

Report to: **Hub Committee**

Date: **9 April 2024**

Title: **Long Stay Pay & Display Charges Consultation Review**

Portfolio Area: **Community Services - Cllr Adam Bridgewater**

Wards Affected: **All**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken: After the call in period for Hub Committee – Thursday, 18 April 2024

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Hub Committee is RECOMMENDED to:

- 1. NOTE the results of the statutory public consultation;**
- 2. APPROVE the following amendments to the West Devon Borough Council (Off-Street Parking Places) (Variation No.1) Order 2022:**
 - i. Amend the Pay and Display charges in accordance with Appendix A;**
 - ii. Change Abbey car park from a 4 hour maximum stay to a 6 hour maximum stay car park; and**
 - iii. Remove Brentor car park and Lydford car park from the West Devon Borough Council (Off Street Parking Places) Order 2022.**
- 3. REQUEST that the lead Hub Committee Member for People and Communities write to Devon County Council requesting that the Council is proactively consulted on any future proposed changes to the on-street parking in Tavistock or Okehampton to ensure that these can be considered by the Council in relation to the economic impact on the respective towns.**

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 On the 21st November 2023, the Hub Committee agreed to give notice of the proposals to amend the West Devon Borough Council (Off-Street Parking Places) (Variation No1) Order 2022 detailed in the report considered by Hub Committee and to seek the views of the public on such proposals (Min. HC 33/23 refers).
- 1.2 The Council recognises the importance of supporting the high street and this was the reason why there was a strategic change to selected long stay tariffs only to enable short stay tariffs to remain at 2021 levels.
- 1.3 The proposed parking charges remain fair and proportionate and offer competitive pricing locally for visits to our towns compared to other local authorities within Devon.
- 1.4 Following on from Devon County Councils (DCC) postponement of on-street car parking charges, the Council recognises the need to ensure that any future proposals from DCC aligns with West Devon Borough Council's off-street parking schemes to ensure that any such scheme is not detrimental to the economy of the high streets in the towns.
- 1.5 The main objectives of the consultation were to seek views on the:
 - i. amendment of the long stay parking tariffs
 - ii. changing Abbey car park from a 4 hour maximum stay to a 6 hour maximum stay car park: and
 - iii. remove Brentor car park and Lydford car park from the West Devon Borough Council (off Street Parking Places) Order 2022
- 1.6 The public consultation concluded on 8th January 2024. During the period, 44 responses were received, of which 34 were formal objections, 3 were neutral responses offering alternative options and 7 supported the proposals. The response rate to this consultation was exceptionally low given the size of the cohort of people who were consulted.
- 1.7 Section 3 of this report highlights the Council's rationale for the proposed changes and Section 4 of this report details the consultation responses.
- 1.8 Having comprehensively reviewed the objections and representations made to the Council it is recommended to approve the amendments to West Devon Borough Council (Off Street Parking Places) Order 2022

- 1.9 The Notice of Making will be advertised informing of the decision in the local press, car parks and website in relation to the car parks as in Appendix A

2. Background

- 2.1 At the meeting on 21st November 2023, the Hub Committee resolved to undertake a 21-day public consultation before making a decision as to implement the proposed amendments to the Off-Street Parking Order.
- 2.2 The Council has a legal obligation to undertake a statutory consultation and advertise the appropriate amendments to the Off-Street Parking Order before implementing any changes to parking arrangements, including fees and charges.
- 2.3 The Council are aware of the importance of car parking sites to the development and prosperity of the Borough.
- 2.4 The proposed tariffs were arrived at to ensure parking charges covered the costs of managing the car parks and their maintenance, whilst remaining competitive with other providers and comparable with other similar local authorities' providers. This allows us to offer competitive pricing locally for parking and visits to our towns.
- 2.5 The last tariff amendments were carried out in March 2021 and had not increased since. During this time the Consumer Price Index (CPI) has increased by 20.66%.
- 2.6 A strategic change to selected long stay tariffs ensured that the short stay tariffs remained unchanged from the 2021 levels.
- 2.7 Following feedback from customers it was also proposed that Abbey car park extended for a four hour to six hour maximum stay to allow for longer term parking.
- 2.8 It was also proposed to remove Lydford and Brentor car park from the Off-Street Parking Order following proposed termination of the agreement with Dartmoor National Park.
- 2.9 The 21-day consultation commenced on Thursday 7th December 2023 with the closing date for responses being Monday 8th January 2024.
- 2.10 Residents were informed of the consultation by the following methods:
 - Notices advertised in the local press.
 - Notices displayed in all our West Devon Borough Council car parks.

