

## **AGENDA ITEM NO. 5**

**Cabinet  
28 July 2015**

**Head of Community and Environmental Services  
Report No COMM 1514**

### **Aldershot Town Centre – Parking**

#### **Introduction**

- This paper recommends introducing a number of parking concessions on a one-year trial basis to identify if they will encourage more shoppers and assist residents living in the Aldershot town centre.
- The following parking concerns have been raised by residents, members, and businesses, relating to the Aldershot town centre:
  - Aldershot retailers are concerned that the current parking charges are discouraging shoppers from using the town centre. In particular they would like to see free on street parking to encourage pop in trade and free parking on Sundays.
  - It is difficult for residents living in the town centre to find free overnight parking.
  - Due to the popularity of the free Westgate car park, it is difficult for those using the complex and Princes Hall in the evenings to find a parking space.

#### **Daytime on street parking charges**

- The one-hour on street parking restriction was introduced at the request of retailers to encourage pop in trade and prevent the bays from being used for long periods by commuters, people working and residents living in the town.
- This has been a success with the bays being very well used, (around 350,000 tickets purchased pa) offering customers the option of paying in 15-minute segments (20p per 15 minutes) up to 1 hour at 80p. With the change in legislation, which provides for a 10-minute period of grace before the issuing of a fixed penalty notice, customers paying for each segment will now receive an additional 10 minutes dwell time.
- Between 10am and 5pm (peak times) with 170 on street parking spaces in the town centre, this provides around 430,000 one-hour parking bays pa. Half are

already taken up with 45 minute to one-hour stays and a quarter with 15 minute to 30-minute stays.

- Observation has also shown the parking bays are very well used and in the parking review customers indicated, the current charges were reasonable.
- Reduced on-street parking charges is therefore unlikely to increase the number of customers visiting the town as the one hour bays are already well used.
- If these bays were offered free, it would reduce the income to the Council by around £110k pa. The provision of 30 minutes free parking with the additional 10 minutes dwell time would reduce income by around £80k pa.
- Even though there is free parking at both Tesco and Westgate the above heavy use of short stay on street parking indicates there may be demand for more short stay parking within the town centre.
- It is therefore proposed to trial the provision of 20 free one hour parking bays in the High Street Multi Storey, which may encourage use of this underused car park and provide sufficient time to walk to the shops for pop in shopping.
- The Council owned Birchet Road Car Park in the heart of the town centre is currently designated a short stay car park but given the low cost of all day parking (£5) compared to the nearby train station (£7.50 with spare capacity), is primarily used by commuters providing an income of £115k pa . There could be significant benefit to shoppers if the all-day tariff was removed with a maximum stay of 3 hours.
- In order to inform the Councils decision on this, it is proposed to consult with the commuters using the car park to identify if they would displace to the either the private Train Station Car Park or Wellington Centre (£5 all day), or to either of the Council car parks (High Street Multi Storey and / or the Parsons Barracks Car Parks). The Wellington Centre is closer to the train station, with both the Council car parks equidistance from the train station, but would increase the walk by a few minutes.

### **Evening and overnight parking charges**

- On street charging, after 6pm was introduced to assist evening trade in the town centre particular the shops with late night opening, restaurants and pubs/ nightclub. This allowed customers to park close to the businesses and pick up / drop off people where otherwise the spaces would be taken for resident parking. Recent surveys have shown that these bays are still used during the evening.

- The restrictions include some 1-hour limit parking between 8 am and 10 pm, some long stay between 8 am and 6 pm and some areas with a mix of the two between 8 am and 8 pm.
- The demand for on street evening parking from shoppers is much less and could be provided free after 6pm, but with a one or two hour limit to keep these bays available for customers of the local businesses and prevent them being taken for resident parking. To assess demand for this consultation would be carried out with the businesses.
- To assist local residents living in the town centre and those using the businesses in the evening, which would include any overflow from Westgate, it is proposed to provide free parking in the High Street Multi Storey Car Park after 6 pm until 9am. This will ease the congestion on the streets around the town centre, which are used, by both the adjacent residents and those living in the town centre in search of free parking. This situation if left unchecked is likely to worsen as more residents live in or close to the town centre. The all night charge is currently £1, which is in line with the Wellington Centre, and this will result in a loss of income of around £10k pa.
- The Council have previously offered overnight parking permits to residents at £180 pa available in three monthly blocks. This ceased due to no take up. Along with the trial free parking in the High Street Multi Storey Car Park it is proposed to consult with residents in the town centres on where they currently park and what would encourage them to use our car parks overnight.

