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**TOWN CENTRE PARKING**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member(s) - Councillor Nick Wallis,  
Highways and Transport Portfolio**

**Responsible Director(s) - John Buxton, Director of Development and Environment**

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**Purpose of Report**

1. To inform Members of the consultation process undertaken regarding the introduction of charges for on street parking in the town centre, together with an outline of the responses received.
2. To request Members consider and either uphold or set aside the objections made.

**Background**

3. Currently parking in the town centre is administered by the Council, the police and private sector organisations as follows:
  - (a) off street parking by Council and the private sector
  - (b) on street by the police with the exception of resident parking permit zones which is the Council.
4. This variety of administration has led to differences in the way that parking is enforced, leading to a lack of consistency for users.
5. Darlington's Car Parking Strategy, approved in December 2002, seeks to offer car parking space to commuters, shoppers and others needing to visit the town centre, whilst recognising the need to also cut down on traffic congestion and air pollution, and providing residents living close to the town centre with Resident Permit Parking.
6. Within the town centre charges are made for off street parking but on street parking is free. Where there is a residents' parking scheme in operation the residents are charged for the permit that enables them to park in the designated resident parking places. This has led to complaints from some residents that whilst they are charged to park in their street, commuters and shoppers who can often park for up to 8 hours are not charged. Some residents do not have a permit and utilise the unrestricted and limited waiting areas for overnight parking and non-residents often circulate these areas in the morning peak to find spaces vacated by these residents. This has a detrimental effect for residents and the local environment.

7. Cabinet has recently approved the commencement of the process to implement decriminalised parking within the Borough whereby the Council will enforce all the on street parking and yellow lined waiting restrictions throughout the Borough instead of the police if this is ultimately implemented.
8. In the interim, the Council can, independently from decriminalised parking, begin to control some of the on street parking by introducing charges that it can enforce itself rather than the police. This will enable the Council to encourage, through its enforcement regime, a higher turnover of spaces thereby providing short stay spaces close to commercial properties that should enhance town centre trade.
9. Currently, due to restructuring of the police enforcement, there is very little parking enforcement being carried out by the police and many motorists are aware of this and use the limited waiting areas for long stay parking which does not assist customer parking for adjacent commercial properties.
10. Parking charges may also encourage some motorists to consider changing to a more sustainable transport mode for short trips within the Borough thereby reducing congestion. As one of the three national Travel Demonstration Towns recently appointed by the Government to carry out a five year project, Darlington has been given the opportunity to make a concerted effort to tackle the levels of traffic growth that would otherwise occur in the next five years and the growth of congestion which could have a detrimental effect on the economy of the town centre. This initiative will promote the travel choices for Darlington residents and give greater encouragement to people to make short trips by walking, cycling and public transport. These modes already account for about half the trips to the town centre. Car parking charges which make car use more comparable to the costs of using other modes are consistent with this strategy of persuading people to switch from car to other modes, which is important to the long-term economic health of the Borough. Cities like York and Nottingham show that promoting non-car travel can be an important part of achieving a growing town centre.
11. Subject to a final decision at the conclusion of the consultation period, Cabinet, Min C186/Feb04 approved in principle the introduction of on street parking charges in town centre streets, the Stanhope Road area and other limited waiting areas close to the town centre. The proposed charges in the Stanhope Road area will be considered separately and included in the forthcoming consultation on the proposed residents' parking scheme.
12. The total number of off street parking spaces in the town, including Safeway and MFI, is 3088 of which 2170 are short stay spaces. The proposed 375 charged on street short stay spaces will represent 12% of the total parking provision and 17% of the total short stay parking provision.
13. Charging for on street parking will bring a greater fairness to the overall town centre parking. The introduction of on street parking charges by October 2004 was assumed in the Medium Term Financial Plan last year and also in this year's budget.
14. In towns and cities where there is charging for parking, theory would suggest that on street charges should be at least as high as, or higher than, off street charges; this is because on street spaces are more convenient for short visits and it is therefore better for people staying longer to park off street. Charging levels can help to achieve this. It should be better for businesses to encourage higher turnover of on street spaces so that they are more available to customers.

15. The proposal is therefore to convert existing short stay limited waiting areas to charged parking without alteration to the operational times or maximum length of stay in each affected street. Current limited waiting areas within the town area have operational times of either 8am to 6pm Monday to Saturday or 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday with maximum permitted stays of 30 minutes or 1 hour or 2 hours. Officers are proposing charges equivalent to £1 per hour, paid in 30 minute increments of 50p. This should encourage the use of off street parking, charged at 80p per hour in short stay car parks, as the first option for the majority of motorists. However, if charges were lower than £1 per hour initially, they should be at least 80p per hour. Parking for people with disabilities will continue to be free in all designated parking spaces.
16. There will be wide spread publicity before the charges are implemented and a short period of grace will initially be given when warnings rather than fines will be issued until motorists are accustomed to the new regime.
17. Table 1 shows the number of parking spaces and proposed charges in each affected street.

