Plan initiatives.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Committee is recommended to agree:

- a) introduction of car parking charges for staff and councillors for the use of the Town Hall car park, The Avenue, Radius House (51 Clarendon Road) and Sutton car parks as set out in 3.11 of this report from 1 April 2007
- b) preferential allocation of spaces for essential car users, car sharers and blue badge holders with everyone else having no priority.

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Report approved by:

Corporate Director Better Watford

3.0 **DETAILED PROPOSAL**

3.1 Two of the Council's priorities in the Medium Term Plan are the introduction of a Green Travel Plan and to build new leisure facilities for the town.

3.2 Successful Green Travel Plans are normally a mixture of incentives to travel by alternative methods and demand management to reduce car use. The demand management measures can include:

- Reducing the amount of car parking
- Reducing the amount of car parking permits
- Introducing car parking charges

These have been shown to be the most effective components of a Green Travel Plan in reducing car use.

3.3 The decision to bring forward the construction of the leisure centre on the Central Baths site means that there will be a reduction in the number of car parking spaces available at the Town Hall before actions to reduce car travel have had an impact on demand. The following alternatives were investigated:

- no alternative parking provided
- use of the Peace Hospice car park
- turning the Avenue car park into a staff car park
- purchasing 60 permits for Sutton car park

3.4 The Peace Hospice could not offer any spaces. A sudden reduction of sixty places would not give enough time for staff time to find alternative means of travel with the risk of them parking in nearby streets, the loss of visitor parking at the Avenue is unsustainable and Sutton car park offered the lowest cost solution at £39,000 per annum. This can be funded through car parking charges. The alternative parking arrangements at Sutton car park are only intended to be for a period of two years when we hope to have reduced the number of people regularly driving to work and Housing staff should have relocated to Watford Community Housing Trust premises. In addition should the Council take a lease on offices in Clarendon Road then approximately a further 19 car parking spaces will be available

3.5 Currently, all staff who request a car parking permit are given either access to the Town Hall car park or Avenue car park. Parking spaces are available on a

first come first served basis. On the whole this works reasonably well, although there are times when staff cannot get access to the Town Hall car park. With the introduction of car parking charges it is necessary to limit the number of car parking permits to minimise the chance of sufficient spaces not being available. There will be 60 permits for Sutton car park, 60 permits for the Avenue car park, approximately 19 permits for Radius House (51 Clarendon Road) and 120 permits for the Town Hall car park (There will be 109 spaces in the Town Hall car park). This should ensure that all those given access can find a space although we will not be able to guarantee a space.

Car parking charges

- 3.6 A questionnaire to staff to assess staff views on a charging and allocations policy was included with Wats Up (the staff newsletter) in September and it was also available electronically on the intranet – see Appendix A.
- 3.7 There were 120 responses to the questionnaire and details of the responses are set out in Appendix B. The following proposals aim to take into account the most popular options for charging:
- Differential charging rates based on the size of engine. This would mean a higher rate charged for cars with engine sizes 1600cc or more.
 - All essential car users charged at the reduced rate for smaller cars until a full review of the existing policy on car use is completed. A number of respondents felt that there should only be reductions for essential users who are regularly called out and whose duties are mainly reactionary and cannot be planned. Without a review of the essential car user policy it is not possible to make this distinction. Ideally we would wish to complete this before changing is introduced.
 - Reductions for part time staff based on the number of days worked
 - All car sharers charged at the reduced rate for smaller cars
- 3.8 At the current time it is only proposed to introduce car parking charges for staff working at the Town Hall or Clarendon Road. These locations are in or on the edge of the town centre where car parking charges apply for public parking and parking on site is controllable via a permit system. In other locations, such as the community centres, parking could not be controlled and there could more easily be displacement parking onto residential streets.