### **Sunday Parking**

- On a Sunday, the majority of customers in our car parks stay between 1 and 2 hours, paying 60p an hour. The parking at Tesco and Westgate is free, with an all-day charge of 60p at the Wellington Centre.
- Given the free parking already in the town and the low flat rate charge at the Wellington Centre it is unlikely that free parking in Council car parks will attract new customers to the town. However, with free parking in our car parks, we may see some displacement from the Wellington Centre or some customers, who use our car parks on a Saturday and pay for parking, may move to Sundays when parking is free if the shops they require are open.
- It is therefore proposed that the Council introduce a 60p all day charge in its car parks in keeping with the Wellington Centre. Without any new customers, this will reduce the Councils income by around £25k pa.

## **Free after three**

- The Council have previously trialled a free after three in the Aldershot High Street car park. Based on our experience at the time this did not increase visits to the town centre but merely changed the patterns of use with queues developing around 3pm.

## **Financial Implications**

- The provision of 20 one-hour free parking bays in the High Street Multi Storey car park could reduce the Councils income by around £20k pa unless there is additional take up from new customers visiting the town.
- The provision of short stay parking in the Birchett Road Car Park will provide more choice for short stay customers and if the long stay customers move to either the Aldershot High Street or Parsons Barracks Car Parks will not adversely affect our income.
- Free overnight parking in the Aldershot High Street Multi Storey Car Park from 6 pm will encourage residents to use this car park provided they feel it is safe and secure. This will result in a loss of income of £10k pa.
- A 60p charge for all day on Sundays will bring us in line with the Wellington Centre. This will reduce the Councils income by around £25k pa unless there is additional take up from shoppers.
- The overall cost of the above to the Council will be around £55k pa unless there is additional take up from customers.

## **Conclusion**

- Given the difficulties faced by some retailers in the town centre, the Council is keen to ensure that our parking charges are not discouraging shoppers from visiting the town.
- There is currently a high level of use of on street parking during the day, which indicates that these charges are not preventing usage. However given this demand the Council is keen to provide more short stay parking closer to the shops. There is scope to increase the availability of short stay parking in the Birchett Road Car Park and this will be considered following consultation with the commuters that predominantly use this car park.

- The provision of free after three was previously trialled without success. To make better use of the High Street Multi Storey Car Park and encourage pop in shoppers it is proposed that some free all day one hour parking bays be trialled.
- It is also proposed to liaise with retailers on whether the provision of free on street parking after 6pm but retaining the current time limits would be supported.
- To assist customers using the businesses in the Town Centre in the evenings and provide much needed overnight parking for residents living in the Town Centre it is proposed to trial free parking in the Councils High Street Multi Storey Car Park between 6pm and 9am. The levels of use will be reviewed and consultation carried out with local town centre residents on overnight parking.
- Given the free parking at the Westgate and Tesco's car parks and the 60p all day charge at the Wellington it is also proposed to reduce the Councils car parking charge to 60p for all day Sunday.
- It is proposed that the above free parking and reduced Sunday charge be piloted for one year from 1 October 2015 with any changes in take up and the results of consultation reported back to Cabinet in the late summer 2016. This will provide sufficient time to make any changes and promote the scheme.

## **Recommendations**

Cabinet is recommended to approve the following:

- Provide 20 dedicated bays with up to one hour free parking in the High Street Multi Storey car park on a one-year trial basis
- Provide free overnight parking in the Aldershot High Street Multi Storey Car Park from 6pm to 9am on a one-year trial basis.
- Carry out consultation with town centre residents on their overnight parking.
- Introduce 60p all-day on Sundays in our Aldershot car parks on a one-year trial basis.
- Carry out consultation to assess the implications of Birchett Road car park becoming a 3 hour maximum stay car park and whether this would encourage the commuters to use the long stay at the Parsons Barracks and High Street Multi Storey Car Parks, and

- Carry out consultation with businesses to assess the support for free evening on street parking.

**Peter Amies - Head of Community and Environmental Services.**