# LICHFIELD CITY CENTRE CAR PARKING


Cllr Iain Eadie, Cabinet member for Investment, Economic Growth and Tourism

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| Date: | 21st January 2020 |
| Contact Officer: | Craig Jordan |
| Tel Number: | 01543 308202 |
| Email: | craig.jordan@lichfielddc.gov.uk |
| **Key Decision?** | **NO** |
| **Local Ward Members** | |


Lichfield district council
www.lichfielddc.gov.uk

**Economic Growth, Environment and Development (Overview and Scrutiny) Committee**

## 1. Executive Summary

1.1 To update members on the current business levels and various developments regarding the car parking estate within the ownership of Lichfield District Council.

## 2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes the content of the report and:

- provides its views on the proposal to regularise Sunday parking charges in line Sat – Mon charging;
- supports the roll out of cashless payment systems applicable to all car parks;
- supports further work to establish a case for facilitating more EV charging points within the Council's car parks; and
- examines the options for provision of variable messaging signing to aid car park users.

## 3. Background

3.1 Lichfield District Council is the main parking provider in Lichfield. The Authority maintains 20 city centre car parks with in excess of 2000 spaces available to support business and the local economy. As part of the current city centre master planning exercise being undertaken by consultants DLA on behalf of the Council a review of car parking needs and capacity is being carried out.

3.2 The car parks operate on a pay and display basis at charging rates approved by Councillors. Outside of the making of cash payments, some of the pay machines have debit/credit card facilities and all car parks allow for pay by phone. Car park tariffs are reviewed annually but it has not been thought appropriate to make any further increases since the last tariff change in 2016. Prior to 2016 the previous charging rates were agreed in 2008. **Appendix 1** to this report shows number of parking transactions over the last 3 years plus data relating to pay by phone income for the past 6 months.

3.3 Consideration is currently being given to the possibility of extending Sunday charging bringing rates in to line with the rest of the week, further details on this are provided below.

3.4 Having fallen substantially after the financial downturn of 2010 car park business levels showed a slow but continuing increase in the years running up to September 2019 but in that month, and subsequently in October and November business fell by between 5 and 6%. During December 2019 and the run up to Christmas business continued to fall continuing the earlier trend. The December figures show that transactions fell by approximately 9% compared to the same month in the previous year.

3.5 Footfall figures provided by the Lichfield BID show a parallel fall in the number of persons using the town centre and these figures appear to be reflected across the wider West Midlands suggesting that wider economic and social factors may be of more influence in this matter than any specifically Lichfield issues. That said the city centre continues to perform well when looking at other indicators such as retail vacancy rates and visitor numbers.

**Sunday Charging**

3.6 At present a flat rate charge is applied to the Council's car parks on a Sunday. It is proposed to regularise this and apply the same charges that apply throughout the rest of the week.

3.7 Although there has been a traditional resistance to the introduction of Sunday charging in Lichfield due to the presence of the Cathedral, as Sunday is increasingly being seen as a day for recreation and shopping this argument may have less weight than previously particularly given the emphasis the Cathedral authorities themselves are placing on ticket entry events.

3.8 Based on actual receipts during the financial year 2015/16, it is estimated that an additional £176,885 (£212,263 less VAT) of income could be generated.

3.9 A fall in business following the introduction of charging needs to be factored in, however based on the results of our current occasional Sunday parking patrols it appears that there is a proportionately higher level of avoidance on these days than we experience during the rest of the week. Additional Sunday patrols, which would be funded by Parking Charge Notification (PCN) income, could reduce none payment and counter the financial effects of any falls in business. It is worth noting here that It should be also noted that the 2016 tariff increase did not appear to have any effect on car park patronage or on the wider trading conditions in Lichfield.

3.10 Any additional surplus monies generated[1] it is suggested should be used to promote the business environment of the town centre and to improve the customer experience when using the car parks. Examples of how this could be achieved could include free or reduced-cost parking at certain times to increase footfall and an extension of card payment facilities (including contactless) across the parking estate to aid convenience. It should however be noted here that the 'free after two' promotion undertaken in partnership with the BID group in January and February did not bring any noticeable boost in business levels.

**Electrical Vehicle Charging points**

3.11 There are two electric vehicle (EV) charge points currently provided by the Council at the Friary car park. Use of electric vehicles is increasing across the globe, nationally and they are becoming a common sight on the district's roads.

3.12 Given the Government's commitment to zero carbon it appears clear that electrical vehicles will make up an increasingly significant part of the nation's transport stock in the future. Policy in respect of electrical charging points is however not so clear and as far as public charging points goes the provision

[1] The use of additional surpluses is governed by the general requirement that they should be spent on transport or highway related activities.

of these and policies as regards the same appear to be left to individual local authorities and other public bodies to determine.

3.13 When EV's first came on to the market there was a push to encourage their use with incentives for various bodies to install associated infrastructure but such incentives have gradually been removed or reduced in value. Decisions on provision, costs willing to be incurred and pricing fall very much on the aforementioned bodies. Guidance from government (although see below) and EV promoters, is limited.

3.14 The growth in EV levels of ownership coupled with continuing limitations in the effective range of vehicles suggests there will be a role for charging points located away from EV owners homes. We have seen an increase in privately operated charging points at motorway service stations, filling stations etc. Equally, free or subsidised operations are being rolled out across the public sector estate. With charging becoming seemingly easier to undertake at home due to improvements in the technology, what we may be looking at are public charging points (in tandem with those private facilities mentioned above) acting as top ups and as such patterns of demand accordingly reflecting specific needs and requirements. Consideration by the Council of possibly enhancing the provision of EV public charging facilities across its estate it is suggested is an area that should be looked at together with the costs of this and scope to cover these costs through an appropriate charging mechanism.

