

14 July 2009

Our ref: HD/Letchworth/Jul.09
Contact: Hilary Dineen
Direct Dial No: 01462 474353
Email address: hilary.dineen@north-herts.gov.uk

To: Members of the Letchworth Committee of North Hertfordshire District Council (Councillors Michael Paterson (Chairman), Paul Marment (Vice-Chairman), S. Bloxham, John Booth, J.M. Cunningham, Melissa Davey, Gary Grindal, T.W Hone, David Kearns, Lorna Kercher, D. Levett, Elliot Needham and Mrs. L.A. Needham).

You are invited to attend a

MEETING OF THE LETCHWORTH COMMITTEE

to be held at

**HIGHFIELD SCHOOL, HIGHFIELD
LETCWORTH GARDEN CITY, HERTFORDSHIRE
SG6 3QA**

on

WEDNESDAY, 22 JULY 2009

at

***8.00p.m.**

[*PLEASE NOTE START TIME]

Yours sincerely,



David Miley
Democratic Services Manager

AGENDA
PART I

ITEM	PAGE
1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	-
2. MINUTES – 10 JUNE 2009 To take as read and approve as a true record the minutes of the meeting of this Committee held on the 10 June 2009.	-
3. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS Members should notify the Chairman of other business which they wish to be discussed by the Committee at the end of either Part I or Part II business set out in the agenda. They must state the circumstances which they consider justify the business being considered as a matter of urgency. The Chairman will decide whether any item(s) raised will be considered.	-
4. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS Members are reminded that any declarations of interest in respect of any business set out in the agenda, should be declared as either a prejudicial or personal interest and are required to notify the Chairman of the nature of any interest declared at the commencement of the relevant item on the agenda. Members declaring a prejudicial interest can speak on the item, but must leave the room before the debate and vote.	-
5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION To receive presentations and petitions from members of the public including: 1. Save Letchworth Museum (Petition) – David's Book Shop; 2. Town Centre Christmas Lights – Martin Fletcher; 3. Draft Parking Strategy – Martin Fletcher.	1
6. CHAMPION NEWS AND FINANCE REPORT REPORT OF THE ACTING HEAD OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL SERVICES This report was under preparation at the time the agenda went to print and will be published as soon as possible. Applications for Grant funding include: 1. St Georges Youth Group 2. Town Centre – Christmas Lights	3 [To Follow]
7. DRAFT PARKING STRATEGY REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF PLANNING, HOUSING AND ENTERPRISE To seek the Area Committees' views on the draft strategy prior to presentation to Cabinet on 8 September 2009.	5

8. WARD AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS **51**
*To receive any oral reports from Members regarding Ward matters and
Outside Organisations.*

The dates for Letchworth Area Committee Meetings in the Civic Year 2009/2010 are:

23 September 2009	Venues for this and future meetings to be advised as soon as possible.
18 November 2009	
13 January 2010	
10 March 2010	

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<p style="text-align: center;">LETCHWORTH AREA COMMITTEE 10 JUNE 2009</p>

<p>*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT</p>	<p>AGENDA ITEM No.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">5</p>
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PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Three presentations are expected during public participation as follows:

1. Save Letchworth Museum (Petition) – David's Book Shop;
2. Town Centre Christmas Lights – Martin Fletcher;
3. Draft Parking Strategy – Martin Fletcher.

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<p>LETCHWORTH AREA COMMITTEE 22 JULY 2009</p>

<p>*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT</p>	<p>AGENDA ITEM No. 5</p>
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Comments received from Martin Fletcher (Town Centre Manager).

NHDC Draft Parking Strategy 2009-2019

Background

These comments have been prepared on behalf of Letchworth Garden City Town Centre Partnership by the town centre manager. The board of directors of the Partnership, who represent a wide range of business and other interests in the town centre, have been consulted on the content, but the views expressed may not be those of all our members or of other businesses in the town.

Comments have been confined to the town centre elements – particularly as they affect Letchworth Garden City – and issues outside the town centres are not considered.

Introduction

Parking in town centres is a vital ingredient in attracting and retaining visitors – especially shoppers. Safe, clean, reasonably priced off-street car parks that are easy to access and some short-term on-street parking are essential to a town centre's economic success.

For the above reasons, we believe that the emphasis in the Strategy should reflect these needs, rather than start from the point of view of "transport strategy". (It is interesting to note that the recently completed Grand Arcade development in Cambridge, one of our region's greenest cities in terms of Park & Ride and other environmental schemes, has a 900 space car park as an integral part of the new development.)

It is recognised that increasing numbers of people will choose to use alternative modes of transport when appropriate, and it is right that they should be given encouragement to do so. Nonetheless, it is only realistic to expect that the majority will continue to want to use the car for most of their shopping trips for the foreseeable future, and that towns that fail to take account of this will lose customers – and therefore revenue from the local economy – to towns that do and to out-of-centre retail areas.

Detailed comments on the Draft Strategy

With the above preamble in mind, we have framed our response as follows (paragraph numbers refer to draft document dated 23 June 2009).

- 2.2 We welcome the recognition that there is a need for the Strategy to be reviewed on a regular basis. We would hope as well to be consulted each time a review is undertaken.
- 3.3 We are of the opinion that the Strategy should not seek to deter car use for visits to the town centre. As we have hinted above, deterring people from bringing their cars to Letchworth is counter-productive if it forces them to visit rival towns in the area. Letchworth Garden City is in the process of revitalisation, and until a lot more has been done to improve the town's offer – particularly in terms of retail – visitors need positive encouragement to continue coming here.
- 3.6 The third sentence of this paragraph reads: "The Strategy will ensure that excessive amounts of parking are not provided..." (This theme is repeated at 3.9: "The Strategy does not seek to provide an excessive amount of car parking...") It is not clear how such a situation might arise, but our view would be that too much is better than too little – which is sometimes the case at times of peak demand even now.
- 3.7 Reference is made to Hertfordshire County Council's Long Term Strategy, which is quoted as follows "the overall aims of the parking strategy are to reduce dependence on the car, particularly within town centres..." We would contend that this aim is impracticable within the lifetime of the Parking Strategy.
- 3.8 We are of the view that charging for on-street parking, even it can be shown to be financially viable, should not be considered until the town centre revitalisation projects (i.e., The Wynd and Arena proposals) are completed. In our view, pressures on the current on-street parking stock (as included in the current Streetscene scheme) are not sufficiently high to justify this measure, which would therefore only serve as a deterrent to visitors that need to complete a speedy transaction with the minimum of cost and inconvenience.
- 5.6 This paragraph refers to Letchworth's "significant volume of on-street parking", and goes on to suggest that this could encourage "excessive circulating traffic". We strongly support the retention of all the current on-street parking provision, which we would describe simply as adequate, and anticipate that the new traffic pattern will discourage excessive circulation of drivers searching for a space.
- 5.22 While we recognise the value of differential tariffs between car parks, the use of tariffs to manage parking demand is a very blunt instrument and has great potential to undermine a town's economic vitality by deterring visits entirely.
- 5.26 This paragraph refers to the fact that on-street parking is currently free of charge, and implies that this increases the volume of traffic circulating in search of parking space. There is clearly no connection to be made between the two – unless you believe that charging for on-street parking will deter people from using it, which is not an outcome that we would wish to see.

5.33 We would contest the assertion that “charging for on-street parking is one way of managing [adverse environmental] impacts”; in areas of very high parking demand, there are justifications for it but as we have already stated, we believe that those conditions will not exist in Letchworth Garden City at least until the revitalisation projects are completed.

Policy statements

The following are our comments on the Policy statements:

Policy 1

We would wish to be consulted in respect of the detailed investigation of these issues, and any proposals for change; our business-led perspective on customers’ expectations and how best to meet them would, we believe, be invaluable in the process.

Policy 2

Again, we would wish to be consulted when the need for additional off-street capacity is investigated.

Policy 3

We welcome the opportunity to be involved in the review of a programme of physical improvements to the council’s car parks. We recognise the high costs that are potentially involved in some of the more ambitious proposals; we would urge that ways be found to fund these that do not impact too heavily on tariffs at least until the revitalisation projects are completed.

Policy 4

We agree that there are advantages for a Pay on Foot system, but believe that the benefits must be weighed carefully against possible tariff increases (see comment on Policy 3 above).

Policy 5

We believe that to attempt to “encourage alternative modes of travel to [North Herts] town centres” by adjusting the long term tariffs carries a serious risk that it will encourage our customers to defect to other town centres nearby.

