

To: **City Executive Board**
 Date: **19 September 2017**
 Report of: **Head of Direct Services**
 Title of Report: **Oxpens Parking Tariff**

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To align Oxpens Car Park tariff with Westgate Shopping centre.
Key decision:	No
Executive Board Member:	Councillor Hollingsworth, Planning and Regulatory Services
Corporate Priority:	A Vibrant and Sustainable Economy
Policy Framework:	Corporate Plan
Recommendation(s): That the City Executive Board resolves to:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Align Oxpens parking tariff with the Westgate car park. 2. Retain the Council's tariff structure in Worcester St and Gloucester Green car parks. 3. Note that the financial implication of adopting this recommendation is expected to be cost neutral. 	

Appendices	
Appendix 1	2017/18 Oxpens Tariff
Appendix 2	Proposed Westgate's Tariff
Appendix 3	Risk Register

Introduction and background

1. In January 2015 the Westgate car park ceased to operate as a public facility and was subsequently demolished as part of the Westgate Alliance redevelopment of the Westgate Centre .
2. A temporary car park was constructed on the Oxpens car & coach park, which provided 420 car parking spaces.
3. The new Westgate car park is scheduled to open on 24th October 2017 which coincides with the opening of the new shopping centre. This facility will provide 960 car parking spaces, which is approximately 240 less than the original site.
4. In order to provide a coherent transport and parking offer in the city the Westgate Alliance were required to consult the Council about their proposals for parking fees. This report recommends that those proposals are accepted and that adjustments are made to the tariffs at the Oxpens car park to ensure that the two sites, which are close together are aligned.

Existing Policy

5. The City Council has utilised parking charges to change the behaviour of motorists with the view to reducing city centre congestion and improving air quality. City centre tariffs have been set at a level that balances demand to available space, being mindful of the cost of public transport alternatives and to discourage commuter parking.
6. Westgate Alliance is proposing to adopt a similar tariff structure to those used in City Council car parks. The tariff will incrementally increase with a view to encouraging short stay shoppers rather long stay customers and commuters.
7. Whilst the proposed parking tariff is slightly different, the ethos of the scheme is very similar to the City Council's adopted policy, which endeavours to persuade customers who park for longer periods to utilise the Park & Ride sites.

Park & Ride

8. The opening of the new shopping centre will increase the number of visitors to the city centre. To ensure that Park and Ride remains a more attractive option than parking in the city centre, the City Council is currently working with Oxfordshire County Council, Westgate Alliance and Oxford Bus Company to implement a single ticket solution for the Park & Ride sites, which will be operational in time for the opening of the shopping centre
9. The ticket will allow up to 2 adults and 3 children to travel on the bus and will include the cost of the parking.

Proposal

10. Westgate Alliance has now released their parking charges and whilst they are not exactly in line with the Council's existing tariffs, the principle is broadly the same.
11. The tariff proposed by the Westgate Alliance would be operational seven days a week and unlike the Council's current tariff, would not increase on Saturdays. The Westgate Alliance believes that the simplicity of this tariff will be appealing to customers, especially for those who have not previously visited the city.
12. Considering the proximity of the Oxpens car park to the new development, it is proposed that the Council's car parking charges at Oxpens are aligned with the new tariff structure at Westgate car park. This will present a unified parking policy in this area and will assist customers.
13. Aligning tariffs also discourages customers from parking in one facility only to immediately vacate to the cheaper alternative, which would only further add to congestion.
14. In addition, the message of a coherent policy can be easily promoted in the media and demonstrates the Council's commitment to working with stakeholders for the benefit of our residents and visitors.
15. It is also proposed that the Council's parking operation continues to work closely with Westgate Alliance to ensure that the level of charge is encouraging bay optimisation, whilst also supporting the Park & Ride sites.
16. Alternatively, the Council could retain the existing tariffs with a view to monitoring the situation. However, this could create a degree of confusion for customers, as two car parks within close proximity would be charging different rates.

Financial Implications

17. Aligning parking tariffs will present a coherent policy regarding parking charges in this area of the city and should encourage the use of the Council's facility.
18. The income from the Oxpens car park is difficult to predict with some many variables in play. Whilst we are not able to definitively state that usage will increase, Westgate Alliance has suggested that 15 million customers could visit the new shopping centre within the first year of operation. It has been estimated that a 5% reduction would reduce income by c£43k. However, considering the projected increase in custom, it is anticipated that the additional patronage will ensure that the impact of the proposal will be at worst cost neutral, but at best will exceed budget expectation.
19. The Council has formed a company with Nuffield College, Oxford West End Development Ltd (OxWED). The company has agreed to purchase an area of land that encompasses the Oxpens car park for future redevelopment
20. Oxford City Council and OxWED have agreed that the car park can continue to operate until 2018 when the planning application expires. If an application to renew planning consent is not submitted, and no lease back to the Council is agreed, the Council would be required to vacate the site by May 2018. The Council will pay a lump sum for the site but retain income and therefore the financial risk regarding usage sits with the Council
21. In December 2017, ownership of the Oxpens site will be transferred to OxWED and will include the area occupied by the public car park.

Legal issues

22. The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 gives the Council power to provide off street parking places where it is necessary for the purposes of relieving or preventing traffic congestion. If the recommendation is agreed, a variation will be required to the existing Off Street Parking Places Order in order to vary the charge at Oxpens car park. This must be completed in accordance with the 1984 Act and Regulations and will require the consent of the County Council as Highways Authority and promotion of the variation order by way of a public notice. The Order must be advertised for 21 days providing customers with an opportunity to formally comment on the proposal.

Level of risk

23. It is anticipated that the increase in usage will mitigate any loss of income and therefore there is no need to adjust the budget to accommodate the proposed change.

Conclusion

24. The opening of the new shopping centre is going to fundamentally alter the retail landscape of Oxford city centre. Whilst this development will bring numerous benefits, it will also pose a number of challenges.
25. Visitor numbers will increase and a high proportion of these may be first time visitors to the city. It is therefore essential that every effort is undertaken to ensure that these customers have a positive experience and parking can play an important role in delivering this. Our preference shared with partners is to steer as much demand as possible to the Park and Ride sites and public transport. For those choosing to park in the city centre it is considered important to maintain an coherent charging policy across similar sites.
26. The demand at peak times for parking will test current supply. Customers may be new to the area and unfamiliar with the current parking conditions. It is therefore recommended that a simplification of tariffs is adopted and consequently a harmonisation with Westgate's charges be adopted.

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Background Papers: None

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