3.15 Finally, whilst this paper was in preparation a joint consultation document was issued by the Department For Transport/Office for Low Emission Vehicles which moots both a 'requirement' to provide charging points in new residential developments over specified sizes and also in non-residential properties with parking provision serving the public – the latter, at a rate of one point per 20 parking spaces.

3.16 This is not a definite requirement at this stage but if brought into force it could have major impacts for the Council and other public bodies. It is unclear if the requirement would apply to public car parks but the Council House and Depot car parks as well as the leisure centres could all be effected by this potential legislation.

**Other matters**

3.17 Whilst plans for the Friarsgate scheme were being progressed and which would have resulted in the removal of the existing bus station, minimal maintenance was carried out to the latter. Since the demise of that project and the Council's focus moving to bringing forward alternative proposals there is the opportunity to address issues whilst the longer term plans are drawn up. Members will be aware of the Birmingham Road site enabling works which are on-going, these include refurbishment of the bus station to provide for a better customer experience.

3.18 The aforementioned enabling works are intended to facilitate development on the Birmingham Road site. Members will be aware that consultants David Lock Associates have been commissioned to undertake a master planning exercise looking at the future development and growth opportunities of this site and the wider city centre of Lichfield. As part of this work, DLA will be considering parking requirements and what this means for the Council's parking estate.

3.19 We continue to examine different possible car parking payment methods in line with changing customer expectations. Unfortunately some of the most effective methods of operation using Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) systems are not available to local government operators due to the operating requirements of the Traffic Management Act but we have made both payment by phone and contactless card payment available on some of our car parks and both forms of cashless payment continue to gain in popularity. We will seek to roll out the technology to facilitate cashless payments across the whole parking estate.

3.20 Whilst many local residents will have knowledge of our car parks and the scope to park at any one time given demand. This will not always be the case and certainly for new visitors to the city. It is therefore important that information is available to inform people where car parks are and the availability of spaces. Variable messaging is a means of addressing this and is an area being considered subject to the necessary resources being available. The Council currently holds a sum of approximately £40,000 acquired under a S106 planning obligation to go towards this technology.

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| Alternative Options | 1. Members may consider not to support any changes to the present car parking charging regime on a Sunday or suggest an alternative to that proposed in this report.<br>2. Members may also have alternative views on the case for exploring additional EV charging capacity and for introducing signage to assist car park users. |
| Consultation | 1. There has been previous consideration of the potential for Sunday charging by an EGED (O&S) Committee. |
| Financial Implications | 1. The report identifies a potential income from regularising the Sunday charging rates and bringing these in to line with those applicable currently across the rest of the week. Costs would have to be factored in in terms of enforcement.<br>2. There would be costs involved in the provision of facilities which would allow for the use of more cashless debit/credit payment. This would need to be off-set against income including potential increased income levels as a result of introducing choice and easier means of payment.<br>3. There would be costs on introducing more EV charging points and charging for use would need to consider whether this is based on what kind of a cost recovery basis is being applied. |
| Contribution to the Delivery of the Strategic Plan | 1. Provision of suitable parking facilities and the infrastructure to support electrical vehicle use encourages people to access Lichfield city centre, use its varied facilities and in doing so help sustain it. This is in line with the strategic objective of creating and maintaining a vibrant and prosperous economy. |
| Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications | 1. None from this report |
| Crime & Safety Issues | 1. None from this report |
| GDPR/Privacy Impact Assessment | 1. None. |

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| | Risk Description | How We Manage It | Severity of Risk (RYG) |
|---|---|---|---|
| A | The Committee do not support the idea of regularising Sunday charging rates with those for the rest of the week | Members would need to consider the potential loss of income and the uses this would be put to, to aid customers experience. Monies would have to be found from other budgets to progress certain aspects of the report. | Yellow |

## Background documents

## Relevant web links

**Appendix 1**

**Car Parking Statistics**

The council collects detailed data in terms of the usage of its car parks on a daily basis and records this. Variables include number of transactions (ticketed and paid via pay by phone), duration of stay, income received etc. Such information is available for each of the Council's individual car parks.

The car parking service prepares monthly aggregated reports which are, with key highlights and trends over time, reported to the responsible cabinet member and relevant head of service. This helps monitor performance against agreed objectives but also informs decisions about possible actions that need to be taken.

On an annual basis the Council is obliged to publish data relating to its parking account in respect of costs and income and does this as part of the financial transparency arrangements.

The table below shows transactions per month across the parking estate for the years 2017, 2018 and 2019. The figures are for tickets purchased at the machines and do not include those bought via the pay by phone facility.

| | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **January** | 75,670 | 71,384 | 77,491 |
| **February** | 76,984 | 65,756 | 76,346 |
| **March** | 83,822 | 73,687 | 86,208 |
| **April** | 75,101 | 76,020 | 77,311 |
| **May** | 75,023 | 80,651 | 73,244 |
| **June** | 76,132 | 85,485 | 75,047 |
| **July** | 84,507 | 87,815 | 81,946 |
| **August** | 82,965 | 91,041 | 84,468 |
| **September** | 77,511 | 82,303 | 73,652 |
| **October** | 78,462 | 85,360 | 75,490 |
| **November** | 78,750 | 85,744 | 79,036 |
| **December** | 86,008 | 108,620 | 91,161 |

Payment made via the Pay by Phone facility is increasing as a proportion of overall income. The table below shows the number of transactions undertaken via this process over the last 6 months:

| **June 2019** | **July** | **August** | **September** | **October** | **November** | **December** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10,884 | 11,372 | 10,756 | 10,808 | 12,394 | 13,193 | 14,543 |