

 Executive April		Agenda Item No. 4
Title	Delivery of joined up on and off-street parking mechanism in Leamington geared to supporting town centres.	
For further information about this report please contact	Ian Coker ian.coker@warwickdc.gov.uk 01926 456227	
Wards of the District directly affected	All	
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?	No	
Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number		
Background Papers		

Contrary to the policy framework:	No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	No
Key Decision?	Yes
Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)	Yes
Equality & Sustainability Impact Assessment Undertaken	No

Officer/Councillor Approval		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive	29 th March	Andrew Jones
Head of Service	29 th March	Ian Coker
CMT	26 th March	
Section 151 Officer	29 th March	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer		
Finance		
Portfolio Holder(s)	29 th March	Cllr Shilton
Consultation & Community Engagement		
Leamington and Warwick Chamber of Trade with WCC on 26 th February		
Leamington Town Council meeting 28 th March.		
Final Decision?		Yes
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		

1. **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The Portas Report published before Christmas highlighted the role that Councils can play to support town centres. Significant work has taken place over many years to try and support town centres and a large number of projects and partnerships are already in place or being developed which are geared to providing support for our town centres. See 7.1 / 7.2.
- 1.2 Parking Charges are always the first area that we are asked to change and which is cited (perhaps wrongly) as a prime deterrent to town centre usage.
- 1.3 In discussion with the Districts Chambers of Trade and based on feedback from customers we have identified three issues which if addressed would significantly improve the parking offer in the town centres. These are
 - A way to provide a much clearer charging / pricing mechanism which links both on and off-street charges
 - A way to provide a charging mechanism which resolved the “no change” or “overpayment” in P&D car parks
 - A way to encourage increased dwell times and / or remove the possibility of receiving a PCN for an overstay
- 1.4 The suggested policy meets the need of simplifying charges, giving customers what they pay for, and joining up on-street and off-street which the customer believes are one and the same.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the work and projects already in place to support the town centres are supported by officers including other opportunities coming forward including the delivery of Portas Bids.
- 2.2 That officers continue to work in partnership with WCC, local Chambers of Trade and Leamington BID and engage with TCMI's to deliver a more joined up on and off-street parking mechanism
- 2.3 That changes to off-street charges detailed in Appendix 1 and the linear tariff mechanism for paying for parking are introduced by WDC at the earliest opportunity alongside WCC proposals for changes to on-street charges.
- 2.4 Discussions between the County Council, the Chambers of Trade in Warwick and Kenilworth and the various Town Centre Management Initiatives regarding measures to improve the parking offer should be continued and a further report brought later in the year.

3. **REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 The Council has supported town centres in many different ways over many years. Given the current difficult economic position that support is all the more important and with new initiatives coming forward every opportunity needs to be exploited.

- 3.2 Over the past few years' car park usage has fallen in many town centres across the country as a result of high fuel prices, an increase in internet shopping and economic conditions. In Leamington whilst the level usage levels have stabilised there is still a need for a more joined up parking mechanism and charging policy to support the town centre. To achieve that close partnership working between the County and District Councils who manage on and off-street parking and the local businesses organisations is required.
- 3.3 If changes are to be made to on and off-street charges and a linear tariff is introduced (see 7.4) some form of promotional activity is required. It makes much more sense to the customer that this is done by WDC and WCC together rather than as separate on and off-street changes.
- 3.4 The County is anticipating a move to a linear tariff for on-street charges for stays of up to 2 hours. As a result the District Council would be at a disadvantage if it were not to adopt a linear tariff for off-street charges. This linear charging structure has the support of the Leamington Chamber of Trade detailed in a letter dated 1/3/12. See Appendix 2.
- 3.5 The multi-storey car parks in Leamington operate a "Pay on Exit" system which resolves the change and stay issues. A linear charge would make promoting the parking offer for longer stay parking (over 2 hours) in all parts of the town much simpler.
- 3.6 Discussions are already taking place about potential enhancements to the parking offer in Warwick. These discussions would benefit from the data which will be available as a result of the move to a linear tariff in Leamington.

4. **POLICY FRAMEWORK**

- 4.1 **Policy Framework** – the reason for the move to the same on and off-street charges has been accepted by the County Council. Previously they had promoted off-street charges being set at a lower level to on-street charges. The principle of operating a linear charge mechanism for on-street charges is already in place in Stratford and Rugby.
- 4.2 **Fit for the Future** – the simplification of parking charges and more flexible payment options is in line with FFF principles of focussing on trying to deliver what the customer wants which in this case is an easier pricing structure, easier payment system and reduced risk of being issued with a PCN.