Policy 6

We welcome the opportunity to be involved in future reviews of possible charging for evenings and Sundays, and are currently of the view that this is unlikely to be justifiable until the revitalisation projects are completed.

Policy 7

We welcome the principle of providing other services in car parks – especially if these lead to increased activity/footfall in ways likely to enhance security.

Policy 8

We believe that the second sentence of the first paragraph needs to be reframed as follows: “No consideration will be given to reducing the overall quantum and balance in duration of stay of on-street parking spaces if there are indications that such reduction would have a detrimental impact on the town centre.”

Policy 9

We consider that there is no case at present for on-street charging in Letchworth Garden City and, as indicated previously, believe it should not be contemplated until the revitalisation projects are completed.

Policy 10

We would like town centre management added to the list of consultees on future provision for Blue Badge holders.

Final thoughts and conclusions

We have seen reported an Office of National Statistics survey which found that almost a fifth of respondents think parking restrictions are not clear, and that 37% of motorists who had received a parking ticket in the last year thought the penalty to be unjustified.

We are aware that, in line with the above findings, some motorists parking in Letchworth Garden City – particularly on-street – have inadvertently committed an offence and received a penalty notice. We would urge that signing and layout of all parking places is as clear as possible in order to minimise confusion.

We are grateful for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Parking Strategy, and hope that our comments will be taken into account in the final document.

**TITLE OF REPORT: CHAMPION NEWS & FINANCE REPORT - LETCHWORTH
AREA COMMITTEE**

**REPORT OF THE ACTING HEAD OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & CULTURAL
SERVICES**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise the Committee on the current expenditure and balances of the Area Committee delegated budgets.
- 1.2 To bring to the Committee's attention details of recent requests received for Area Committee Development Discretionary Grant Funding made by community groups and local organisations.
- 1.3 To advise the Committee of the activities and schemes with which the Community Development Officer has been involved.
- 1.4 To bring to the Committee's attention some important community based activities that will be taking place during the next few months.

2 THE FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

3. PROJECT/ ACTIVITY/ SCHEME DETAILS

3.1 Community Safety - Respect Agenda Schools Project

A Presentation of Certificates by the Chairman of the Area Committee to Year 9 pupils in Fearnhill School took place on Tuesday 7th July 2009. The project was welcomed by the school and was successful in raising awareness amongst the pupils. An evaluation of the project will be completed when all of the forms have been received from the pupils and teachers involved.

3.2 Summer Activities in North Herts

This year's booklet outlining the activities in North Herts available for children and young people from 0 – 19 years of age is now available and in circulation.

Activities range from free play opportunities in the towns' parks and open spaces to Wild Camp, Friday Night Project and Brazilian Soccer workshops.

3.3 **Letchworth Youth Council**

The youth council meetings have now ceased for the Summer period. There are currently four active members of the youth council who will be kept in contact with over the Summer Holidays.

A recruitment initiative is planned to start in early September to coincide with the new academic year. Initially, this will take the form of presentations to school assemblies, contact with school councils and local youth groups.

In partnership with Youth Connexions the Community Development Officer is in the process of planning three recruitment events. These will take place at the youth centres on The Grange, Jackmans Estate and at Mrs Howard Hall.

The events will take the form of informal meetings to allow young people to discuss the role and purpose of a Youth Council and come up with ideas for future projects and engagement with other agencies etc. Once a functioning committee is reinstated the group will be encouraged to organise events and activities that young people have requested.

3.4 **Letchworth Festival Steering Group**

The programme of the two week festival is being sold from the Arts Centre, the Tourist Information Centre and local shops and cafes within the town. The programme details fringe events which include a talent competition, local walks, garage sales, youth drama project, quizzes, music events, talks, disco's and exhibitions.

The Festival will culminate in the two day event on Broadway Gardens on Saturday 1st and Sunday 2nd August 2009 with a theme of the 50's and 60's industrial heritage of Letchworth.

Community Development Officers have been supporting the group by providing advice on the necessary licenses and public liability insurances.

3.5 **Youth Summer Soccer Sessions – Wilbury Recreation Ground**

Rap-Aid will be delivering soccer sessions on Wilbury Recreation Ground throughout the six week School Summer Holiday period. Sessions will take place every Tuesday & Thursday morning from 11.00am to 1.00pm aimed at children and young people of 6 -16 years of age.

In addition to learning new skills and playing soccer over the Summer months Rap-Aid workers will engage with the local young people and encourage them to perhaps take up other forms of sport on a regular basis, signpost them to other agencies and generally give out advice on how they can become more involved in their local communities.

3.6 Lordship Centre Project - school and the local shops area.

Officers have attended a meeting with Mr Ben Parry the Head Teacher of Lordship Farm School. It was agreed that Mr Parry would contact Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation and liaise with their Landscape Architects on the progression of this project.

Mr Parry has also agreed to talk to the Premises Department at Children, Schools & Families, Herts County Council, with the endeavour to seek provisional advice in the School taking on the area in the long term. Community Development, Parks & Open Spaces and Estates Officers are to have a series of meetings over the coming weeks to ascertain whether Groundwork UK would consider joining the project team and to also look at the wider provision within the Lordship area.

3.7 Letchworth Salvation Army – Community Hall Project

Representatives from the Letchworth Branch of the Corp have contacted the Community Development section and have asked officers to officially inform the Members of the Letchworth Area Committee, that the Branch had been successful in its funding application to Wren for a £50,000 grant from the Landfill Communities Fund.

The grant will help fulfil the Branch's aim to rebuild the new Community Hall at the rear of the current building and the funds will specifically cover the First and Final Fix stages of the construction programme.

Subsequently the Council has received correspondence from the Waste Recycling Group Ltd requesting the release of the Area Committee's generous grant of £5,500 third party matching funding to unlock the full £50,000 from Wren.

The Salvation Army has again thanked the Letchworth Area Committee for the provision of the third party funding and has indicated that Members will be kept informed of the project's final stages through to the Hall's formal opening.

3.8 2012 Open Weekend – 24th 25th & 26th July 2009

To celebrate the forthcoming 2012 Olympic & Paralympic Games, the North Herts Leisure Centre is providing a range of subsidised activities on Saturday 25th July 2009 from 8.00am to 9.00pm. The day forms part of a number of events happening within the Sport & Leisure Centres across the district over the weekend.

Activities include Trampolining, Dodge ball, Indoor Athletics, Basketball & Taster Fitness Sessions. Further details via the Centre's reception 01462 679311

3.9 Community Matter - Sollershott West

The Community Development Officer has investigated and assisted in resolving an issue for residents regarding loose drainage gravel that has been poured into an open ditch that runs along Sollershott West.

Officers from Herts Highways have agreed to look into the possibility of laying a wire mesh over the drainage medium to discourage and possibly prevent further misuse.

The Community Development Officer has also contacted the nearby school to see if any assistance can be sought to deter further incidents.

3.10 **Grounds & Environment Update – July 2009**

The paddling pool at Howard Gardens has been well used already this year and in comparison to recent years attendance has already exceed expectations.

Unfortunately, the new skate park, multi use games area and renovated tennis courts in Norton Common appear to have been the focus of attention with regards to recent bouts of vandalism.

People on the North Herts Allotments Waiting lists are being offered plots at the recently re-opened Hillbrow site. The main gates have been repaired and the water supply reconnected.

The renovation of play areas at Jackman's Creamery and Baldock Road Recreation Ground are now complete.

As a result of extensive local community consultation by Groundwork Herts, Play Area design proposals are being requested from a number of play equipment manufacturers to reflect the concepts of the Playbuilder project at Hillbrow.

Works have started on phase 2 of the Grange Central Community project. This incorporates the closure of through traffic along Pelican Way.

4. FUNDING DECISIONS TO BE MADE / CONSIDERED

- 4.1 A spreadsheet showing the detailed spend to date of the Area Development budget is enclosed as Appendix 1.
- 4.2 Four grant funding requests / schemes have been received for the Area Committee to consider:
1. £1000 – support funding for Whitethorn Wanderers Youth Football Club, a newly formed club which requires start up funding for equipment, bibs, goal posts and footballs.
 2. £454 – support funding for Letchworth Eagles Youth Football Club required to purchase side line spectator barriers to help bring club facilities in line with the Football Association's 'Respect' campaign requirements.
 3. £2000 – support funding for the Letchworth Garden City Town Centre Partnership Christmas 2009 Lights Switch On Event.
 4. £1,500 – support funding for the conversion of a roof space within the Church Hall to the rear of St Georges, to create a dedicated space for young people.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Committee has delegated powers to administer funds from the budgets described.
- 5.2 There are no other legal implications pertinent to this report.

