

Briefing Note on the Burdwood Car Park for the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission meeting on 11 December 2012

Response to Letter from Councillor Crumly Dated 14 November

The letter from Councillor Crumly is attached as Appendix A. The letter contained six requests for economic information, which are set out below with a response in each case.

1. A breakdown of the current cost of repair and maintenance of the Burdwood car parks.

Response

The cost of cleaning the elements of the car park that are owned by the Council consist of two parts, namely cleansing and litter picking. This is carried out under the corporate cleaning contract with Veolia and the monthly costs are £105.32 and £22.66 respectively. This equates to £1,535.76 per annum.

It is proposed to install one or two of the Zeag pay machines that are currently held in store. These machines are available because they have been replaced by more modern Metric alternatives at very high use sites for operational reasons in the past. They are nonetheless functional and perfectly adequate for this location. These two Zeag machines are already on the list of machines that are included in the Council's maintenance contract, so there will be no additional maintenance costs incurred if one or two of them are deployed.

The type of repairs that can be required in Council car parks include repair or replacement of tariff boards, replacement of posts or bollards, repairs to pot holes, repainting of worn out lines, trimming back plants and trees for which the Council is responsible etc. It is not however possible to identify what these maintenance costs might be during any financial year because they occur on a needs must basis. If such costs do occur they are paid for from the Parking budgets that are set up for the purpose.

This response is given in relation to the extent of the Burdwood car park that comes under the Council's control. The Parking team is not responsible for the repair, maintenance and cleaning of the two smaller areas of the car park that are not in the Council's ownership. Consequently it is not possible to provide any information on what the costs are for these two areas.

2. Clear identification of which are owned by the Council and which are not.

Response

The plan that was included as Appendix D to the ID report considered on 8 November 2012 shows all of the car park and highlights the two small areas that are not in the Council's ownership. These are the area adjacent to Wheelers Green Way (in front of the Co-op) and the area in front of the Surgery. This plan is attached to this briefing note as Appendix B.

3. The capital cost of setting up the project.

Response

As indicated in the response to 1 above we will not be purchasing any new pay machines as we already have these available for use. The cost of installing the bases for the machines is approximately £250 so the maximum we would have to pay for this is £500 if we go for two machines. This cost would come out of our revenue budget however so it is not a capital cost.

4. A detailed breakdown of the likely income.

Response

At the time that Full Council approved the charges for this car park as part of the wider revised parking charges contained in the 2012/13 revenue budget the following tariff structure was agreed:

Monday to Saturday 8.00 am to 6.00 pm	
Up to 1 hour	Free
Up to 2 hours	£0.50
Up to 3 hours	£0.80
Over 3 hours	£2.00

A very conservative approach was used to predict the income at that time because there is always considerable uncertainty about how customers will react to new charges. Typically income is low to begin with but then picks up when customers become accustomed to the new charges. The very simple assumption made was that we would sell 10 tickets per day at £0.50 for the 305 charging days per annum (ie less Sundays and Bank Holidays). This equated to £1,270 net of VAT. No additional income was

included for customers staying for up to 3 hours or for those staying for over 3 hours because it was considered that the numbers would be small given the location. This was almost certainly an under estimate however because this car park may be attractive to peak time railway commuters willing to walk further for a lower parking charge than they have to pay at the Station car park.

When the petition was received objecting to the proposed charges it was agreed that the proposal be postponed for further consideration. As a result of the further deliberations that followed revised proposals were included in the Individual Decision Report that was considered and approved on 8 November. The revised tariff structure proposed to take account of concerns raised is as set out in the November report that is reproduced below:

Monday to Saturday 8.00 am to 6.00 pm	
Up to 2 hours	Free
Up to 3 hours	£0.80
Over 3 hours	£2.00

Two assumptions were made at this stage. These were that we would sell some 6 £0.80 tickets per day or that we would sell just 1 ticket at £0.80 and 2 tickets at £2.00 for the 305 days per annum. Both of these assumptions are again very conservative. In both cases the estimated income net of VAT is £1,220. Again we think this is almost certainly an under estimate but it is better to have a lower estimate that we improve on than a higher one that we don't achieve.

It is worth mentioning that we now have the benefit of the information on ticket sales at the Gilbert Court car park at which charging was introduced in May. In the first 7 months we have achieved an income of £873, which projects to £2,095 for a full year. This compares with our earlier estimate of £1,270 using the same assumptions for this car park as we did for Burdwood.

5. A breakdown on the latest thinking on exempt periods and exempt individuals, ie two hours and all surgery personnel.

Response

The first part of this request has essentially been covered above and was set out in more detail in the 8 November Individual Decision Report. To summarise the position though, customers would now be able to stay for 2

hours instead of 1 hour free of charge, which should be ample time to meet the needs of almost all visitors to the Surgery and the local shops. For those persons who would need to stay for more than 2 hours, eg a very small number of patients or staff working at the Surgery, the latest proposal, as detailed in the report, to provide the Practice Manager with 10 free season tickets to be used at her discretion will provide for this need. The Practice Manager has contacted the Council and said on behalf of The Partners that they are happy to co-operate fully with this proposal and to thank us for our assistance in this matter.

6. A detailed breakdown of the likely income to be generated, bearing in mind the free periods.

Response

This has already been covered in 4 above.

Response to Reasons for Call-In as detailed in letter from Strategic Support dated 14 November

The letter from Strategic Support is attached as Appendix C. The letter listed five reasons for the call-in, which are set out below with a response in each case.

1. The predicted income is negligible and is at risk in any event.

Response

It is accepted that the estimated income is quite low but the estimate is very conservative. The detailed explanation in the response to Councillor Crumly's economic information request 4 above makes this clear and indicates that we are likely to achieve higher than the estimated income. It is certainly not the case that the income is at risk.

2. The costs of purchasing and installing a ticketing machine, and collecting the money from the machine and servicing it are not mentioned in the report.

Response

This has also been partly answered in the responses to Councillor Crumly's economic information requests 1 and 3 above. In summary the machines are already held in store and readily available for use at no extra cost and are already on the Council's maintenance contract. The cost of installation will be between £250 and £500 depending on whether we go for one or two pay machines.

Cash is collected from all of our machines under an existing cash collection contract. The cost of adding either one or two machines to this contract will be £5 per machine per week, which equates to £260 to £520 per annum.

3. This will cause a displacement of car parking to parking spaces that are provided free to support local retailers.

Response

It is difficult to see why this would be the case. The majority of visitors to this car park would be able to conclude their business within the 2 hours of free parking that would be permitted if this proposal goes ahead. Consequently it is unlikely that visitors would park in the Co-op car park that will still be free. It is accepted that some of the retailers may have employees that park for more than the 2 hours of free parking and these would have to pay if they use the Council's car park. However this is no different from everywhere else in the district. Co-op employees would probably park in their own car park though.

4. There will be damage to the local retail trade.

Response

The nature of the local retail trade in this area is unlikely to require stays of greater than 2 hours and the number customers who stay for longer than this are likely to be quite low. It is therefore unlikely that there would be any significant impact on the local retail trade.

5. There is concern over the management of the two hour free period; some members of the public may not realise they have to obtain a ticket to park for free for the first two hours.

Response

Everything will be done to make the signage as clear as possible to ensure that customers understand the need to obtain a ticket for the first 2 hours even though it is free. This requirement to display a ticket for free periods of parking is common place throughout the country. It is not unreasonable to expect car drivers to read signs and comply with clear instructions.