



OFFICER REPORT TO LOCAL COMMITTEE

Proposed on street 'pay and display' parking charges in Spelthorne

14 September 2011

KEY ISSUE

To seek approval for statutory advertisement of on street parking charges in parts of Spelthorne Borough.

SUMMARY

On 12 January 2011 the Cabinet Member for Transport approved a consultation programme for the introduction of on street pay and display parking charges in Surrey. These proposals have subsequently been reviewed and modified by the Environment and Transport Select Committee and Cabinet, and amended further following discussions with Councillors whose wards could potentially be affected by the proposals. Decision-making has now been devolved to Local Committees; consequently, this report seeks the Spelthorne Local Committee's approval to formally advertise on street parking charges as shown in the attached plan in Annex 1.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Spelthorne Local Committee is asked to:

- a) Approve the statutory advertisement of the parking charges and waiting restrictions shown on the attached plan in Annex 1
- b) Agree that objections and comments to the proposals are reviewed by the Committee at a later date.

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Surrey County Council is the Highway Authority in Surrey and responsible for managing the highway network including on street parking. Spelthorne Borough Council act as agent for Surrey and carry out enforcement of the on street parking restrictions in the Borough of Spelthorne, as well as managing their own off street car parks.
- 1.2 On 12 January 2011 the Cabinet Member for Transport approved a programme of consultation for the introduction of on street parking charges in many towns and shopping areas around Surrey.
- 1.3 The Transport Select Committee set up a task group to review these proposals in February 2011. The task group recommendations were presented to and approved by the Environment and Transport Committee on 18 May and the Cabinet on 24 May. The proposals in this report are based on the E&T recommendations/proposals but they have also been modified following discussions with Spelthorne councillors and officers.
- 1.4 Across Surrey many shopping areas have a variety of parking facilities. These are typically:
 - On street spaces, managed by the County Council as the Highway Authority
 - Off street car parks, usually owned and managed by District and Borough Councils, but sometimes privately owned.
 - Supermarket car parks, usually free for customers and limited to 2 hours or so
- 1.5 District and Borough Councils and private car park operators currently charge for parking in the majority of car parks they own and manage. Sometimes the car parks have a free initial period in smaller towns, villages or shopping areas to encourage visitors. On street parking spaces in Surrey (with a few exceptions e.g. Guildford and Woking) tend to be free.
- 1.6 In shopping and retail areas, off street car parks usually offer longer term parking whilst parking on street is limited to one or two hours. On street spaces tend to be closer to the shops and they are often more convenient for short shopping trips or to make collections/deliveries. A shorter parking time limit also benefits customers and local businesses because it increases the turnover of the parking spaces ('churn') improving access to retail or other facilities.
- 1.7 Free time-limited on street parking is difficult to enforce as Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO) need to monitor parking activity at regular intervals and record number plates and other details to confirm whether a vehicle has overstayed the time period allowed. This is time consuming

and inefficient, reducing the amount of time available for them to patrol waiting restrictions (yellow lines) that are often installed for safety or congestion related reasons. In practice many large on street parking areas are poorly enforced due to the difficulties involved.

- 1.8 Parking charges usually take the form of 'pay and display'. This requires the motorist to take a ticket from a machine and place it in their vehicle showing their parking time allowance. This allows a CEO to see instantly whether they are legally parked and enables far more efficient enforcement of the restrictions. Because enforcement is easier, compliance improves, again helping 'churn'.
- 1.9 Where there are charges for using off street car parks (as is the case in the vast majority of those operated by the District and Borough Councils in Surrey) and on street parking is free, drivers often tend to 'cruise' nearby streets looking for a free space. This can contribute to congestion, particularly when drivers wait in the road for a space.
- 1.10 Charging for on street parking discourages this behaviour and, if the on street charge is the same or higher than the off street car parks, visitors are encouraged to go straight to a car park. This can help reduce congestion and CO2 emissions.
- 1.11 A comparatively higher tariff for on street spaces also encourages drivers to only buy as much time as they need, again helping 'churn'. The increased availability of spaces means drivers who need or want to park on street can find a space more easily without having to wait. The increased availability of spaces can be particularly helpful to businesses on roads with high levels of passing traffic (or trade).
- 1.12 A free initial parking period has been widely discussed and is recommended in some locations by the Transport Select Committee Parking Task Group. A free period would have an impact on pay and display parking income where used, however if the free period was followed by the medium tariff of £1 per hour then it is considered that there would be sufficient in most locations to cover the costs of operating the machines. This means the first 30 minutes would be free, however if a visitor wanted to stay for an hour it would cost £1. Where allowed, 2 hours on street parking would cost £2 with this tariff. Set in this way the tariff also encourages visitors to use the off street car parks for longer stay parking.
- 1.13 Thirty minutes is considered to be the maximum possible time limit for a free initial parking period. This is because most visitors are likely to be able to do their shopping in half an hour. For the purposes of estimating income it has been assumed that 20% or 1 in 5 drivers will stay for more than 30 minutes. If a longer free period were allowed, say 1 hour, then the number of drivers staying beyond this period could reduce to 1 in 10 or less. This means there would be insufficient income to cover the operational costs of the pay and display machines.