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Members are asked to note the information detailed in Appendix 1 of the report, which relates to the Area Committee budget balances for the current financial year 2009/10.
- 6.2 The spreadsheet also details the pre-allocations carried forward from the previous financial year 2008/09 to the current financial year 2009/10.
- 6.3 In addition, the spreadsheet includes the balances relating to allocated Visioning Budgets available within the Letchworth area.

7. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no human resource and equalities implications pertinent to this report.

8. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 8.1 Consultation with Members has occurred in connection with the allocation of funds for Community Projects.
- 8.2 Consultation with the respective officers and external agencies / groups has taken place with regard to the funding proposals for Area Committee Discretionary Development Funds.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 The Committee is asked to note the budgetary expenditure, balances and carry forwards from the Development Budgets and the Visioning Budgets.
- 9.2 That the Committee considers a grant of £1,000 as support funding for equipment, bibs, goal posts & footballs for Whitethorn Wanderers Youth Football Club.
- 9.3 That the Committee considers a grant of £454 as support funding to purchase side line spectator barriers to bring the Letchworth Eagles Youth Football Club facilities in line with the requirements of the Football Association's 'Respect' campaign.
- 9.4 That the Committee considers a grant of £2000 as support funding for the Letchworth Garden City Town Centre Partnership Christmas 2009 Lights Switch On Event.

- 9.5 That the Committee considers a grant of £1,500 as support funding associated with the conversion of a roof space within the Church Hall to the rear of St Georges, to create a dedicated space for young people.
- 9.6 That the Committee endorses the actions taken by the Community Development Officer to promote greater community capacity and well - being for Letchworth Garden City.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To ensure that the Committee are kept informed of the work of the Community Development Officer.
- 10.2 This report is intended simply to inform Members of the financial resources available to the Committee. It draws attention to the current budgetary situation, assists in the effective financial management of the Area Committee's budget and ensures actions are performed within the Authority's Financial Regulations and the guidance in the Grants procedure.
- 10.3 The awarding of financial assistance to voluntary organisations and the use of discretionary spending allows the Committee to further the aims and Strategic Objectives of the Council.
- 10.4 The allocation of funds will improve the services provided by local organisations and groups that are available and accessed by members of the community.

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix 1 – Spreadsheet of Committee Delegated Budgets 2008/09
- 11.2 Appendix 2 – Whitethorn Wanderers Youth Football Club Grant Form
- 11.3 Appendix 3 – Letchworth Eagles Youth Football Club Grant Form
- 11.4 Appendix 4 – Letchworth Garden City Town Centre Partnership Grant Form
- 11.5 Appendix 5 – St Georges Youth Project Grant Form

12. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 12.1 Claire Morgan
Community Development Officer Baldock & District & 50+ Officer
Telephone: 01462 474226
E Mail: claire.morgan@north-herts.gov.uk
- 12.2 Stuart Izzard
Acting Head of Community Development & Cultural Services
Telephone: 01462 474854
E-Mail: stuart.izzard@north-herts.gov.uk

12.3 Lois Stewart
Group Accountant
Telephone: 01462 474566
E Mail: lois.stewart@north-herts.gov.uk

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Letchworth Budget 2009/2010

<u>SUMMARY/ TOTALS</u>	<u>Funding</u>	<u>Allocated</u>	<u>Spent</u>	<u>Outstanding</u>	<u>Unallocated Budget</u>
<u>Revenue Visioning</u>	£8,580	£8,580	£0	£8,580	£0
<u>Capital Visioning</u>	£92,100	£62,100	£11,446	£50,654	£30,000
<u>Service Level Agreements</u>	£28,850	£28,852	£22,602	£6,250	
<u>Small Area Grants</u>	£2,400	£1,500	£0	£0	£900
<u>Discretionary</u>	£32,900	£17,250	£0	£7,880	£15,650
<u>General Town Centre</u>	£9,430	£0	£0	£0	£9,430
Total	£174,260	£118,282	£34,048	£73,364	£55,978

<u>REVENUE VISIONING</u>	<u>Funding</u>	<u>Year Allocated</u>	<u>Project</u>	<u>Allocated</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Spent</u>	<u>Outstanding</u>	<u>Unallocated</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Preallocated amount C/F from 2008/09	£8,580	2007/2008	Visioning	£4,830	2008/09	£0	£4,830		
		2008/2009	Wilbury Youth Diversionary Project	£3,750	19.03.08	£0	£3,750		
Total	£8,580			£8,580		£0	£8,580	£0	

<u>CAPITAL VISIONING</u>	<u>Funding</u>	<u>Year Allocated</u>	<u>Project</u>	<u>Allocated</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Spent</u>	<u>Outstanding</u>	<u>Unallocated</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Capital Visioning	£92,100		Grange Community Garden Project	£45,745	13.12.06	£0	£45,745		
			Norton Common Management Plan	£16,355	19.03.08	£11,446	£4,909		
Total	£92,100			£62,100		£11,446	£50,654	£30,000	

<u>MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING</u>	<u>Funding</u>		<u>Project</u>	<u>Allocated</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Spent</u>	<u>Outstanding</u>	<u>Unallocated</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Base Budget 2009/10	£28,850		Letchworth Town Twinning Association	£370	20.04.09	£370	£0		
3 year agreements until March 2012			Howard Garden Social Club	£6,300	08.05.09	£6,300	£0		
			Yvonne Savage Club	£400	20.04.09	£400	£0		
			Letchworth Mind	£400	19.11.08	£400	£0		
			Wednesday Drop in Club	£650	20.04.09	£650	£0		
			Letchworth Garden City Community Group	£1,000	30.04.09	£1,000	£0		
			North Herts CVS hall hire	£4,628	07.05.09	£4,628	£0		
			Letchworth Garden City Band hall hire	£2,604	07.05.09	£2,604	£0		
			Letchworth Arts Centre	£12,500	14.01.09	£6,250	6,250		
Total	£28,850			£28,852		£22,602	£6,250	£2	

DEVELOPMENT BUDGETS

SMALL AREA GRANTS	Funding		Project	Allocated	Date	Spent	Outstanding	Unallocated	Comments
Preallocated Funds Brought Forward from 08/09	£1,500		Jackmans Funday	£1,000	05.05.09	£1,000	£0		
			Roundabout Improvement	£500	11.03.09	£0	£500		
Base Budget 2009/10	£900								
Total	£2,400			£1,500		£0	£0	£900	

Discretionary Budgets	Funding		Project	Allocated	Date	Spent	Outstanding	Unallocated	Comments
Preallocated Funds Brought Forward from 08/09	£9,370		Westbury Youth Provision	£5,000	23.07.08	0	£5,000		
			Salvation Army	£4,370	11.03.09	0	£4,370		
Base Budget 2009/10	£23,530		Extended opening Letchworth Outdoor Pool	£5,500	14.01.09	0	£5,500		
			Salvation Army	£1,130	11.03.09	£0	£1,130		
			Rhapsode	£1,250	10.6.09	0	£1,250		
Total	£32,900			£17,250		£0	£7,880	£15,650	

GENERAL (TOWN CENTRE)	Funding		Project	Allocated	Date	Spent	Outstanding	Unallocated	Comments
Base Budget 2009/10	£9,430								
Total	£9,430			£0		£0	£0	£9,430	

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT	AGENDA ITEM No. 7
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TITLE: DRAFT PARKING STRATEGY

REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF PLANNING, HOUSING AND ENTERPRISE

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Council's current Parking Strategy runs until 2009. A new draft Parking Strategy has been produced and was considered by Cabinet in June. Cabinet resolved to seek the Area Committees' views on the draft Strategy prior to its meeting In September.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key decision that was published in the Forward Plan in June 2009.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council's current Parking Strategy runs until 2009. In 2008 the Transport Fundamental Service Review identified the need for the Strategy to be reviewed.
- 3.2 The Council's car park ticket machines are now nearing the end of their working lives so there is a need to consider how to replace them.
- 3.3 A draft Parking Strategy was considered at Cabinet on 23rd June 2009. Cabinet resolved to seek the views of the Area Committees on the draft Strategy prior to considering it in more detail at Cabinet in September 2009.

