

Free to charged car parks – Budget 24/25
Heatons South

Report of the Director of Place Management

1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report provides an overview of the rationale and criteria being applied to those car parks within the borough that are currently free of charge. This is in terms of the viability and justification for the introduction of charges as agreed as part of the MTFP.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The key principles for the introduction of charges are to:

- 2.1.1 Manage occupancy levels and usage in busy locations where an increased turnover would benefit local businesses, such as shops and district centres where parking is in high demand, whilst taking steps to understand and minimise any adverse impact on local residents, businesses and greenspaces through the displacement of vehicles to other streets or car parks.
- 2.1.2 Ensure that sites can be maintained properly in terms of surface quality, signage and the look and feel of the local area. During the council's annual budget setting process, areas were identified where cost recovery was not taking place, adding to the ongoing budgetary pressures facing the council. There is a maintenance liability to the council of operating car parks.
- 2.1.3 Support the fair use of local commuter sites such as railway stations, and to ensure a consistent approach which encourages public transport and active travel.
- 2.1.4 Ensure that there are operational reasons for the introduction of charges for each location, to satisfactorily mitigate the risk of the length of cost recovery in terms of implementation. This is particularly important for those locations where the cost/benefit analysis suggests that cost recovery may take some time.
- 2.1.5 Support Stockport's approach to tackling climate change through the Climate Action Now plan, to encourage active travel as a means of transport across the borough and within the town and district centres.
- 2.1.6 Consistency of charges across car parks within Stockport.

3. DETAIL

3.1 The car park listed below is within the Heatons South Ward:

3.1.1 Didsbury Road.

3.2 The parking charges will be:

*1hr-£0.50, 2hrs-£0.70, 3hrs-£0.90, 4hrs-£1.00, 5hrs-£1.20, 6hrs-£1.40, 7hrs-£1.80
8hrs-£2.00, 9hrs-£2.20, 10hrs-£2.40*

**cost subject to annual review*

3.3 Free/limited stay parking periods – the option to offer non-charged parking periods has been investigated thoroughly but is undesirable for a number of reasons:

3.3.1 Free initial parking periods drive down dwell time as motorists seek to arrive and leave within the uncharged period. This can have a detrimental effect on local shops and businesses.

3.3.2 Stockport's district centre car parks are used primarily by motorists requiring short-term parking to make use of the local facilities and approximately 45% of users pay for one single hour. Offering an initial free parking period will therefore have a disproportionate and significant impact on the financial model.

3.3.3 In order to enforce car parks with 'free periods', a free ticket or parking session is required and this incurs financial costs to the council. Parking terminals issuing free tickets are often abused by those with malicious or mischievous intent. The alternative is for a Civil Enforcement Officer to record evidence on multiple visits; this is unrealistic in practice.

3.3.4 In order to operate an uncharged period of parking, a technological solution is required such as a touchscreen in a local building. There are costs involved in running such as system and these costs further impact the financial model. For example, the implementation of such a system can raise the cost-recovery period from one year to up to 5 years.

3.3.5 We aim to offer equitable parking solutions throughout the borough and implementing this option in multiple areas would have a significant cumulative financial impact.

3.4 One pay-and-display machine will be installed to facilitate cash payments whilst a cashless parking solution (currently provided by RingGo) will enable users to pay using a mobile device such as a phone.

3.5 This small car park is provided predominantly to meet the requirements of the local shops and businesses. Resident permits will not be made available although wishing to use the car park will be able to pay the daily rate or park without charge outside the charging hours (currently Mon-Sat 8am-6pm).

3.6 Contract permits will be made available at the prevailing rate, currently:

Mon-Fri £297 per annum

7 days £356 per annum

**cost subject to annual review*

3.7 Tranche 1 of the 'free-to-charged' project is scheduled for rollout within the 24/25 financial year (subject to contractor availability). The sites detailed above are contained within tranche 2 with rollout scheduled to take place as tranche 1 approaches conclusion.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Members are asked to note the report and are invited to seek clarification from the Cabinet Member on any of the contents.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Anyone wishing to inspect the above background papers or requiring further information should contact Emma Stubbs by email emma.stubbs@stockport.gov.uk