1.14 There have been some case studies about the effect of parking charges on local businesses. There are many other factors that could also influence business performance (competition, wider economy, e-commerce etc) making it difficult to directly link performance with parking charges. The main conclusion of most studies is that where parking charges are introduced, the tariff should be proportional to the retail offer (i.e. the type of shops and businesses present in a particular location and the length of time customers would spend in them). The parking charges need to be set reasonably in comparison with local car parks and the scale of the attraction. Where parking charges are introduced it is usual for the turnover of parking spaces to increase, which in turn helps increase footfall in retail areas.

1.15 While assessing potential new locations where on street parking bays could be introduced and before suggesting their inclusion, officers of the County Council gave due consideration to a number of important factors, including, but not limited to:

- the effect of the bays on the flow of traffic
- whether the bays would have any adverse impact on access to adjacent premises
- the provision of off street parking in the locality
- the availability of roads with no parking restrictions in the vicinity of the bays (and consequently possible displacement)
- the proximity and nature of the local retail offering

1.16 In some cases pay and display machines could be installed in conservation areas. It is planned to work with conservation officers in these areas to agree locations and colours that will have the least impact on the surrounding area

2 ANALYSIS

2.1 The Environment and Transport Committee reviewed proposed charges in locations across the County earlier in the year. In Spelthorne Borough, Sunbury Cross was considered but not felt viable due to difficulties gaining access, competition with the shopping centre opposite and a nearby supermarket. Other locations in Spelthorne considered for on street parking charges are:

Shepperton

2.2 Informal surveys of on street parking in Shepperton indicate that there are usually spaces available at all times of the day. There are 143 on street spaces in Shepperton and combined with the off street availability means there is almost over provision of parking space in comparison with the retail offer available. Turnover of spaces in the High Street is reasonable, however a few vehicles have been recorded staying beyond the 3 hour time limit.

- 2.3 If parking charges were introduced the most appropriate tariff for Shepperton would be a free 30 minutes followed by £1 per hour. This would have the benefit of making enforcement easier but would not necessarily improve 'churn' due to the availability of spaces. There is also a significant risk in this location that an insufficient number of visitors would pay to stay beyond 30 minutes, and use nearby residential street or car parks instead. This could mean there would be insufficient income to cover the maintenance costs of the pay and display machines.
- 2.4 The issue of parking displacement from Shepperton High Street into residential side roads has been raised as an issue, as has the Budgens supermarket, which currently offers 2 hours free parking in approximately 35-spaces, and a concern that this could face overcapacity thanks to shoppers using the High Street, preventing Budgens' own customers from parking there and potentially forcing Budgens to bring in its own enforcement measures.
- 2.5 According to the petitions, the Spelthorne Borough off street car park in Manor Park, a 3 minute walk (via the Russell Road roundabout) from the southern extent of the High Street could also face overcapacity, as at the present time, it offers up to 1 hour free parking, or £1 for up to 2 hours and £1.50 for over 2 hours.
- 2.6 The case of the Village Hall car park in Shepperton and its under-use since a parking machine was installed was highlighted by a number of petitioners, with a concern that the on street bays would be treated the same if charging were introduced.
- 2.7 Consequently it is not considered appropriate to continue with proposals for on-street charging in Shepperton at this time.

Ashford

- 2.8 Ashford is a larger shopping centre than Shepperton and also has a high number of on street spaces (176). Informal visits and surveys in the area indicate that the on street spaces are well used. However turnover of the spaces is lower and it can often take 2 or 3 circuits of the area to find a space. A number of vehicles were observed staying beyond the existing 2 hour limit.
- 2.9 At the moment enforcement cannot be carried out effectively due to the high number of spaces.
- 2.10 There is an off street car park offering 30 minutes parking for 40p and long term parking (over 2 hours) for £1.50. The car park is used to some extent but is less convenient than the on street spaces.