**TABLE 1**

Street	Charged short stay spaces	Max length of charged parking	Max charge	Unrestricted spaces	Resident spaces
Beaumont Street	17	1 hour	£1	0	0
South Arden Street	4	2 hours	£2	0	0
Grange Road	35	1 hour	£1	0	0
Northumberland Street	15	2 hours	£2	0	0
Larchfield Street	9	2 hours	£2	0	9
Powlett Street	13	2 hours	£2	0	12
Primrose Street	6	2 hours	£2	0	7
East Raby Street	13	2 hours	£2	0	16
Raby Street	2	2 hours	£2	14	13
West Powlett Street	2	2 hours	£2	13	14
Duke Street	42	1 hour	£1	0	0
Barnard Street	15	1 hour	£1	0	0
Barnard East Back Street	7	1 hour	£1	0	0
Winston Street	20	1 hour	£1	0	0
Napier Street	8	2 hours	£2	18	13
King Street	3	2 hours	£2	0	0
Kendrew Street	12	2 hours	£2	0	0
Gladstone Street	45	2 hours	£2	2	5
North Lodge Terrace	15	2 hours	£2	39	32
Elmfield Terrace	7	2 hours	£2	33	20
Park Place	34	2 hours	£2	0	0
Swan Street	5	2 hours	£2	0	10
Hargreave Terrace	18	2 hours	£2	41	26
Victoria Road	17	2 hours	£2	0	0
Victoria Embankment	11	2 hours	£2	71	40
<b>TOTAL</b>	375			231	217

18. The situation in other towns is as follows:

- (a) Durham City now charge for both short and long stay on street parking. Their charges are based on the particular area. Short stay areas are charged at 30p per 30 minute intervals over the period 8am to 6pm with no maximum length of stay (ie can pay to park all day) and long stay areas are charged at £1.50 per day ( 8am-6pm) but people can also pay the short stay charge in these areas for a shorter time. All on street parking will be short stay charged at 50p per 30 minute intervals in 2005 when all the Park and Ride sites are operational, long stay utilising the Park and Ride sites.
- (b) Middlesbrough has recently introduced charges for short stay parking in two central streets where charges are 30p for 30 minutes or 60p for 1 hour. Middlesbrough are introducing these charges to provide a turnover of spaces in an area where limited waiting is abused and customers of the nearby banks are unable to find short term parking.
- (c) Stockton is considering on street charges as part of their process to introduce decriminalised parking by 2005.
- (d) Redcar has a mixture of on street charges in different areas charged at 60p for 1 hour, £1 for 2 hours and additional hours at £1, others at 60p for 1 hour, £1.10 for 2 hours and additional hours at £1 and a few other ultra short parking areas charged at 20p for 30 minutes only.
- (e) Newcastle and Sunderland both have on street charging, although they are larger centres with different parking demands and supply.
- (f) York strongly promotes non-car travel and restricts car parking in the town centre by both price and numbers.

19. The 2004 Darlington Retail Study, which is based on a telephone survey of 1000 households, showed that only 26.5% thought the current cost of car parking was bad, 22.5% thought it was easy to find a car parking space and 50% thought getting to the town by car was good.

20. There is understood to be early evidence from the Lockwood Survey, a survey carried out every two years on town centre competitiveness, that parking with time restrictions and charges will work in town centres and ultimately increase the number and turnover of available short stay spaces, however the method of introducing the charges is vital and it has worked best in areas where a transitional period between free parking and charging is given during which warnings and advice is given rather than automatic fines. Having positive local media coverage to outline the benefits to businesses and convenience for shoppers is also vital.

21. Durham City has not experienced a decline in people parking in the town since introducing charges and they are running at 75-85% capacity. They have no evidence of a loss of trade.

## Outcome of Consultation

22. A total of 650 consultation letters were sent to frontagers in the affected streets and Table 2 shows the extent of the consultation with businesses, residents, police, other organisations and the general public. Direct written consultation was carried out with properties directly affected by the proposal, the police and other organisations, the general public were informed via statutory notices in the press and in the affected streets and via an article in the Town Crier. The formal consultation period ended on 13 April.

