

To: City Executive Board

Date: 7th December 2011

Report of: Head of Direct Services

Title of Report: CAR PARKS CHARGES REVIEW

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To review charges and parking arrangements at City centre, suburban, Parks, park and ride, coach and lorry and bus parks and make recommendations.

Key decision? No

Executive lead member: Councillor Colin Cook

Recommendation(s):

The City Executive Board is recommended to approve the proposed variation to coach parking arrangements and tariffs as set out in paragraph 13, to be effective, subject to consideration of any representations received, from 1st February 2012. The City Executive Board is asked to note that charges are not proposed to be varied at any other City centre, suburban or Parks car parks.

Background

1. The Council manages and operates 12 off street car parks, one coach and lorry park and the bus station at Gloucester Green. The Council also manages 3 park and ride sites and 5 parking places next to Parks where charging is applied.
2. Last year VAT was changed from 17.5% to 20% which added pressure to net income. Charges were amended slightly for the current year to compensate.
3. The current monitoring information for car parking income shows an actual receipt for the half year of £3.31m compared to a budgeted income of £3.34m, a shortfall of £30k. Budget for the full year excluding park and ride sites is £6.5m.

4. An analysis of income shows that the suburban car parks are holding up well and are ahead of budget. The City Centre is down and in particular income from the Westgate car park is down at half year by £95k at £1.32m.
5. Charging in parking areas next to Parks commenced on 1st September 2011. Indications are that in a full year these may just achieve budget.
6. The suburban car parks include St. Clements which was expected to be redeveloped over an 18 month period from July 2011. The planning application for development has been refused and the car park remains open. It is likely, therefore, that the car park will remain open during next year and will help to compensate for the likely reductions in usage at Westgate.
7. Park and Ride sites commenced charging on 3rd October 2011 at a charge of £1.50 (including VAT) at all times but this was subsequently varied to apply only during the hours of 5.00am to 6.30pm.
8. Indications are that the usage envisaged in the Park and Ride plan will be achieved. However, at present there is only one month's data available and it is, therefore, too early to see a pattern.
9. Budgeted income for parking from all sites for 2012/13 is £7.48m (excluding VAT). The introduction of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) systems will improve the ability to issue/enforce notices of parking offences and decrease the cost of so doing and is expected to bring in a further £50k of income which is included in the budgeted £7.48m.
10. The economic outlook remains poor and is unlikely to sustain increases in tariffs without a significant reduction in usage.

Proposals and Financial Implications

11. Achieving next year's income target is based on maintaining tariffs at current rates at all car parks. Usage rates will also have to remain similar to the current year and not reduce.
12. Westgate is the main concern where usage has reduced even after reducing weekend tariffs.
13. This report proposes not to vary charges at any of the City centre, suburban or Parks car parks. It does propose to change arrangements for coach parking. The present charge for parking coaches at the Oxpens coach and lorry park is £10. This charge (from £7.50) was introduced on 14th February 2011. The charge was increased from £5 to £7.50 in January 2009. The report proposes:-
 - ❖ increasing the charge for parking coaches at the Oxpens coach and lorry park to £20

- ❖ allowing coaches to park in the open area of the Westgate car park at a charge of £20 per stay
- ❖ allowing coaches to park at the Redbridge park and ride car park at a charge of £20 per stay

Usage of the Oxpens coach park was good during the current year and over the summer months the Westgate car park was used on an informal basis as an overflow.

14. There are not many alternatives for coach drivers to park when visiting Oxford. Normally they would have to go to the M40 services and other locations outside the City boundary. The charge at the M40 service areas is £22.50 including a meal voucher.
15. Parking in the City Centre which allows visitors to return to the coach if needed offers a more flexible service for the operators. This, plus not having to make the journey to service sites, ought to lessen the resistance to the proposed increase in tariff.
16. It is anticipated that the increase in price would have some resistance but should increase income by £60k in a full year. This will help mitigate the anticipated reductions in usage at the Westgate car park.

Legal Process, Procedure and Implementation

17. Changes to existing tariffs may be made by giving legal notice of the changes by advertising them for 21 days, after which time the new tariffs can be implemented. This is a notice of intent, not one that invites comments. We follow this procedure for the Oxpens coach park.
18. To permit coaches to be parked at the Westgate and Redbridge car parks, and to introduce a charge, we need to promote a variation Order and invite comments. This process will take a little longer than varying an existing charge by notice. And the consent of the traffic authority is needed.
19. It would be desirable to implement changes by the end of January 2012. The cost of advertising such changes and implementing the tariff change is minimal and can be met from existing budgets.

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