4. ISSUES

- 4.1 Appendix 1 sets out the draft Parking Strategy and Appendix 2 the report that accompanied it to Cabinet. The majority of the issues are considered in these two documents.
- 4.2 The draft Parking Strategy's main purpose is to set the policy for directing decisions on parking.
- 4.3 The draft Parking Strategy acknowledges that there is a need to consider additional parking management areas in some residential areas alongside a review of existing Controlled Parking Zones. An area wide approach is recommended to avoid a piecemeal and less cost effective approach to parking management.

- 4.4 In town centres the draft Parking Strategy sets out policy on reviewing tariffs and the potential for considering evening and Sunday charging off-street as well as on-street charging.
- 4.5 There is a need to consider a new off-street parking management system as current ticket machines are nearing the end of their working lives. Further work will be commissioned to compare Pay and Display options with Pay on Foot. In the interim, Cabinet has endorsed a trial Pay by Phone service for 12-15 months.
- 4.6 Following completion of the Strategy and once a decision is made on a car park management system, an Action Plan will be produced setting out the work programme over the ten year timescale of the Strategy, subject to the Corporate Business Planning Process. The Strategy will be regularly reviewed over this period, reflecting changing circumstances not least due to the ongoing Town Centre Strategies and Urban Transport Plans.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial or risk implications arising directly from this report. Refer to Section 6 in the Cabinet Report attached at Appendix 2.

7. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no human resource or equalities implications arising from this report.

8. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 8.1 Hertfordshire Highways and Hertfordshire Constabulary were consulted prior to the draft Strategy being prepared. Since Cabinet in June, both organisations have been consulted on the actual draft Parking Strategy. In addition, Town Centre Managers have been consulted on the draft Parking Strategy, as have County Council Members of the North Hertfordshire Highways Joint Member Panel. Any issues from those consulted on the draft Strategy will be reported at the Area Committee.

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9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That the Area Committee consider the draft Parking Strategy and refer any comments on it to Cabinet for its consideration in September 2009.
- 9.2 That Members provide the Transport Policy Officer with any parking issues they wish to see included in the forthcoming Action Plan.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 Cabinet has requested the views of the Area Committees on the draft Parking Strategy.
- 10.2 In order to ensure that any Action Plan resulting from the draft Parking Strategy is informed by as much local knowledge as possible.

11. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 11.1 None other than those identified in Appendix 2.

12. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Draft Parking Strategy
Appendix 2 – Report to Cabinet, 23rd June 2009

13. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 13.1 Simon Young
Transport Policy Officer
Simon.young@north-herts.gov.uk
01462 474846

Please also see Officers listed in Appendix 2.

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Please see reference in Appendix 2.

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North Hertfordshire District Council

Parking Strategy 2009 – 2019

1. Introduction

- 1.1 North Hertfordshire District Council's first parking strategy covered the period 2004-09. This review of that strategy follows several years' experience of managing on-street parking enforcement as well as demand for additional parking controls and pressure for changes in how town centre car parking is managed.
- 1.2 The Council's role with regard to on-street car parking remains one of implementing Controlled Parking Zones and managing the enforcement of all on-street parking restrictions in the district. This management and enforcement role extends into the off-street car parks the Council owns and/or manages mainly in town centres.
- 1.3 The Council's agreement with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC - i.e. the Highway Authority) does not include the implementation of other on-street parking controls (i.e. Traffic Regulation Orders – TROs) that are intended to address safety or public amenity issues. There are examples of safety and/or amenity concerns included in this strategy but the responsibility for implementing lies with HCC.
- 1.4 The Council's town centre car parks have 'Pay and Display' ticket machines. These machines have reached the end of their working lives and the Pay and Display system itself presents a number of challenges in terms of management and, importantly, ease of use for the customer. This Strategy identifies how the Council will look to improve its town centre car parks over the next five to ten years.
- 1.5 There are a number of other parking issues that this strategy will cover. For example, there is increasing demand for Blue Badge Holder parking bays in residential areas and this strategy will set the policy and criteria for providing such bays. Demand for cycle parking in town centres and at other key destinations has grown and especially at Stations has proved to be very popular.

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2. Planning in times of uncertainty

- 2.1 The economic downturn clearly affects town centres and demand for parking generally. Pressure of non-residential parking in residential areas may, in some areas, ease but will be likely to return when economic circumstances improve. Similarly demand for town centre parking may reduce during less favourable economic times but there is an opportunity to plan for returning high levels of demand alongside the forecast growth in housing and jobs in and around the district.
- 2.2 In addition to the planned growth for the area, there are major development opportunities in Hitchin, Letchworth and Royston. In all cases new developments should improve the attractiveness of each town and therefore demand for parking. Much of the land identified for new developments includes land currently used for car parking so this strategy will need to consider how this affects town centre parking provision in the medium to longer term. The uncertainties about timing of these developments means that this strategy will need to be reviewed on a regular basis.
- 2.3 This Strategy is intended to cover the period 2009 to 2019. This ten year timescale reflects the lifetime of a new car park management system as well as an amount of time that could allow for many of the ongoing on street parking control issues to be addressed. It is acknowledged, however, that the Strategy should be kept under review during this period not least because of the implications of major development opportunities in Hitchin, Letchworth and Royston.

3. Background and Policy

- 3.1 Parking availability of any type of vehicle is an important factor in determining how people travel. Parking availability also influences the vitality and viability of town centres and the attractiveness of residential areas. In some places on-street parking can act as a traffic calming measure, in others it is a problem for residents and businesses and can be a barrier to accessibility for pedestrians, cyclists, passenger transport, emergency and other service vehicles.
- 3.2 There is a balance to be struck between providing and restricting car parking. This strategy must be read alongside Urban Transport Plans for towns as well as the Town Centre Strategies, Community Strategy and the Local Development Framework to provide the full picture on how a balance can be struck between environmental protection, economic growth, accessibility, health improvement and social inclusion.

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- 3.3 Car ownership is predicted to continue to grow over next twenty or so years alongside growth from new housing in and adjacent to the District. The Strategy is flexible enough to respond to demand for parking and at the same time seek to influence car use. Experience with parking standards at new development indicates that policies on parking are best suited to influencing car use not ownership.
- 3.4 There is a range of national, regional and local policy that is relevant to parking, promoting the vitality and viability of town centres, assisting residents and businesses and seeking to minimise the impact on Climate Change. Some of the key aims and objectives are set out below.
- 3.5 At the national level the Government's Strategy is set out in 'Delivering a Sustainable Transport Strategy' which sets out the Government's five main goals as follows:
- "We want our transport system:*
- *to support national economic competitiveness and growth, by delivering reliable and efficient transport networks;*
 - *to reduce transport's emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, with the desired outcome of tackling climate change;*
 - *to contribute to better safety, security and health and longer life expectancy by reducing the risk of death, injury or illness arising from transport, and by promoting travel modes that are beneficial to health;*
 - *to promote greater equality of opportunity for all citizens, with the desired outcome of achieving a fairer society; and*
 - *to improve quality of life for transport users and non-transport users, and to promote a healthy natural environment."*
- 3.6 Alongside planning policies contained in Planning Policy Statements and other advice on providing for parking (e.g. Blue Badge Holders, Motorcycles and Pedal Cycles) the Parking Strategy supports national objectives. There is a balance that needs to be struck between tackling climate change and providing for parking to support town centres. The Strategy will ensure that excessive amounts of parking are not provided and the Council's Town Centre Strategies are promoting greater pedestrian priority and less circulation of traffic. The Strategy also seeks to reduce long stay parking in many residential areas, thus promoting alternative modes of travel or car sharing by restricting parking.

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- 3.7 Countywide policy on parking is set out in Hertfordshire County Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP) Long Term Strategy. The following summarises the LTP approach:

“Car parking is one of the key elements in managing the highway network and encouraging alternatives to the car. The overall aims of the parking strategy are:

- *to reduce dependence on the car, particularly in town centres*
- *to minimise the safety and congestion effects of on-street parking*
- *to help maintain the vitality of town centres and to discourage out-of-town developments*
- *to ensure that car parking provision and enforcement are broadly self-financing”*

- 3.8 The Parking Strategy sits alongside the existing Town Centre Strategies and will support existing and emerging Urban Transport Plans for our towns. The Strategy acknowledges the importance of parking in our town centres but seeks to strike a balance between providing for cars and other modes of transport. In addition the policy on charging supports alternative modes of travel, especially in the case of long stay and the Strategy provides the scope for considering on street charging which will help manage the impact of traffic in town centres.