**TABLE 2**

<b>Consultee</b>	<b>Response</b>
Road Haulage Association	No reply
Freight Transport Association	No reply
RAC	No reply
Chief Constable	Yes
Darlington Divisional Police	Yes
Chamber of Trade	No reply
North East Chamber of Commerce	No reply
Darlington Partnership	No reply
Frontagers in Grange Road area	7 Businesses
Frontagers in Gladstone Street area	1 Business and 2 Residents
Frontagers in Victoria Road area	5 Businesses and 8 Residents
Frontagers in Larchfield Street area	6 Businesses and 1 Resident
General public	22 letters and Emails

23. Bus operators have also indicated their support for this policy expecting it to have a beneficial effect on reducing congestion and encouraging the use of buses.
24. The Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committees have discussed this proposal and considered the consultation response. Their comments are included in paragraph 38 of this report.
25. A meeting of the Darlington Transport Forum considered the issue. Members of the Forum wished to make the following comments:-
- (a) that adequate enforcement is essential
  - (b) that the scheme be fair and equitable in respect of access for carers and visitors whilst remaining practical and enforceable
  - (c) that the provision of motorcycle parking be maintained.
26. 54 replies have been received, including 2 supporting the proposal. One of the replies included a petition from 260 customers of the business.
27. A list of respondees from affected frontages and the general public is attached as **Appendix 1**.
28. The police do support the proposal in principle, but have expressed some concerns regarding the possibility of displacement of parking to other areas and to other towns which are addressed in Table 3.

29. Table 3 is a resumé of the main comments made by the respondees together with officers' response.

**TABLE 3**

<b>Comments</b>	<b>Suggested Response from Council</b>
More cars will be displaced into residential areas	Proposal does not alter the number of spaces available or length of permitted parking in any way so we do not expect significant displacement. In fact the higher enforcement should ensure more spaces are available for use by shoppers.
Motorists may be opt to go to other commercial centres to shop	Relatively small number of spaces will be affected compared with the overall total of parking spaces. Most commercial centres of comparable size and range of facilities to Darlington already have, or are introducing, parking charges.
Free parking needed for short visits to banks etc	Higher enforcement will ensure more available parking spaces close to town centre and free parking will remain further from centre.
Impact on specialist shops in Grange Road that rely on convenient access by car based customers who would otherwise go to centres like Yarm and Northallerton (without charging)	Council recognises the specialist nature of Grange Road businesses and the fact that their customers are highly mobile and perception orientated. As short stay parking in Grange Road is now abused, the proposal's enhanced enforcement will provide more customer parking opportunity.
Motorists already taxed enough	Road Fund tax etc does not pay for parking or road maintenance.
Staff who require car for frequent business trips throughout day will be penalised	Staff may already find it difficult to find short stay parking close to business.
Detrimental to customer parking	Short stay parking is now abused therefore charging and higher enforcement will provide more available customer parking.
Moves enforcement from one public body to another	Council will be able to provide and enforce parking where it is beneficial to trade rather than rely on someone else's enforcement regime.
Displace parking to residential areas near town centre	Already have residents parking zones in some areas concentric to town centre and other areas can be considered. Existing residents parking zones are to be reviewed and residents' spaces extended if necessary.
Revenue raising exercise for Council	Council cannot use on street parking charges to purely raise income. The income will be used to support the car park and relevant highway budgets.
Council and Business Tax already too high	These taxes do not provide sufficient revenue for the support of the highway and transport budgets.
Shopkeepers need to have a car parked nearby	More beneficial to use available nearby parking space for customer parking. All commuters have use of long stay car parks.
Need free parking to attract trade	Limited evidence from elsewhere does not suggest that trade suffers from on street charging. A higher turnover of on street parking should be beneficial to business. In the long term tackling congestion will be important to the economy of the town centre.

Comments	Suggested Response from Council
Not sufficient staff and customer parking in Darlington generally	On street parking is provided in town centre wherever possible without causing a road safety hazard. Further off street parking will be provided through new developments and the town centre will become more pedestrian friendly. For example, the Commercial Street development will provide a net addition of 400 spaces and Crown Street 165 spaces.
Passing trade needs 10 minute free parking	Providing a period of grace before charges apply could not be effectively enforced therefore scheme would get abused.
Change 2 hour parking to 10 minutes	10 minute parking is too short for effective enforcement. Each street will have a mixture of businesses some of whom will need longer customer parking than others.
Victoria Road should not be charged when Northgate is not in the proposal	Initial areas identified for charges, Northgate area may be considered in future.
Residents in Hargreave Terrace sheltered housing rely on visitors who will be penalised	Recent introduction of 2 hour parking in area has assisted visitors but as visitors have to park on highway therefore subject to same charges.
Give businesses reserved spaces in long stay car parks	Long stay parking needed for commuters and those visiting town for longer periods. Reserving spaces will reduce overall availability of space.
Need free parking in residents parking zones for residents' visitors	There will be free unrestricted parking in each residents parking zone area but this space will generally be used by commuters. Could be considered as part of residents parking zones' review.
Need to charge for on street long stay commuter parking rather than short stay	Can be considered as part of review of existing residents parking zones.
Make public transport a better option and cheaper	Methods to promote public transport provision and use will be undertaken as part of the Sustainable Travel Demonstration Town initiative.