5. **BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK**

- 5.1 A review of the likely impact of these changes to charges on car parking income has been made and shared with Finance and WCC.
- 5.2 Overall the impact for the District Council is assessed as at worst neutral. Most of the off-street charges remain unchanged. There is no spare on-street capacity near to the car parks where on and off-street charges will be the same. As a result officers do not believe there will be a move from off-street locations to on-street parking. Indeed given that on-street minimum charge is set at 50p and the minimum off-street charge is 20p there could well be a move to off-street from on-street locations with an increase in off-street income the result.

- 5.3 WCC anticipate they could lose some income given the reduction in 1 and 2 hour charges from £1.20 to £1.00 and £2.40 to £2 is not expected to be balanced by the increase in the half hour charge from 40p to 50p. The WCC portfolio holder is considering the proposed changes to on-street changes detailed in Appendix 1 on 20th April and has indicated he would also support the changes proposed to off-street charges which would result in the harmonisation of the on and off-street charges for stays of up to 2 hours.
- 5.4 A move to a linear charge is an important change to the way we charge for parking. Realistically this move would set off-street charges for stays of up to 2 hours in Leamington for the duration of this administration with the emphasis on increases in income being achieved by increases in usage rather than increases in charges.

6. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 6.1 Not to adopt a linear tariff but to maintain the current charging mechanism. This relies on the customer having the right change to pay the relevant parking charge. This was rejected as the current charging mechanism does not resolve the issues identified by customers as needing to be resolved and that if WCC move to a linear charge the District would be at a disadvantage given the customer benefits of operating a linear charge to the customer.

7. **BACKGROUND**

- 7.1 A number of partnerships and projects are already in place aimed at supporting our town centres. These include support for restarting the Leamington town centre partnership, the development of Leamington BID, support via the Town Centre Management team for activities in the town centre(s), the recreation of Linden Arches, the Clarendon Arcade proposals, Christchurch Gardens and support for the evening economy. The District has also joined up activity in tourism with economic development and town centre management to increase the benefits of the activities and is actively working with partners, such as the BID to increase the benefit of our combined activities.
- 7.2 At the same time the Council is supporting the town centre partnerships in Kenilworth and Warwick, developing the town centre framework in Kenilworth that delivered Waitrose and other improvements, as well as working with partners on the Warwick Area Action Plan and the support for a Warwick Portas bid.
- 7.3 To develop a clearer car parking charging mechanism Leamington Chamber of Trade has been working with officers to develop a charging regime which is easy to promote and easier for the customer to understand. That proposal is for the charging regime to operate on a "linear tariff". The benefit of that approach is that it removes any "overpayments" or the need for people to have the "right change" to pay for parking.
- 7.4 The proposal which has been worked up with the Chamber is based on a start point 20p for 12 minutes in off-street car parks. As a result 50p buys 30 minutes and £1 buys 1 hour. These are key price points for customers. The benefit to a linear charge is if you only have 60p (3 x 20p) in your pocket you will purchase 36 minutes not 30 minutes as before, with the end result that the customer "gets what they have paid for".

- 7.5 WCC has already confirmed they are considering the proposal for changes to on-street charges identified in Appendix 1 on 20th April. They would normally aim to introduce those changes to charges as soon as they could after they had been agreed. In order to deliver a joined up parking mechanism with WDC the County Council are planning to introduce those charges at the same time as changes to off-street charges take place. Given the recommendations in this report are agreed then we would expect these changes to on and off-street charges to come into effect on Monday 2nd July.
- 7.6 That new on-street tariff is the same as applies in Stratford and Rugby. In these towns the on-street linear tariff starts at 50p for 30 minutes and moves at 10p intervals to £1 for 1 hour and onto £2 for two hours. WCC have also agreed that off-street charges in Leamington for up to 2 hours in the central off-street car parks can be in line with the on-street charges rather than having to be set below on-street charges.
- 7.7 This creates a very simple message to get over to the customer and has the support of the Chamber of Trade and Leamington BID who have agreed to work together with the District and County Council to produce new promotional material for visitors wanting to park in the town.
- 7.8 Charges in Old Town have always been set lower than those operating north of the river. This is in line with the policy of charges aimed at meeting the "individual needs of each town centre" and fit within the overall corporate strategic objective of making the town centre's "more accessible and active for business".
- 7.9 Charges in Old Town are therefore proposed to operate on a linear charge based on 50p for 1 hour. A start point of 20p will result in the customer buying 24 minutes.
- 7.10 Businesses are agreed that they want to promote longer stays rather than short stays in the town centre. Currently WCC plan to operate with 50p for half an hour as the minimum on-street stay. However, in recognition that some people are looking for a very short stay the District Council will start the linear tariff at 20p for 12 minutes. This maintains the integrity and overall benefit of the linear charge whilst making provision for that short stay considered by some to be important to the success of the town centre.