The Council's own Corporate priorities are focused on promoting Town Centres, Green Issues and Sustainable Development.

- 3.9 Key features of the Strategy that support the above priorities are as follows:

- **Town Centres** – provision of a balance of on and off street, short and long stay parking with appropriate tariffs supports the retail and business functions of town centres. The Strategy does not seek to provide an excessive amount of car parking but, at its heart, is the need to promote the economic vitality and viability of town centres.
- **Green Issues** – the need to reduce Carbon Dioxide emissions is a key consideration and the Parking Strategy will contribute towards reducing long stay parking in residential areas by commuters and employees. This is one way of encouraging use of alternative modes of travel. In town centres the Strategy supports the Town Centre Strategies' insofar as it recognises the need to minimise circulating traffic by way of balancing on and off street parking provision. In addition the Strategy identifies the need to improve the ease of use of car parks, thus reducing circulating traffic and queuing traffic.

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- **Sustainable development** – the Parking Strategy acknowledges as a key issues the need to support town centres as local facilities. This support will help ensure that towns in the district remain important retail and service destinations in their own right. The provision of new housing and employment in and around our existing towns will place additional pressures on parking facilities and the Strategy will enable the Council to find the best way for providing for and managing this demand. The Strategy also supports the provision of parking for Blue Badge Holders, allowing improved accessibility and ensuring people with disabilities have access to local shops, services and their own homes.

4. Management and resources

- 4.1 The management of on and off street parking in the district falls into two broad categories. Firstly the enforcement of on and off street parking (i.e. the public 'face' of the service) and secondly, the back office management which assists the enforcement function as well as day to day management of issues such as Season Ticket and Residents Permit applications as well as customer queries.
- 4.2 Managing car park ticket machines (in terms of cash collection, planned and reactive maintenance) as well as monitoring the status of machines also falls within the day to day management function. In addition the Council allocates resources to physical maintenance of car parks, again on a planned and reactive basis.
- 4.3 With regard to on street parking the Council, in conjunction with Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Constabulary, prepares and implements new or amended Traffic Regulation Orders, principally for Controlled Parking Zones.
- 4.4 The entire daily management resource covers both town centres and elsewhere, both on and off street so changes to one aspect of the service as a result of this Strategy are likely to have implications for the whole service resource. The level of resources provided will dictate how the Strategy will be delivered and the service managed. As such the need to consider management and resource issues across the whole service is an appropriate place to start.

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Policy 1 - Management and Resources

In order to deliver this Parking Strategy the Council is committed to finding the most efficient and effective use of resources to implement improvements and manage the parking service on a day to day basis.

To do this the Council will consider the resource implications of:

- 1) The type of off street car park management system in use and demand for it to be managed
- 2) The amount of on street parking controls and demand for it to be managed, including changes in times of day or days of the week
- 3) The implications of a review of CPZs on the demand for managing on street parking
- 4) The potential impact of on street charging
- 5) The potential of future development sites in town centres
- 6) The possibility of partnering or other parking management options
- 7) Changes in legislation or financial issues
- 8) The potential to manage other third party car parking facilities

- 4.5 The Council is acutely aware of the limitations on its resources. As well as looking at more efficient and effective ways of working the Council will, therefore, seek to secure additional resources towards delivering this Strategy. For example developer contributions, Lottery funding, Growth Area Funding or matched funding with or from other organisations are potential sources of funding for parking, often as part of a package of measures.
- 4.6 In addition to Council owned and managed parking resources there are other privately owned and run car parks in town centres and especially at Railway Stations. Charging policies in private car parks can have significant implications for surrounding streets and car parks. The Council will maintain a dialogue with other car park providers in order to ensure that parking provision as a whole does not have unacceptable impact on other car parks or on street locations.

5. Town Centres

- 5.1 The four towns of Hitchin, Letchworth, Baldock and Royston are different in terms of demand for parking, reflecting the different retail and servicing offer in each town as well as their physical characteristics. The economic downturn has affected each town centre alongside other longer term trends where out of centre retailing and growth in internet and other types of shopping have affected town centres for shopping purposes.

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- 5.2 The availability of car parking supports the town centres and the level of demand for parking in each town reflects the variations between the amount of shops and services in each town. Currently off-street parking is charged during the daytime, Monday to Saturday whilst on-street parking is free of charge at all times. There are privately operated car parks in Hitchin and Letchworth that, combined with Council owned and operated car parks and off-street parking provide a varied amount of parking in terms of on and off-street, short and long stay, location and price.
- 5.3 The balance between short and long stay off-street parking broadly reflects current demand. The Pay and Display (P&D) system in operation does not offer suitable flexibility to manage tariffs to respond to changes or variations in demand. Differential tariffs were agreed for 2009 between car parks within towns and also between towns. This approach has been adopted to reflect the different demands for parking between and even within town centres.
- 5.4 Currently on-street parking within town centres is free of charge, as is off-street parking after 6pm and on Sundays. On-street parking in 'core' shopping streets as well as more peripheral areas provide a significant additional parking resource and is especially important for Blue Badge Holder access as well as for servicing and loading. The majority of this parking is short stay although some longer stay on-street parking conflicts with residents' parking in peripheral streets.
- 5.5 Hitchin is the busiest town in terms of parking demand. Parking survey work at the end of 2008 suggested that, on Saturdays there is almost 100% take up of parking on and off-street. With future plans for significant development in Hitchin town centre the availability of parking in Hitchin will need to be considered carefully so as to ensure the vitality and viability of the town is supported without seriously undermining its environment and running contrary to wider objectives to reduce carbon emissions.
- 5.6 Letchworth has similar development potential although currently has capacity off-street in car parks. Again there will be a need to balance the provision of parking to support the town centre economically without having an adverse effect on its environment. It is especially important that the significant volume of on-street parking does not act as a catalyst for promoting excessive circulating traffic to the detriment of the pedestrian environment.
- 5.7 Royston town centre is currently not realising its potential. Consequently parking supply outstrips demand quite considerably and the recent Town Centre Strategy identifies that potentially some parking could be lost to accommodate development sites to expand the town's retail offer. The availability of parking will need to be re-assessed as individual sites come forward for development.

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- 5.8 Baldock town centre is different to the other towns insofar as, until recently, much of its on-street parking in the core area was taken by long stay parking. The recent Town Centre Enhancements will result in a shift to shorter stay parking in the town centre with an anticipated need to protect residents' parking in areas around the town centre. There are also existing rail commuter parking issues which often overlap with areas used as town centre long stay parking.
- 5.9 Whilst not a town centre, the centre of Knebworth has many of the same characteristics of a small town centre. There is demand for short stay parking for shoppers as well as long stay parking by rail commuters, employees and residents. Currently short stay parking is reduced by long stay usage which does not support local traders.
- 5.10 The Council will follow the following principles when providing for town centre parking:
1. To support the objectives of the Town Centre Strategies
 2. To ensure parking provision is considered within the context of all other policy considerations, in particular Urban Transport Plans and strategies to address Climate Change
 3. Improve the ease of use of all parking facilities i.e. the customer experience
 4. Increase the potential for on street parking to be self-financing
 5. Improve the management of parking by providing better information for users and decision makers
- 5.11 Off-street provision

In general there is sufficient capacity for all types of parking in town centres. There are some pressures as follows:

1. In Hitchin in market days there is very little capacity available both on and off-street.
2. Certain short stay car parks are more popular than others (e.g. Town Hall in Letchworth) and users will wait for spaces in these car parks rather than use other short stay alternatives.
3. Despite there being capacity in off-street car parks there is pressure on on-street parking both in town centres and adjacent streets.
4. Future developments planned via the Town Centre Strategies will place even more pressure on off-street parking provision.

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Policy 2 - Off Street Car Park Capacity

The Council will investigate the need for additional capacity for car parking where it can be justified in supporting town centre economic vitality and viability without unacceptable environmental impact.

- 5.12 The quality and safety of off-street car parks is often a key consideration for car park users. This often falls into two basic categories – the quality, convenience and safety of the car park and the quality, safety and convenience of the route from the car park to town centre shops. Much of the latter will be dealt with via Town Centre Strategies and development proposals but there are some key issues for consideration with regard to enhancing the use of car parks.

Policy 3 - Physical Improvements to Car Parks

The Council will identify and keep under review a programme of physical improvements for its car parks. This will be done in conjunction with Area Committees, Town Centre Management, Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire Constabulary and via feedback from car park users.