- Council website
- Social media platforms

3. Rationale for changes

3.1 A response to the objections and representations received are as follows:

- i. The Council recognises the importance of supporting the high street and this was the reason why there was a strategic change to selected long stay tariffs only to enable short stay tariffs to remain at 2021 levels allowing for 'pop and shop' on the high street.
- ii. Car parking income is used to support the vital street scene services provided in the Borough which supports the vibrancy of towns which includes street cleansing, open spaces, parks, public conveniences, and litter bin emptying.
- iii. The parking charges remain fair and proportionate and offer competitive pricing locally for visits to our towns compared to other local authorities within Devon.
- iv. There is a need to ensure there is a balanced budget given the inflationary pressures (consumer price index has increased by 20.66% since the last tariff increase in March 2021) and the significant increase in costs such as fuel, utility costs and contract costs etc.
- v. The parking charges and change in time restriction at Abbey car park will continue to be reviewed.

4. Outcomes/outputs

4.1 The Council received 44 responses to the consultation. Of the 44 responses received, 34 were formal objections, 3 were neutral responses offering alternative options and 7 supported the proposals.

4.2 The table below shows a summary of the 44 responses which have been identified into common 'themes' with the objectives raised.

	No Of Correspondence Received
Objects due to cost - need to support towns	30
Objects to Abbey changing to 6 hour stay	2
Objects to Lydford & Brentor/cost	2
Neutral - no expression either way but made alternative comment	3
Support	7

- 4.3 In summary the objections mainly related to the increased price of the long stay car parking tariffs. The objections referred to :
- i. The proposals being counterproductive to supporting towns.
 - ii. It was felt the increased charges will drive more people out of town or online rather than shopping local
 - iii. It was just another tax on the motorist.
 - iv. It was stated we should be encouraging visitors and residents to the towns and not discouraging with increased charges.
 - v. The parking charges are unaffordable in a cost-of-living crisis.
- 4.4 Objections were also received with regards to changing Abbey car park from a 4 stay to a 6 hour stay car park as it was felt this car park is great for shoppers and workers with long stay available at alternative car parks such as Riverside car park.
- 4.5 Objections to the Lydford and Brentor car parks related to pay & display charges being introduced and should remain free for health and mental health reasons promoting Dartmoor.
- 4.6 The neutral responses, of which there were three did not specify whether they supported or objected to the proposals but, put forward alternative suggestions such as install EV charges at zero cost to the motorist and would like to have a permit option for those that frequently visit the town.
- 4.7 Those that supported the proposals agreed with the charges and supported the tariff increase applied to the long stay car parks only. It was acknowledged that West Devon Borough Council car parking charges were cheaper compared to other areas. Support was given provided the income supported the local community.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1 Having comprehensively reviewed the objections received, it is recommended to implement the amendment to the Off-Street Parking Places Order.
- 5.2 Officer will proceed to publish the Notice of Decision within the local press, website and car parks and the Off-Street Parking Order will be amended and sealed.
- 5.3 The new parking charges will come into operation in April 2024.

6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	The Council has power to provide and to regulate off-street car parks under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 The Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996 set out the procedures to be followed before and after making any order regulating the use of car parks.
Financial implications to include reference to value for money	Y	<p>The impact of the tariff increases is expected to generate £150k in additional car parking income from the tariff changes across all car parks. However, it must be noted that in 2023/24 the Council reduced its income target for car parking income by £150k. Therefore, increasing car parking charges as is proposed in this report by an inflationary amount (since March 2021) is taking the Council's car parking income back to pre-pandemic levels and a pre pandemic budget position.</p> <p>We will monitor the income and performance The cost of implementing the changes will be met from the car parking budget.</p> <p>The difference between the income and expenditure on off street parking is used to support costs associated with the operation and maintenance of parking services, its infrastructure, and the maintenance of off street car parks. It is also used to support and provide other Council services such as street cleansing, toilets, parks, and open spaces and other lawfully incurred identified expenditure.</p>
Risk		

Supporting Corporate Strategy		Council Communities Environment
Climate Change - Carbon / Biodiversity Impact	Y	There are no negative impacts. There may be small positive impacts with customers considering alternative means of transport or care sharing.
Equality and Diversity		No implications.
Safeguarding		No implications.
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		No implications.
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		No implications.
Other implications		None at this stage.

Supporting Information

Appendices:

Appendix A: Pay & Display Charges

Background Papers:

None