

Overview of Responses and Recommendations

Budget Proposals 2024/25: Restructure parking fees and charges		Service Director: Jon Winstanley Author: Peter Walker	8 February 2024 Version 1 (Scrutiny Commission)
Proposal:	<p>To amend the parking fees and charges for 2024/25. The specific proposed changes to car parks are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• introduce a 20p increase on most one hour (or shortest stay) tickets for car parks across the district• to align Goldwell and Northcroft Leisure Centre (and, seasonally for 1 April to 30 September, Northcroft Lane West) charges to provide consistency for the users attending Northcroft Leisure Centre and support use of the Newbury Lido• ensure parking charges, where they apply, are implemented all day, every day, across West Berkshire unless there is a good justification for not doing so• introduce evening and Sunday charges in some places where these don't currently exist• introduce charges in Lambourn, which will require the installation of a ticket machine• adjust Station Road, Hungerford charges to be competitive with the nearby APCOA facilities• reduce charges at Northbrook multi-storey car park due to current underutilisation and to help free up capacity at other Newbury parking facilities <p>For our other parking fees and charges, the main changes are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• season tickets have been modelled to offer annual, quarterly and monthly options, based on equivalent daily charges for 80, 25 and 10 days respectively• resident permits have been modelled to be charged in four tiers: Tier 1 - where resident permit bays are in parking charge areas; Tier 2 - where there are good bus and rail services and car club availability; Tier 3 - reasonable bus and rail services; and Tier 4 - bus services only• it is proposed, for 2025/26, to charge second (or additional) residential permits at a higher rate, and that early notification of this intention is being given at this time• to introduce an administrative charge for All Zone permits, which are currently provided free of charge (but extend their validity from 1 hour to 2 hours); it is anticipated that some medical and care professionals will review their need for the permit		

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Total budget 2023/24:	Expenditure £2m Income £3.1m	Initial proposed additional income 2024/25:	Up to £0.5m	Recommended proposed additional income 2024/25:	Up to £0.5m	
No. of responses:	<p>In total, 258 responses were received through the survey. The breakdown of responses is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 154 - A user of the service • 225 - A resident of West Berkshire • 3 - A visitor to West Berkshire • 10 - A West Berkshire business owner • 18 - Employed by a West Berkshire business • 6 - Employed by West Berkshire Council • 15 - A Parish/Town Councillor • 0 - A District Councillor • 0 - A partner organisation • 0 - A West Berkshire Council service provider • 5 - Other <p>We also received direct responses from Reading West & Mid Berkshire CLP and Newbury CLP, Thatcham Town Council, and Tilehurst and Basildon Parish Councils. We received no petitions.</p>					
Key issues raised:	<p>Views expressed were both in favour and against the proposal, and it was a fairly even split excluding Lambourn. This was seen as the most palatable of the ten proposals.</p> <p>Those in favour explained that people who could afford cars could afford parking charges, and that the proposals would support a move to active and sustainable travel.</p> <p>Those against were critical of the impacts, especially on shops, as people were less likely to come into Newbury in particular.</p>					

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	<p>A number of suggestions were made to improve the offer, with the most practical already included within the Parking Strategy 2024-2034 and have been considered when proposing the fees and charges for 2024/25.</p> <p>Lambourn residents were concerned that introducing charging would make the High Street more dangerous and there could be a potential loss of trade for high street shops.</p>		
Equality issues:	No issues were raised during the consultation, that weren't already included in the EqIA stage one.		
Suggestions for reducing the impact on service users:	Suggestion	Council response	
	Discounts for West Berkshire residents, elderly, those on benefits.	Discounts are available for regular users through season tickets. Some car parks will charge lower rates.	
	Short-term parking free, reduced rate, or paid for by businesses.	Evidence suggests that short-term free parking leads to less economic activity in town centres. This will be kept under review.	
	Discounted pre-payments, improved season ticket options. Introduce transferable tickets. Better signposting of Northbrook multi-storey. Retain cash and card payments. Improve district-wide enforcement.	These are included in the Parking Strategy 2024 to 2034.	
	Remove cliff edge parking charges between day and night rates.	Current technology restricts this. Evening charges could be removed but this would result in day charges applying at all times, which would ultimately have a higher financial impact on residents and visitors and a detrimental effect on evening trade.	
	Incentivise bus use.	The Council are already doing this through the Bus Service Improvement Plan and Enhanced Partnership.	

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	Introduce a park and ride service.	This is not currently considered a cost-effective solution.	
	Remove parking from Lambourn High Street.	There are some bays on the High Street (on-street) which still allow for existing traffic movements. We acknowledge that introducing charges in the car park may put additional pressure on-street. Removal of all charges from the car park would result in a forecast potential loss of income of £2,300 each year. It is therefore proposed to amend the Charging Policy to allow one hour free parking in the car park which is forecast to reduce the potential income by up to 50%. This would continue to encourage drivers to use the car park and minimise on-street congestion.	
	Remove parking charges in the vicinity of Thatcham Station after midday.	The charging hours are proposed to align with Pipers Lane where charges apply at all times. Charges should apply equally to all users using the same facilities. Reduced off-peak rates are already in operation at Station Road car park.	
	Do not charge for school streets permits.	There are currently no plans to charge for these permits.	
Alternative options for applying the saving in this area:	Suggestion	Council response	
	Encourage businesses to cover at least part of their customers parking charge.	We would be happy to explore this where technology, parking provision and business demand exists.	
	Use ANPR to reduce costs.	Councils are currently not legally allowed to enforce parking charges through the use of ANPR cameras.	
	Get rid of traffic wardens.	Civil enforcement officers are a vital part of the service. Without them, the Council would need to close its car parks.	
	Suggestion	Council response	

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Suggestions for income generation:	Increase charges more than proposed.	The proposals represent a balance. Increasing charges further at this time would more likely lead to reduced income as usage would decrease.	
	Better enforcement.	This would require additional resources (staffing and associated costs) and would be unlikely to result in overall savings.	
	Increase fines.	Fines are set nationally.	
	Allow cash payments only in £1 increments.	This would disadvantage those that need to pay by cash and would be unlikely to result in any meaningful additional income.	
	Introduce pre-payment options.	This is included in the Parking Strategy 2024 to 2034.	
	Trial low-cost car parks.	Some car parks do charge lower fees to stimulate demand. Within the proposals, charges at Northbrook would be reduced for longer-stay parking.	
	Fix broken barriers.	This is a network issue which we are actively seeking to resolve.	
	Charge for concessionary bus passes.	This is a national scheme and the council are unable to charge for applications (only replacement passes).	
	Introduce speed cameras.	Income from speed cameras goes to the Police. The Council does not have the legal power to use speed cameras.	
	Increase council tax. Receive adequate government funding.	Levels are set by government.	
	Attract big retailers to town centres. Sell some investment properties for a profit. Convert old council buildings into flats for rent. Use libraries to provide fingerprint and photos for visa applications. Increase brown bin fees. Run cafes in parks. Allow	These are matters for other parts of the Council to consider.	

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	installation of EV charging stations but with Council taking a percentage of the revenue. Build more houses.		
Officer conclusion and recommendation as a result of the responses:	Given the fairly even split between those in favour and those against the proposal, and the fact that this is seen as the least painful of the ten proposals within the public consultation, it is recommended that this proposal is accepted, with the amendment to allow the first hour of parking in Lambourn car park to be free of charge.		

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