- 5.13 Some of the key issues the Council will consider are:

1. The Letchworth multi-story car park has narrow parking spaces, poor lighting, décor and pedestrian circulation space. There are also problems with regard to water leaking between decks and general surfacing quality. The lifts are often in a poor condition or not working
2. The Lairage multi-story in Hitchin is accessed from the top and exited at the bottom. Car park users have no way of knowing whether spaces are available in lower levels so a system of advising users of space availability would address this problem.
3. There is an ongoing need for maintaining car park surfacing, lining, and signing.
4. In some places security and vandalism are a problem so there is a need to consider how to manage this and eradicate it.
5. In order to support the need for better traffic management and to direct users towards available parking, the potential for Variable Message Signing on approaches to car parks should be considered. This could be in the form of 'real time' information or just more basic signing advising on the direction to and capacity of each car park.

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5.14 Off-street car park management system

Currently the Council provides coin only operated Pay and Display ticket machines in car parks it owns or operates. The equipment is now dated and the following issues have to be considered:

- The age of machines and the cost of maintaining them
- The appropriateness of Pay and Display for promoting town centre use (i.e. the user has to anticipate the length of stay before buying a ticket)
- The amount of non-payment of tariffs either due to users 'taking a chance' or not having the correct change
- The amount of transferring of tickets between users
- Meter feeding.
- The potential for users to pay for actual use rather than over-payment due to machines not issuing change
- Potential for cashless payment – in line with credit card or 'Chip & Pin' transactions either at the machine or via telephone
- The security of machines and cash handling issues
- The lack of data from machines on usage, management or faults
- The staff resources required to ensure compliance with car park tariffs and car park regulations as well as 'back office' management.

5.15 Modern Pay and Display machines can offer cashless payments and provide data for management and usage but many of the other key issues that affects the current system will still apply.

5.16 An alternative could be the introduction of a Pay on Foot system. In simple terms this involves barriered entry and exit with users paying at pay stations before returning to their vehicles. Whilst this system ensures all users pay for parking and only pay for the time they stay it is very expensive and will require a considerable change in approach to parking management.

5.17 More recently payment for parking by telephone has been introduced by other local authorities that operate a Pay and Display system. This has the potential to provide flexibility for people wishing to stay in town centres without having to be restricted by what ticket they have purchased at the outset.

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Policy 4 – Car Park Management System

The Council will investigate the most appropriate car park management system for the district with a view to agreeing a programme for implementing a new system with a minimum ten year lifespan.

Options to consider will include:

1. Replace current machines with similar coin only Pay and Display machines
2. Replace current machines with coin and 'Chip & Pin' Pay and Display machines
3. Provide Pay by phone with either of the above two Pay and Display options, potentially on a trial basis initially
4. Replace the current machines with a 'Pay on Foot' system

The Council will have regard to the wider economic and development influences on town centres and the likely demand for parking in the medium to longer term.

The Council will also consider the implications of introducing a charging system for other 'free of charge' car parks.

- 5.18 More modern ticket machines with daily connectivity will provide accurate information on usage and management issues. Payment by telephone will also provide data on usage. Usage information will negate the need for expensive surveys of car parking and will also allow the Council to consider managing car parks and tariffs on a more flexible basis, possible even on a micro scale rather than district wide.
- 5.19 Accurate information from car parks also allows the Council to support initiatives at Christmas or for parking rebate schemes in partnership with traders.
- 5.20 Currently the Council reviews its town centre parking tariffs every three years, usually reflecting inflation per annum, equating to a minimum increase of 10p per tariff band. This largely reflects the limitations of the ticket machines in terms of coin types accepted and the very limited information available on car park usage from ticket machines and on-street usage.
- 5.21 In 2009 tariff increase considered the different demand for parking both within and between towns. As a result 'differential' tariffs now exist reflecting the higher demand for parking in Hitchin and Letchworth compared to Royston. In addition some 'prime' short stay car parks within Hitchin and Letchworth have higher tariffs than other short stay car parks in the same towns, reflecting observed demand from surveys of users.

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5.22 Tariffs can also be used to manage parking demand, potentially directing users to less busy car parks. There is a fine line between using tariffs in this way and putting people off coming to town centres.

Policy 5 - Reviewing Tariffs

The Council will review tariffs every two years starting from 2010 allowing for inflation as a baseline. It will consider the following:

1. Usage and demand for car parks within towns as a whole
2. Differences in demand for parking within car parks
3. Differences in demand for parking between days and times of the day
4. Economic vitality and viability of town centres
5. Tariffs used in other private car parks within towns
6. Tariffs used in other nearby towns
7. Tariff rebate or discount schemes
8. Short stay tariffs should to reflect the key objectives of Town Centre Strategies with specific regard to supporting duration of stay.
9. Long stay tariffs should compare favourable with return local bus or rail fares in order to encourage alternative modes of travel to town centres.
10. The practicalities of implementing tariff increases depending on the types of ticket machines in operation.
11. Other issues such as the need to prevent unnecessary circulating traffic due to big tariff differences between car parks.

5.23 Currently there is no charge for Sunday or evening parking in town centres. In recent years certain towns have increased activity on Sundays and during the evenings and car parks are used during these times. Charging for parking will place greater demands on management and enforcement resources as well as have implications for the economic viability of town centres during these times.

Policy 6 - Charging for Evenings and Sundays

The Council will consider charging for parking for evenings and Sundays when tariffs are reviewed and depending on what charging system may be in place in the future. The evening and Sunday charging review will be carried out in consultation with Area Committees and Town Centre Management and will consider the demand for Evening and Sunday parking, economic circumstances of town centres at the time and availability of alternatives as well as resource implications for managing car parks outside current charging hours.

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- 5.24 In line with modern car park operations, there is potential for other services to be provided in off-street car parks in the district. Where appropriate some of these services may benefit car park users and the Council will consider opportunities on a case by case basis.

Policy 7 - Other Services in Council Car Parks

The Council will consider opportunities for providing other services to customers in its car parks. In some cases services may be provided by third parties and in all cases consideration will be given to the appropriateness of the service provided as well as the implications for use of the car park and town centre generally.

Services could include:

1. Advertising on tickets, ticket machines or elsewhere
2. Promotion or marketing initiatives
3. Other events associated with town centre promotion or activities
4. Other appropriate commercial activities

- 5.25 There is a considerable amount of on-street parking in town centres. Much of this parking is as close, if not closer, to main shopping areas than off-street parking. This makes it popular and survey information indicates that turnover of spaces is significant.
- 5.26 On-street parking is currently free of charge and this, coupled with the short stay parking restrictions in place, means a significant amount of vehicles moving through town centres searching for on-street parking, often when there is spare capacity in off-street car parks. In some locations this puts circulating traffic in areas where pedestrian activity is busiest.
- 5.27 On-street parking generally falls into five categories:
1. Short stay (e.g. 20 minute or half hourly duration)
 2. Medium stay (e.g. 1 – 3 hours duration)
 3. Long stay (e.g. 3 hours plus)
 4. Blue Badge holder parking
 5. Loading and servicing
- 5.28 The Council will review the provision of on-street parking, especially where Town Centre Strategies are progressing and the demand for or need for on-street parking may change over time. The principle of short stay in core area and medium/longer stay further away from shops is the preferred approach.

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- 5.29 From time to time there may be a need to review provision of on-street parking in town centres where servicing, emergency vehicles and buses have difficulty accessing key destinations.

Policy 8 - On Street Parking Provision

In consultation with District Area Committees, Town Centre Management, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Constabulary the Council will review provision of on-street parking as and when circumstances change in town centres. Consideration will be given for retaining the overall quantum and balance in duration of stay of on-street parking spaces unless circumstances indicate that there will be limited detrimental impact to the town centre of removing on street parking or amending duration of parking.

The Council will continue to pursue a policy of short stay in core streets, medium stay in peripheral streets and medium to longer stay in streets further out from the centre, subject to provision not conflicting with other demands or giving rise to safety, access or amenity concerns

- 5.30 The Council manages the enforcement of on-street parking controls in town centres. This considerable cost is not off-set by users paying for service at source, as is the case in off-street car parks. In addition the Council is concerned about the implications for town centre vitality and viability of the volumes of traffic circulating in town centres. This problem will only become more acute when development sites in town centres come forward.
- 5.31 Town Centre Strategies identify the need for increased pedestrian priority measures as well as identifying the need for town centre users to use car parks on the edges of shopping areas and walk rather than circulate by car through core town centre streets.
- 5.32 In summary there is a balance between providing on-street parking in town centres, the cost of managing that provision and the implications for town centres as shopping environments of the volume of traffic it generates.