## Conclusions

30. The general objections are to the loss of free parking for short trips into town, the detrimental effect on passing trade, the displacement of parking to residential areas, the need for increased resident parking and the hardship caused to the minority of staff who need to use a car on business several times a day, particularly in the Duke Street area.
31. The adverse response has not been significantly high for a potentially controversial issue with a wide consultation and the responses outlined in Table 3 do address these points sufficiently to recommend the introduction of the proposed charges.
32. Ultimately the change in enforcement regime and the introduction of charging for short stay on street parking will ensure an adequate supply of parking for customers of premises that rely on short visits and passing trade. Most objections have been to the principle of charging and not to the actual charge proposed. The survey outlined in paragraph 19 gives confidence that charging will ultimately increase parking provision for short trips to town.

33. Monitoring will be undertaken to ensure that an effective turnover of space is maintained and footfall surveys will be undertaken in each commercial area to check the effects of this policy decision.
34. The Government's white paper Transport 2010 charged local authorities with the task of improving public transport and reducing congestion. Whilst Councils can improve infrastructure to assist bus movements with route priorities etc they can also use the provision and cost of town centre parking as a effective tool to reduce the volume of traffic entering the centre each day by encouraging use of other modes, particularly for short trips. Reducing the number of trips made by cars with low occupancy will go a long way to tackling congestion problems. Parking charges are never a popular measure to use but without them there appears to be no incentive to make people who can use other transport modes to consider leaving the car at home for their short trips to town. Encouraging a proportion of shopping trips to transfer to other modes is an important part of a strategy to tackle congestion.
35. All trips have an associated cost whether it be the cost of a bus fare or the cost of parking associated with the convenience of using the car.
36. When parking charges were first introduced or increased in some of our off street car parks there was a tendency for the some motorists to find alternative parking in the short term. This reaction was short lived and motorists soon returned to the convenience of car parks, many of which hold the 'secured car park' award. No doubt some motorists will seek other parking areas in the short term but after a short time officers expect all on street parking to operate between 80-100% capacity on an average day. This is borne out by experience elsewhere.
37. In summary, whilst most of those commenting object to the principle of charging, the level of response has not been as high as might have been expected. A higher turnover of car parking spaces could be helpful to businesses and to those needing to park on street. Charging can also be an important element of a transport policy designed to tackle congestion and support the long term growth of the economy.

### **Recommendations of Environment & Resources Scrutiny Committees**

38. The Environment & Resources Scrutiny Committees discussed this proposal at their meeting on 13 May 2004. After consideration of the issues involved and listening to representations, the majority of the Committees made the following recommendations:
  - (a) that the implementation of charges for on street parking, in the streets outlined in the submitted report, be endorsed;
  - (b) that a charge of 80p per hour as opposed to £1.00 per hour be made and that the resultant effect on costs be presented to Cabinet;
  - (c) that the introduction of a Daily Badge Scheme and associated costs be investigated for use when there is a family event within the proposed charging areas;
  - (d) that the findings of the economic reviews be reported to Monitoring and Co-ordination Committee for it to determine the way forward;



- (e) that the introduction of an Exemption Badge for use by carers and associated costs be investigated within the proposed charging areas.
39. The Committees would also like the following minority report to be considered by Cabinet. The minority view was that the proposed scheme was flawed due to the following reasons:-
- (a) There is no proven traffic need to change the existing parking controls other than to properly enforce the current traffic orders and decriminalisation would allow the Council to positively carry out this role.
  - (b) The preliminary and operational costs of parking meters has not been qualified or quantified.
  - (c) Effective enforcement procedures have not been considered.
  - (d) Charging the motorist for parking simply to raise income to subsidise waste disposal is an unacceptable form of taxation on a minority group. It is this group which should be encouraged if we intend to sustain the economy of Darlington.