3.9 The amount of the charge is based on the average member of staff paying approximately half of the minimum rate of £2.50 that people can pay for all day parking in the town centre. It is proposed to base the average charge on £1.25 per day for 48 weeks of the year or roughly £300 per annum. Part time staff or staff who choose only to use their car on some days of the week would be charged pro rata for the number of days they drove to work, but would need to be parked at the Town Hall. Should staff change their car or the number of days they drive to work during a year then an adjustment will be made at the start of the following month following notification.

3.10 Group leaders and the independent councillors were also asked to comment on the proposals. A response was received from the Liberal Democrat group proposing a flat charge for councillors of £25 a year to reflect use of the car park in the evenings and that the Mayor should pay the same as staff. It was further suggested that for councillors not wishing to pay a flat fee they could pay to use the Avenue car park as and when necessary.

3.11 Should the recommendations be agreed, it is proposed to introduce charging on 1 April 2007 to give staff enough time to make a decision as to whether they wish to pay or make alternative arrangements for travel to work. Staff who are on maternity leave or long term sick (i.e. after 20 days continuous sick leave) will not be charged for parking until they return to work.

3.12 Taking all the above into account the scale of charges would be as follows:

Band	Who	Amount p.a. 1600cc or above	Amount p.a. 1599 cc or below, car sharers, essential users
A	5 days a week	£360	£240
B	4 days a week (part-time working or a car free day)	£288	£192
C	3 days a week (part-time working or two car free days)	£216	£144
D	2 days a week (part-time working or three car free days)	£144	£96
E	1 day a week (part-time working or four car free days)	£72	£48
F	Councillors (based on 20 visits a year)	£25	£25

3.13 Car Park Permits Allocations

Turning now to the allocations, the most important consideration is the need for the Council to provide its services. This leads to the priority for car parking permits being for those staff who need a car to carry out their duties. This would give priority to essential car users. Currently, there are 108 essential users. This leaves 151 spaces available for other staff. Of equal priority would be car sharers, where the permit holder would be the driver and blue badge holders. Discretion could be given to heads of service to consider exceptional circumstances as and when they arose if a member of staff who was not an essential car users had to have a car parking space to enable them to carry out their job e.g. medical grounds

3.14 As well as the majority view being that essential car users should be given priority, there were also comments regarding people with caring responsibilities and people who lived a long way from work. In considering what would make a workable scheme, the conclusion is that it should be as simple as possible to administer and as little open to interpretation as possible. It is recommended, therefore, that preference is given to essential car users, car sharers and blue badge holders only and everyone else is treated as non priority. Staff wanting a car parking space would be asked to complete an application stating whether they are an essential user, blue badge holder or car sharer as a driver. They will also be asked for any preference regarding car parks.

3.15 Spaces will be allocated as set out in 3.12 above and all other applicants would have their names drawn from a hat until all spaces are allocated. Any remaining names would be placed on a waiting list.

4.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Financial

Revenue Implications	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
	£	£	£
Transport and Projects – Green	9,750*	39,000*	29,250*
Travel – Car Parking passes	1,500		
Less: Budget	None identified	39,000 income from car park charges	29,250 income from car park charges
Growth/Savings	11,250	0	0

*50% of payment for car parking permits will come back in as income to Property Services

The Head of Finance comments that there is no provision in the 2006/07 budget for the expenditure outlined in the above table. This will have to be funded from the Council's general balances in 2006/07. As outlined above expenditure in future years will be funded from car park charges.

4.2 Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)

The Head of Legal & Democratic Services comments that when parking permits are allocated it will be made clear that the permit will not necessarily guarantee a place in the car park, and that having made a payment and not obtained a space will not lead to a contractual liability to provide a space. All staff will need to agree to the payments being deducted from their salaries prior to those deductions being made.

4.3 Staffing

The recommendations will be implemented within existing staffing resources.

4.4 Accommodation

No implications

4.5 Equalities

Provision will be made for blue badge holders to park free of charge in designated spaces

4.6 Community Safety

Staff who use Sutton car park and attend evening meetings at the town hall will be able to park in the visitors' car park at the town hall.