- 2.11 If parking charges were introduced the most appropriate tariff for Ashford would be a free 30 minutes followed by £1 per hour (2 hour limit) This would have the benefit of making enforcement easier and in turn improve 'churn' freeing up spaces for customers.
- 2.12 The Woodthorpe Road area has a smaller retail offer than Church Road however the spaces here are well used. There is a greater risk of displacement into surrounding residential roads in this area, however these are already congested.
- 2.13 Many of the residential side roads off Church Road are already very heavily parked by residents and local workers. There is little scope for further displacement onto these roads if parking charges were introduced in Church Road.
- 2.14 The small Tesco store in Church Road does have a small free car park and this is also well used. There is a larger Tesco store outside Ashford with free parking.
- 2.15 Given the benefits that could be gained for local businesses and the councils enforcement arrangements it is proposed to formally consult about parking charges in Ashford.

Staines

- 2.16 Church Street currently has free on street parking for up to 1 hour. These spaces are well used by visitors to the town centre to avoid using car parks. It is proposed to implement charges of £1.40 per hour for up to 1 hour for these spaces for reasons explained in the introduction to this report.
- 2.17 Wraysbury Road is currently used for parking by commuters and visitors to Staines. Although further from the town centre this area provides a parking facility for visitors to the west side of Staines. The introduction of long and short term charges in this location could provide additional space for shoppers visitors to nearby recreation grounds and encourage commuters to use car parks in the town centre.
- 2.18 Knowle Green is used for parking by visitors to the Health Centre, Borough Council Offices, Court Building and Leisure Centre. It is also within walking distance of Staines Station and is used for all day parking by commuters. The introduction of charges in this location would encourage greater use of car parks but also provide an over flow facility for visitors to local amenities.
- 2.19 Given the benefits that could be gained for local businesses and the councils enforcement arrangements it is proposed to formally consult about parking charges in Staines.

3 CONSULTATIONS

Shepperton

- 3.1 There have been a significant number of comments and responses from local businesses and residents in Spelthorne to the draft proposals for on street charges announced by Surrey County Council earlier in the year. The paragraphs below give a summary of the responses received so far. It should be noted that the comments are in relation to the original proposals (without a free 30 minutes) and not the proposals in this report.
- 3.2 There have been differing views amongst the community in Shepperton as to the issue of parking in the village. Some say that parking in the village is 'horrendous' while the majority state that they have never had any trouble finding a space to park the way things are arranged at present.
- 3.3 Shepperton High Street was assessed and initially put forward in the proposals, and has been the subject of much debate and discussion within Surrey County Council and externally within the press, through social media and via petitions in the High Street and online. A written petition in Shepperton collected over 5000 signatures by the end of June 2011.
- 3.4 An online petition has also been created by a Member of the Shepperton Village Chamber of Commerce, entitled *"We, the undersigned, petition Surrey Council to reconsider its plans to introduce parking restrictions in Shepperton. We believe that such a move would force customers to shop at large superstores rather than support local businesses, which would have a devastating effect on both the economy and ultimately the diverse nature of business in our village"*. This petition garnered 242 signatures up to April 2011. The Chamber of Commerce have also used Facebook to set up a group petitioning the proposal to include Shepperton, it currently has 105 Members and has been very active since March 2011.

Ashford

- 3.5 Ashford was also assessed and initially put forward in the proposals, and has also been the subject of much debate and discussion within the press, through social media and via petitions. It is anticipated that there will be a petition from Ashford regarding on street charges at the Local Committee meeting.
- 3.6 Subject to the Local Committees agreement it is proposed to carry out a statutory consultation and advertise the proposals in this report during October/November 2011. Notices will be placed in newspapers and put up on streets where charges are proposed. Detailed plans will be

available on the County Council's website and at local libraries and civic offices. An online survey/response system will also be set up.

- 3.7 Spelthorne Borough Council have commented on the outline proposals in this report. This is shown in Annex 3.