### **Response**

40. The original proposal for a charge of £1 per hour was based on the premise that on street parking should attract a premium rate due to the convenience of such spaces for short stay visits to the town centre, leaving short and long stay car parks for longer periods. Generating a high level of turnover is seen as essential for business by permitting very short stay trips by car to the town centre. However, it is likely that a lower charge will not significantly reduce the amount of turnover and it is therefore accepted that on street charges should be set to mirror the standard short stay rate. The turnover of the on street car park spaces will be one of the items monitored in the proposed programme outlined below.
41. The case for a badge scheme for visitors and carers to residential properties needs to be considered at the same time as a similar scheme that applies to the Residents' Parking Zones to ensure both equity and practicality of operation on adjacent streets. Any new badge scheme would replace the current arrangements in place for certain groups of health care professionals, such as Doctors and District Nurses. However, there would be a number of practical difficulties in defining eligibility and administering any scheme in such a way that it did not undermine the ethos of providing residential parking zones. It would also be likely that a charge would apply to any permits issued to ensure that no one group were given preferential treatment. For these reasons, it is recommended that the case for the introduction of a badge scheme be considered at the same time as the review of the existing Residents' Parking Zones that is scheduled to start in the autumn.
42. The need for monitoring is highlighted elsewhere in this report, especially given the concerns raised over the possible impact on local trade. It is proposed that a monitoring programme is implemented, that provides data on car parking behaviour for 2 years after scheme implementation on an annual basis. This will allow valid comparisons to be drawn against the base data, avoiding distortions caused by seasonal variations in trade or lack of familiarity with the scheme as per the evidence from the Lockwood Survey.

43. As outlined in paragraphs 5 to 14, there are cogent reasons for introducing parking charges for on street parking spaces. The Council is also committed to realizing the shared priority for transport, agreed between the Department of Transport and the Local Government Association. The costs of installation of equipment have been budgeted in the 2004/05 Local Transport Plan funding, and are estimated at £70,000. Whilst qualitative evidence is awaited (paragraph 20), experience from Durham City indicates that there is no decline in the numbers of people parking after the introduction of on street parking charges.

### **Legal Implications**

44. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

### **Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998**

45. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

### **Council Policy Framework**

46. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework

### **Decision Deadline**

47. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter.

### **Recommendation**

48. It is recommended that :-

(a) Charging for on street parking in the following streets be approved:-

Beaumont Street, South Arden Street, Grange Road, Northumberland Street, Larchfield Street, Powlett Street, Primrose Street, East Raby Street, Raby Street, West Powlett Street, Duke Street, Barnard Street, Barnard East Back Street, Winston Street, Napier Street, King Street, Kendrew Street, Gladstone Street, North Lodge Terrace, Park Place, Swan Street, Hargreave Terrace, Victoria Road, Victoria Embankment;

(b) Charges be set initially at the standard rate for short stay car parks (40p per 30 minute interval), with the maximum length of stay and hours of operation to be the same as those existing for the current free limited parking in these streets;

(c) That the merits of introducing a badge scheme be considered as part of the forthcoming review of Residents' Parking Zones;

- (d) That the effects of charging be monitored and reported to Members as appropriate, but not less than annually for two years.

**Reasons**

49. The recommendations are supported on the basis of achieving greater consistency in respect of parking charges and parking enforcement within and close to the town centre.

**John Buxton**  
**Director of Development and Environment**

**Background Papers**

File TP 9/3

Brenda Bowles: Extension 2657  
Jh

Bullens
Thomas Watson
Mrs Jobson
Workshop
Cooks and Kitchen plus 7 others
Ms Stephenson
N.F.U
Elite Living
Mr B Denham
Mr M Frazer
Bathroom World
The Second Handtique Shop
Ms Soig
Mr B Wilson
JW Wood
JW Wood
Cooper & Leatherbarrow
Mr C Lewis
Ms Nicholson
The Taylors
Mrs Hardy
Ms C Hurworth
Mr C Ormerod
Chipchaser Quicksnacks
Mr Horner & Ms Bowes
Mr JR Iley
Mr K Hodgson
Mr B Leonard
Mrs A Welsh
Victoria Road Post Office
Carr-Gorm Society Ltd
Reeds Rains
Park Place Health Centre
Mr KH Hallworth
Mrs B Truran
Mr IS Nicholls
Mr S Murphy
Mr H Peart
Mr P Galloway
Mr & Mrs Garry
Close Thornton
Mr C Sowerby
Ms Richards & Mr Harman
Mr SE Dunne
Chesnut
Mr Appleby