4.7 Sustainability

These measures are part of the Council's draft Green Travel Plan, which seeks to reduce carbon emissions and the amount of car journeys undertaken by the Council's staff.

4.8 Potential Risks

Provision of sixty spaces at Sutton car park cannot be provided at no cost to the Council unless staff charging is introduced. If the additional spaces are not made available for two years, the measures in the Green Travel Plan to reduce car use will not have the anticipated impact and up to sixty staff, who use the car park at present, will lose access. Without an allocations policy, with less spaces available, management of the car park would be more difficult.

Additionally a decision not to charge for parking will result in no financial resources to implement the Green Travel Plan unless savings are found elsewhere in the Council's budget to allocate to implementation

Appendices

Appendix A – Staff questionnaire

Appendix B – Analysis of the responses

Background papers:

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report. If you wish to inspect or take copies of background papers please contact the officer named on the front page of the report.

Effective travel plans research

Draft Green Travel Plan – prepared by MVA on behalf of Watford Borough Council – 2005

Appendix A – Staff questionnaire

Article for August WATS UP

Consultation on charging for staff car parking

One of the main bugbears of working or living in Watford is the amount of traffic and congestion. This is a very complex area to tackle but the Council is committed to encouraging less reliance on the car as a way of reducing traffic and congestion. It also has other spin offs such as reducing carbon emissions and helping people to adopt a healthier lifestyle.

A Green Travel Working Group has been established which is developing a Green Travel Plan for the Council and working with partners, West Herts Hospital Trust, West Herts College, Total UK, Sanyo, John Lewis, Taylor Woodrow and Leavesden Park, to introduce car sharing across the town in the autumn. Research has shown that the plans which work best in terms of reducing car commuting by staff are those which include incentives which encourage use of sustainable travel modes and demand management of car parking. The incentives we will provide are:

- 1 Improved bus services to the Town Hall and around the town
- 2 Discounted season tickets for bus travel
- 3 Interest free loans for train and bus season tickets and for bike purchase
- 4 The introduction of a car sharing scheme for staff of the Council and its partners
- 5 Dedicated car parking spaces for car sharers
- 6 A bike pool for business use, plus free equipment and lockers
- 7 A review of allowances for bike use for business purposes

The incentives will be developed over the next year and may change when the West Herts College development goes ahead in about three years.

Car sharing is being launched on **25 September 2006** at the Town Hall with a meet and match event. There will also be opportunities to register for car sharing throughout the week. Look out for details of the launch.

Feedback from the staff survey on how to encourage other forms of Green Travel revealed the need for better showers, lockers and changing facilities and this will be considered as part of the accommodation review.

The Council also needs to seriously think about introducing a charge for staff car parking to support further development of the Green Travel Plan and to be consistent in our aim of encouraging use of other forms of transport.

There is also an immediate practical issue of dealing with the reduced amount of parking in the Town Hall car park, once work starts in December 2006 as part of the leisure centre redevelopment. CMB have agreed that alternative car parking for 60 staff will be provided at Sutton car park to replace the lost

spaces for two years. They have also agreed to the principle of charging and will also be consulting Members on how it can apply fairly to them. The revenue raised will be used to fund the Green Travel Plan incentives and the car parking at Sutton car park. Charging will be introduced initially for Town Hall staff as it is in the Town Centre and charges apply for parking nearby.

It is proposed that charging will be introduced as near as possible to coincide with the closure of part of the Town Hall car park for the central baths redevelopment. However, it will need to be agreed by Functions Committee and charging would not be introduced until three months after this decision, probably around February 2007.

Charging is being introduced to help encourage staff to walk, cycle or use public transport. Charges have been pitched at half the going rate for long stay parking in the town which is currently £2.50. This would equate to £1.25 a day on average for staff which would equate to roughly £300 a year if you used the car park every day. Staff on the Working Group made it clear that they wish to see a fair and equitable system and it also needs to be easy to administer. This consultation is your chance to say on what basis the charging for staff car parking should take place and how car parking passes should be allocated.