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- 5.33 Charging for on-street parking is one way of managing these impacts and is in line with managing parking elsewhere in car parks and on-street parking in residential areas (i.e. via permit charges).

Policy 9 - On Street Charging

The Council will consider the case for on-street parking charges when off-street parking tariffs are reviewed. This will be carried out in consultation with Area Committees, Town Centre Management, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Constabulary.

Key issues to consider will be as follows:

1. The economic vitality and viability of town centres and the implications of introducing on street charging
2. The cost of implementing and managing on-street charging
3. Appropriate tariffs for on-street charging alongside off-street parking charges (see also the issues in 'Reviewing Tariffs')
4. Appropriate charging times and days for on-street parking

The following category of on street charging areas will be considered in conjunction with the above:

1. Core shopping streets with the lowest duration of stay and highest turnover of spaces.
2. Next to core shopping streets with short to medium stay duration
3. Longer stay on the edges of town centres, with specific regard to the potential for parking migrating to non-town centre areas.
4. Longer stay elsewhere e.g. for employee, commuter or education users

- 5.34 The Council has maintained a policy of providing on-street and off-street parking for Blue Badge Holders in a variety of locations in town centres. This reflects the need for Blue Badge Holders to park near their destination on grounds of reduced accessibility. There is, at times, great demand for prime Blue Badge Holder spaces and the opportunity for increasing provision in key destinations is limited. There is also a considerable amount of abuse of Blue Badge Holder parking bays by non-Blue Badge Holders, especially on a short stay basis.

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Policy 10 - Parking for Blue Badge Holders

The Council will maintain its policy of providing free parking for Blue Badge Holders both on and off street in a variety of locations around town centres. Where circumstances change (for example associated with a new car park management system, development proposals or demand for more pedestrian priority) the views of stakeholders, the Area Committee, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Constabulary will be sought on future provision for Blue Badge Holders.

Where demand arises the Council will also seek to identify and provide parking space for mobility scooters.

Pedestrian priority measures will be designed with the needs of Blue Badge Holders' parking needs as a key consideration.

- 5.35 Another key issue for town centres is the availability of service access and loading bays for serving shops and businesses. Currently loading bays are provided in locations where demand for on-street parking is high, road space is often limited and specific provision is needed to assist business deliveries. The Town Centre Strategies identify potential demand for pedestrian priority measures and increased retail provision in town centres. Pressure for servicing and loading access will increase in town centres, potentially being directly at odds with the ability to carry out servicing and deliveries where pedestrian priority becomes more in-demand.
- 5.36 There is now restricted access to core shopping streets in Hitchin on Saturdays. This, along with experience from outside the district, suggests that there are ways of maintaining service access alongside demand for greater pedestrian priority.

Policy 11 - Servicing and Loading

The Council will seek to maintain servicing and delivery access for businesses and residents in town centres. As proposals from Town Centre Strategies come forward, the ability to maintain servicing and delivery access throughout the day in certain parts of town centres may be limited, therefore needing a more flexible or managed solution.

In consultation with Town Centre Management, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Constabulary the Council will review servicing and delivery access as and when circumstances require. The preference will be to serve properties from the rear where possible and, if not possible, from the street.

Pedestrian priority measures will be designed with the needs of servicing and delivery access as a key consideration.

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- 5.37 Emergency access in town centres is a key consideration and many of the issues associated with it are similar to those affecting servicing and deliveries. The one key difference is the need to preserve human life overriding the need for any other access or parking requirements. The emergency services will park wherever needed in an emergency and the Council seeks to support their ability to get access into town centres and not be impeded by other parking. Much of this issue is a matter for the management and enforcement of town centre parking.

Policy 12 - Emergency Services' Access

The Council will work with Hertfordshire County Council and the Emergency Services to review town centre parking provision in order to ensure that there are no circumstances where parking is consistently impeding emergency service access.

Pedestrian priority measures will be designed with the needs of the Emergency Services as a key consideration.

- 5.38 Increased use of both modes of transport help reduce congestion in town centres and pressure on car parking. Increased bicycle use also helps reduce carbon emissions and the Council's Proposed Cycle Route Network alongside Urban Transport Plans for the towns will identify improvements to routes to and from town centres for bicycles.
- 5.39 Security and shelter are key issues for both types of two wheeled user. Both are able to park free of charge and bicycle parking stands are generally situated at various locations around town centres. Powered two wheelers are able to park in designated areas of off-street car parks, on street or in other informal locations, often sharing with bicycle parking.

Policy 13 - Powered Two Wheeler and Bicycle Parking

The Council will work with Town Centre Management, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Constabulary to seek to identify and provide additional parking facilities for powered two wheelers and bicycles. The most appropriate mechanism for delivering improvements is via Urban Transport Plans or Town Centre Strategies but the principle of small scale provision at a variety of locations in town centres is the start point.

For powered two wheelers the Council will work with Hertfordshire County Council to identify locations where specific provision can be made to park motorbikes and mopeds and lock them securely to a fixed object.

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Provision for powered two wheelers will continue to be made in off-street car parks free of charge. Opportunities for increasing provision will be made where they can be identified.

- 5.40 Currently the Council provides Coach and Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) overnight parking in Woodside car park in Hitchin. The Council will consider provision for similar parking where demand arises.

Policy 14 - Bus, Coach and HGV Parking in Town Centres

The Council will work with Ward Councillors, Town Centre Management, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Constabulary to identify parking provision for Buses, Coaches and HGVs as and when demand is identified.

- 5.41 There are several locations within town centres where existing Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) are not as clear as they should be, leading to some confusion amongst users. As such this encourages parking in locations or for durations not intended. These outstanding issues need to be resolved to ensure that parking management in town centres can be effective

Policy 15 - Updating Traffic Regulation Orders

The Council will identify and take action on any Traffic Regulation Orders in town centres that need to be reviewed to improve clarity for users.

6. Residential and other non-Town Centre Areas

- 6.1 The District Council has been managing on-street parking controls for five years and has considerable experience of the most appropriate way of addressing parking issues in residential areas. The agreement the Council has with Hertfordshire County Council permits the District Council to implement Traffic Regulation Orders that provide for parking, mainly in the form of Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs).
- 6.2 The Council now manages 12 Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs) in residential areas of Hitchin, Letchworth and Royston. These zones have been successful in removing non-residential parking although the original intention was for CPZs to be self financing. This has not been the case and with demand for additional CPZs this Strategy will consider how to provide additional CPZs, whether there is potential for CPZs and other on street parking to be self financing and whether existing CPZs need to be reviewed in the light of the past few years' experiences.

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- 6.3 Other TROs are implemented from time to time in the district that are mainly to do with preventing parking and/or promoting safety and public amenity. Whilst the District Council may enforce these types of parking restrictions they remain the responsibility of Hertfordshire County Council to implement.
- 6.4 The overall aim is to minimising the effects of street parking upon road safety, congestion and the environment. The approach of this Strategy is to consider an area wide approach rather than street by street. It is recognised that it is difficult to convince residents of currently unaffected areas to consider parking controls but this Strategy seeks to identify how an area wide approach may benefit wider residential areas. In reality, provision of measures to provide for parking on-street may involve a combination of CPZs and other TROs by the District Council.
- 6.5 The provision of CPZs has been focussed on removing non-residential car parking in residential areas, normally long stay and mainly associated with commuters, employees and town centre users. The CPZ's implemented to date have been successful in achieving the removal of non-residential parking but experience over the last few years has shown that:
1. Non-residential parking problems migrate, not always to the most likely areas
 2. Controlled Parking Zones are expensive and income from permits do not cover the cost of implementing and managing the zones.
 3. There are other ways of dealing with non-residential parking that may be as effective in terms of removing non-residential parking but not being as costly to implement and manage as CPZs
- 6.6 Removing long stay, non-residential parking can help promote alternative modes of travel to town centres, employment areas and railway stations. There are important overlaps with the Urban Transport Plans in this respect as removing on-street parking may free up road space for other facilities such as cycle routes or pedestrian crossings.
- 6.7 There may be instances where removing non-residents parking creates the circumstances for excessive speed for vehicles and therefore demands for traffic calming. In some cases retaining some on street parking, including long stay may serve to keep traffic speeds down.
- 6.8 In considering parking control areas the Council will need to consider the wider implications of any parking restrictions for all road users. The Council will also identify whether there is any scope for delivering parking improvements in conjunction with other highways works being undertaken, for example, maintenance of safety engineering schemes.