4 FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 In addition legal costs to install on street parking charges could total £15,000 for Spelthorne Borough.
- 4.2 As part of the estimating process for the Countywide programme it has been conservatively calculated that a pay and display ticket machine typically costs £3000 to supply and install and another £2500 per year to maintain. This cost includes cash collections and fault fixing.
- 4.3 Modern pay and display machines are solar powered meaning there is no need to provide a mains power supply, helping reduce installation and energy costs.
- 4.4 Potential income from parking charges has been calculated in each area to determine if it will be sufficient to cover the cost of maintaining the machines. The income is estimated by assuming occupancy levels in parking spaces and then factoring the tariff with this and the operational periods of the restrictions. The income estimates for each location where parking charges are proposed is shown in Annex 2.
- 4.5 Income estimates have been compared to actual income achieved in similar areas in Surrey where P&D is already installed to ensure they are realistic.
- 4.6 Adoption of the revised proposals with a free 30 minute period in some locations should still mean the cost of operating the pay and display equipment is covered by the income from parking charges. Estimates have been made assuming income could be reduced by upto 80% with a free 30 minute parking period. An initial free 30 minutes followed by the medium tariff (£1 per hour) is considered the most appropriate tariff in smaller shopping areas or where there are nearby supermarkets with free parking. In practice this would work by allowing the first 30 minutes free, however parking for an hour would cost £1. This option reduces the likelihood of displacement onto unrestricted side roads or customers shopping elsewhere. It also maintains a differential over off street car park charges.
- 4.7 Allowing a free hour would reduce income further. It is estimated 10% of visitors would pay to stay for over 1 hour, and consequently the income would be insufficient to cover the costs of pay and display machines.
- 4.8 Estimated income from on street charges described in this report is shown in Annex 2.

- 4.9 The pay and display ticket machines will be managed day to day by the Spelthorne Borough Council Parking Team. Their CEO's will be trained by the machine supplier to fix basic faults such as ticket jams. Overall it is not anticipated that there will be any additional cost associated with on street enforcement as a result of the introduction of pay and display parking charges. CEO's will need to spend some time fixing simple machine faults, however this is offset by far more efficient enforcement practice.
- 4.10 It is also planned to use a cashless payment alongside the pay and display ticket machines. This allows visitors to pay for parking by phone and is convenient if they do not have change on them. Pay by phone has a low set up cost. All that is needed are signs advising the motorist of the phone number they need to call alongside the parking place reference number. Callers are typically charged a fee for using this facility, however this will first be subject to a tender exercise to seek best value for residents and the Council. A 'pay by phone' service helps to reduce the number of payment machines that need to be installed.
- 4.11 The purchase and installation costs will be funded from the Council's 'Invest to Save' scheme. The capital investment to install the infrastructure for on street charging could be recovered over 2-3 years based on the estimates in the table above.
- 4.12 Any surplus arising from managing on street parking can only be used as defined under Section 55 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (as amended). This restricts use of any surplus for the maintenance and/or improvement of the Highway including environmental works or additional parking provision.
- 4.13 If there is a surplus it has been agreed to split this 65/35 between the County Council and Spelthorne Borough Council respectively for 2011/12 only. Arrangements for 2012/13 are subject to ongoing negotiation.

5 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 An equality impact assessment has been undertaken. This has identified potential negative impacts for certain groups, especially those with a low household income. However parking charges are small compared to the overall cost of running a motor vehicle.
- 5.2 Blue badge holders can park in disabled parking bays or on yellow lines for up to three hours and are exempt from charges.
- 5.3 The impact on minority, disadvantaged, vulnerable and socially excluded groups is likely to be minimal. Paying for parking on street is not a new phenomenon (it is just not widespread in Surrey) and most drivers will have encountered it previously either at locations where it

already exists in Surrey or at locations outside the county. The proposed tariffs are reasonable when compared with off street car park charges and should contribute to only a relatively small rise in the overall costs of running a motor vehicle.

- 5.4 Although some users may have difficulties using pay and display machines, providing pay by phone as an alternative should help minimise those issues, as should careful consideration of the structure and location of the pay and display machines.

6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The County Council has the necessary legal powers to operate parking enforcement through the Traffic Management Act 2004 and introduce or amend orders to designate parking bays and introduce parking charges through the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.
- 6.2 The legal mechanism for introducing on street parking charges is through an order made under sections 45 and/or 46(1A) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (as amended).
- 6.3 Any surplus generated from managing on street parking can only be used as defined under Section 55 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (as amended). This restricts use of any surplus for the maintenance and/or improvement of the Highway including environmental works or additional parking provision.

7 CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Charging for parking helps the County and Borough Council effectively and efficiently manage on street parking in Surrey and has the following benefits:
- ‘Pay and display’ makes short term parking easier to enforce and helps improve turnover of the available parking space making retail areas more accessible and helping local businesses
 - Free on street and ‘pay and display’ off street parking encourages drivers to look for on street parking and increases congestion and CO² emissions in town centres
 - A policy of setting higher charges for on street ‘premium’ spaces also encourages drivers to go straight to a car park, reducing congestion
 - Blue badge holders would be exempt from the charges
- 7.2 It is proposed to carry out a formal statutory consultation and report the response back to the Local Committee for a decision.

8 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

- 8.1 Subject to agreement, the proposed on street parking charges will be advertised in accordance with the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and the response reported back to the Local Committee for decision on how to proceed in early 2012.

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