

Budget Proposals 2016-17: Car Parks

Summary of Feedback Received and Key Findings

Why we consulted?

Over the last four years we have had to make savings of £23m because we've received less money from central government. We have done this by becoming more efficient at what we do, by reducing some of our administrative functions and increasing our income. Throughout this period we have done our best to protect front line services.

We now have to find another £20m over the next four years, with almost £11m to be found in 2016/17. Much of this will come from further efficiencies within the council, but £4.6m will have to come from services that will impact the public.

In order to inform the budget setting process for 2016/17 we published a list of those proposals which would likely have a direct impact on service users, and sought the views from those affected and interested:

- to understand the likely impact
- to identify any measures to reduce their impact
- to explore any possible alternatives

Approach

All the proposals were published on the council's website on 3 November 2015 with feedback requested by 14 December 2015. Respondents were directed to a [central index page](#), with a video message from the Chief Executive outlining the background to the exercise.

Information relating to this proposal was linked directly from this index page. This contained more detailed information on what was specifically proposed, information on what we thought the impact might be, as well as what else we had considered in developing and arriving at this proposal. Feedback was then invited through an online form, and through a dedicated email address.

Each individual budget proposal was placed on our [Consultation Portal](#) which automatically notified those registered that an exercise had been launched. Members of the West Berkshire community panel (around 800 people) and local stakeholder charities, representative groups and partner organisations were also emailed directly, notifying them of the exercise and inviting their contributions.

Heads of Service made direct contact with those organisations affected by any of the budget proposals prior to them being made publically available.

A press release was issued on the same date, as well as publicised through Facebook and Twitter.

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Background

Parking charges at council car parks in Newbury have been pegged at the same level since 2012, and even longer at some car parks in Thatcham, Theale and Pangbourne. After a period of four years it is appropriate to review our parking charges with the aim of using additional income to enable further important traffic management work (defined as that needed to secure expeditious, convenient and safe movement of traffic, both pedestrian and vehicular, and provision of suitable and adequate parking facilities on and off the public highway) to be undertaken whilst remaining competitive with other towns in the region.

We are proposing to implement the following tariff at our main Newbury car parks.

	New Tariff	Current Tariff
Up to 1 hour	£1.30	£1.00
Up to 2 hours	£2.50	£2.20
Up to 3 hours	£3.70	£3.40
Up to 4 hours	£5.00	£4.50
Up to 6 hours	£7.00	£6.50
Up to 8 hours	£8.50	no change
Over 8 hours	£12.00	no change

We are also proposing:

- An increase in the evening charge (Mon to Sun) to £1.50 (currently £1)
- No change to the current Sunday charge (8am to 6pm) of £1.50
- A 35% increase in season ticket prices
- An increase in Newbury resident and visitor parking permit charges to £30 per annum and £1 per day respectively.
- No increase to the current on-street charges in Newbury
- A modest increase at car parks in Theale, Pangbourne and some in Thatcham

Summary of Key Points

25 responses to the consultation were received. Two of these were from Parish Councils (Tilehurst and Pangbourne) with one organisation providing a response (West Berkshire Green Party). The remaining 22 responses were from individual members of the public. All responses were received via the online consultation portal.

The majority of the responses (17) related to the proposed price increases at car parks in Newbury, with 10 concerned that shoppers may go elsewhere, two were concerned that drivers will search for free parking and cause problems in residential areas, four supported the proposal and one suggested that the Sunday parking charge should be increased from £1.50 to £2.00.

Four comments were received in respect of residents parking with one respondent stating that permit prices should be increased in all towns, not just Newbury. One supported the proposed price increase of resident permits but thought that visitor permits should not be increased and two people commented that they would like to have more areas provided for residents parking.

One organisation commented that modest car park price increases at towns outside Newbury is reasonable, one objected to an increase in season ticket prices, one felt that more parking for workers and businesses should be provided and one person commented

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on parking at Newbury Community Hospital (which is not the responsibility of West Berkshire Council).

1. Are you a user of this service?

22 respondents stated that they were users of the parking service and three said they were not.

2. What do you think we should be aware of in terms of how this proposal might impact people?

The key areas were as follows:

- Shoppers may go elsewhere (10 responses)
- Effect on residents parking (Four responses)
- Important to provide good public transport (One response)

3. Do you feel that this proposal will affect particular individuals more than others, and if so, how do you think we might help with this?

The survey indicated that the following individuals/groups would be affected:

- Newbury residents (Two responses)
- Every service user (Two responses)
- Residents without a car and/or are dependent on care visits (Two responses)
- Newbury businesses (Three responses)
- Workers from outside Newbury (One response)
- Those with less disposable income (One response)

14 respondents felt that no particular individual would be affected.

4. Do you have any suggestions as to how this service might be delivered in a different way? If so, please provide details.

- Nine comments were made only two of which would generate income. These suggested that the price of resident permits should be increased for all towns, not just Newbury, and that the Newbury Sunday charge should be increased.
- Other suggestions included leaving 1 hour parking at £1, providing more resident parking, re-letting the CEO contract (not applicable as in-house service), make all on-street parking free and ask businesses to allow their parking spaces to be used at weekends.

5. Is there any way that you, or your organisation, can contribute in helping to alleviate the impact of this proposal? If so, please provide details of how you can help.

No suggestions were received.

6. Do you have any alternative charging proposals? If so, please provide details.

Nine of the 24 respondents provided a comment, few of which would actually result in increased income. These included:

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- First hour should be free (two)
- Keep charges as they are (one)
- Increase Sunday charge to £2 (one)
- Make all on street parking free (one)
- Scrap parking charges and increase business rates (one)
- Put in place a refund arrangement with town centre shops (one)
- Impose £1 for 30 minutes then £2 for two hours (one)
- Amend restrictions in residents parking areas to deter free parking (one)

7. Any further comments?

Six additional comments were received as follows:

- Price increases are minimal and should go ahead (one)
- Price increases will discourage visitors (two)
- Keep the rates as simple as possible (one)
- Still a lot cheaper than Reading or Oxford (one)
- Enforcement officers do a great job in keeping order (one)

Conclusion

Relatively few responses were received to the Car Parks Consultation which may indicate that the proposals were reasonable. However of the 25 received, ten people felt that higher parking charges in Newbury may deter visitors. A recent benchmarking exercise showed that prices in Newbury are competitive with other towns in the region. There were also some positive comments made such as the good work of our CEO's and that price increases are minimal/modest. There is therefore no reason why the proposals should not be implemented.

Please note: *In order to allow everyone who wished the opportunity to contribute, feedback was not sampled. Therefore this wasn't a quantitative, statistically valid exercise. It was neither the premise, purpose, nor within the capability of the exercise, to determine the overall community's level of support, or views on the proposals, with any degree of confidence.*

The feedback captured therefore should be seen in the context of 'those who responded', rather than reflective of the wider community.

All the responses have been provided verbatim as an appendix to this report. Whilst this summary seeks to distil the key, substantive points made, it should also be read in conjunction with the more detailed verbatim comments to ensure a full, rounded perspective of the views and comments are considered.

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