The questionnaire is also available on the intranet, so if possible please use that version.

Q1. Do you think charging should be a flat rate (the same for everyone) or differential (higher rates for some staff)?

- a) Different rates – go to Q2.
- b) Flat rate - go to Q5.

Q2. If different rates were introduced, this would be based on two bands e.g. on engine size, staff with vehicles with less than 1600cc engine would be charged £240 a year and those with over 1600cc would be £360 a year. The precise charging rates haven't been worked out yet but would be roughly of this scale. Do you think the scale of difference is right?

Q3. Should the different rates be based on (select one of the following):

- a) engine size, or
- b) grade/pay, or
- c) distance from workplace, or
- d) whether staff park at Town Hall/Avenue or at Sutton car park, or
- e) whether a guaranteed space is provided, or
- f) any other category – please state?

Q4. Should there be reductions for (select one or more)

- a) essential users, and/or

- b) car sharers, and/or
- c) part-time workers (based on number of days in work) , and/or
- d) staff required to start work before 8.00 a.m. , and/or
- e) any other category – please state?

Q5. If more people want a parking space than can be accommodated at the Town Hall, The Avenue and Sutton car parks, how should it be decided who gets a car parking space.

- a) only permanent staff and those on contracts over one year, or
- b) should there be criteria to determine who gets a car parking space, or
- c) another method - please state?

Q6. When allocating car parking spaces between the Town Hall, Avenue car parks and Sutton car park what factors should be taken into account?

- a) essential users, or
- b) car sharers, or
- c) any other category – please state?

Town Hall staff who currently regularly commute by car

Q7. When car parking charges are introduced will you still regularly commute by car to work?

- a) Yes
- b) No

If you have any queries, come along to the car sharing events to talk to Joan Hancox or another member of the Transport and Projects Team. Alternatively contact Joan on Tel 278081 or email joan.hancox@watford.gov.uk.

Responses by 29 September 2006 to Joan Hancox, Transport and Projects Team, Planning and Development, Town Hall.

Appendix B: Analysis of responses

Consultation on charging for staff car parking – initial analysis – 5 October 2006

Introduction

An article and questionnaire appeared in Wat's Up and on the Intranet on 15th September 2006 and staff had two weeks to respond. 120 responses were received.

The initial analysis

Q1. Do you think charging should be a flat rate or differential?

55% thought there should be different rates
37% thought there should be a flat rate
7% did not answer
1% stated should be no charge

Q2. If different rates – do you think the scale of difference is right?

36% - yes
19% - no
45% - blank

Of those that answered

65% - yes
35% - no

Q3. Should the different rates be based on:

21% - Distance from workplace
19% - Engine size
16% - Other
14% - Grade/pay
13% - Whether a guaranteed space is provided or not
12% - Essential users (included in other category answers)
6% - Whether staff park at Town Hall/Avenue or at Sutton car park

(adds up to 101% due to rounding)

Q4. Should there be reductions for: (staff could select one or more)

33% - Essential users
21% - part-time workers (based on number of days in work)
14% - car sharers
7% - staff starting work before 8am

Other responses included

- Where public transport is unreliable or costly or takes too long

- Staff required to provide a car and “on” call officers
- Whether you work shifts – not practical to car share

Q5. If more people want a parking space – how should it be decided?

- 44% - Only permanent staff and those on contracts over one year
- 19% - Should there be criteria to determine who gets a car parking space
- 21% - Other

Q6. When allocating car parking spaces between the Town Hall, Avenue car parks and Sutton car park what factors should be taken into account?

- 46% - Essential users
- 10% - Car sharers
- 50% - Others (needs further analysis into categories)

Q7. A question for Town Hall staff who regularly commute by car: when car parking charges are introduced, will you still regularly commute by car to work?

- 74% - Yes
- 12% - No
- 14% - blank