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- 6.9 The Council recognises that there are still some areas of the District that suffer from excessive amounts of long stay parking that is a problem and has identified areas that will need attention over the course of this strategy. The following objectives summarise the Council's priorities in dealing with on-street parking problems:
- ◆ where residents compete for road parking space in their own streets with other groups (local workers, commuters etc) new schemes will give greater priority to residents.
 - ◆ where local businesses compete for road parking space in their local industrial areas with other groups, (commuters etc) new schemes will give greater priority to local businesses.
- 6.10 A two stage process is required to assess the need for action and, if it is agreed that action is needed, what needs to be considered to identify the best solution. Stage 1 of the process is largely concerned with identifying problem areas that need further detailed investigation to determine the extent of any problems and possible solutions.

Policy 16 - Identifying On Street Parking Problem Areas

The Council will investigate and take action according to the following initial appraisal:

- ◆ Where residents, with no off street parking provision, are regularly prevented from parking in their streets or reasonable walking distance by commuters, local workers, students or other long-stay parkers.
- ◆ Where businesses are impeded in their daily activities, by parked vehicles associated with commuters, local workers, students or other long-stay parkers.
- ◆ Where the local Area Committee, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Police are agreed that action needs to be taken to reduce the risk of accidents.
- ◆ Where the Council, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Police are agreed that action needs to be taken to prevent regular significant queuing and congestion as a result of obstructive parking.
- ◆ Where the Council, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Police are agreed that pedestrian, cycle or passenger transport routes are regularly impeded by obstructively parked vehicles.

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- 6.11 Where an initial appraisal has identified the need for action the Council will move to the second stage of appraisal required before detailed implementation. The second stage appraisal seeks to consider the specific characteristics of the area based on observations or information supplied to the Council.

Policy 17 - Identifying Solutions to On Street Parking Problems

In deciding the best approach to take to remove long-stay parking it will consider the following:

1. The possible amount of non-residential parking and the amount of residential or operational business parking competing for roadspace.
2. The likely availability of off-street parking.
3. Locations where long-stay parking is impeding private accesses and junctions
4. Locations where non-residents' parking is causing other concerns, such as verge parking, blocking pedestrian routes, causing highway safety concerns or preventing safe and convenient access especially for cyclists, buses, servicing and/or emergency vehicles
5. The extent to which other parking generators influence demand (e.g. local businesses, schools and other organisations)
6. The potential for other issues such as speeding to become more prominent when parking is removed.
7. Whether removing non-residential parking will lead to a clear and unacceptable worsening of parking conditions elsewhere.
8. If a CPZ is implemented what are the resource implications for the Council, including an estimate of permit take up by local residents/businesses.
9. The views of Ward Councillors, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Constabulary on the above as well as initial views on the best method to addressing problems including whether a CPZ is appropriate.

- 6.12 In order to implement measures to support residents' or businesses parking, the Council will continue to seek their support before moving from second stage to implementation. In some locations it may be preferable to consult on a wider area if it is anticipated that an existing problem could be moved to an adjoining area where parking isn't currently a concern.

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Policy 18 - Consultation

A full public consultation will be undertaken of all local Ward Councillors, residents and businesses in an affected area to ascertain the scale of any problems and to determine the number of residents with no off street parking provision.

With regard to specific proposals the Council will continue to seek the support of at least 50% of residents and/or affected businesses before implementing any parking controls. This includes the support of a minimum of 50% of those with no off-street parking.

Where a parking scheme is progressed in detail the formal process associated with advertising Traffic Regulation Orders allows for anyone affected to make representations to the Council during an advertised period of time. The Council will consider any representations made to a formal Order prior to finalising any parking scheme.

Where practical, consultation will include areas beyond those immediately affected where it can be demonstrated that parking problems may migrate.

- 6.13 This above policies set out the approach to implementing potential parking controls. The Council has identified areas that need attention, areas that need investigation at a later date and areas that will need to be monitored for future parking issues.
- 6.14 Hitchin, Letchworth and Royston have a number of CPZs in place. There are a still number of areas in these towns affected by non-residents parking largely as a result of problems migrating from other controlled areas but also as a result of other changes both in terms of employment uses and even timetable changes for rail services.
- 6.15 Baldock does not currently have any CPZs although issues that exist in certain areas suggest that CPZs may be appropriate. There are existing parking issues that are likely to be worsened by the introduction of shorter stay parking in the core town centre streets.
- 6.16 Certain areas of Knebworth have competition for parking spaces between residents and non-residents associated mainly with rail commuters. A CPZ may be appropriate alongside other safety related parking controls.

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Policy 19 - Future Parking Control Areas

The Council will identify and keep under review a programme of parking controls for areas of the District in need of assistance. Areas identified fall within the following broad categories:

1. Area with an existing problem
2. Area requiring further investigation
3. Area to be monitored for potential future problems

The resources allocated to delivering solutions to those areas included within categories 1 and 2 above will dictate when and what solutions can be delivered. In identifying a programme the Council will give careful consideration to resources required to deliver and manage improvements.

- 6.17 There are a number of other smaller scale issues associated with providing or managing on-street parking that aren't area wide. The Council is aware of many of these but recognises that from time to time additional ones will be added and this list will need to be flexible enough to respond to changes.
- 6.18 In addition the Council is also aware of the environmental impact of on street parking in some areas (e.g. on verges or footways) and has undertaken works to mitigate this impact alongside use of byelaws where appropriate.

Policy 20 - Smallscale Parking Improvements

The Council will identify and keep under review a programme of implementation of smallscale parking improvements in locations where parking is having a detrimental environmental impact or is not serving the needs of local people as required. In addition the Council will investigate whether other methods of enforcement than a Traffic Regulation Order are appropriate.

Parking issues that are largely safety related will be referred to Hertfordshire County Council to address.

- 6.19 Many of the smaller scale issues identified will need to be implemented by Hertfordshire County Council either in full or in partnership with the District Council. In some cases these issues may need to be addressed as part of the Urban Transport Plan delivery programme for each town. Agreement on a programme for these measures will be made with the County Council.

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- 6.20 Existing CPZs have largely addressed the problem of long stay, non-residential in areas covered by the zones. The original plans for these CPZs envisaged a higher take up of residents permits and, therefore, lower cost to the Council of managing these areas. In light of the past experience of managing CPZs there is a need to review some of the existing zones. Reviews will consider how well they operate, whether a CPZ is the most appropriate way of addressing parking issues and whether a zone needs to be amended in any way.
- 6.21 Part of the review process will include the pricing of residents' permits and potential concessions on permits as well other issues such as whether to increase prices for multiple car owned properties or restrict the number of permits available per property as is standard practice in other Local Authorities.

Policy 21 - Review of Existing Controlled Parking Zones

The Council will review existing CPZs in order to determine whether they remain 'fit for purpose' in terms of their purpose and operation.

In consultation with Local Area Committees, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Constabulary, a programme for amending CPZs will be drawn up where it is considered appropriate to do so but without undermining the principle of supporting residents and/or local businesses in preference to longer stay non-residential or local business parking.

- 6.22 The Council receives regular requests for providing Blue Badge Holder Parking bays adjacent to residential properties or community facilities. In order to provide Blue Badge Holder bays the Council will develop a criteria based eligibility policy as well as a programme for implementing Blue Badge Holder Bays. A clear process for applying for Blue Badge holder parking bay(s) will also be developed.

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Policy 22 - Blue Badge Holder Parking Bays

The Council will develop a policy for providing Blue Badge Holder Parking and an annual programme for delivering parking spaces for Blue Badge Holders. It will focus on eligibility criteria as well as site specific circumstances. Considerations will include but not be limited to the following:

1. The availability and distance from the applicant's destination of off and on street parking
2. The ability of the applicant to walk or otherwise manoeuvre to the nearest parking provision, possibly via confirmation from a medical professional
3. Whether a formal or informal parking bay is the most appropriate course of action
4. Site specific safety or amenity issues for other road users
5. The views of local Ward Councillors, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Constabulary

6.23 The Council has Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) guidance on the parking policy and standards to be applied to all new development. This will be regularly reviewed to reflect changing development pressures and demand for parking.

6.24 As the provision of CPZs and the number of brownfield sites developed within urban areas have increased, the pressure for parking space in CPZs from new developments¹ has intensified. The Council considers that all new development should, as far as possible, be self sufficient in providing for future occupiers' parking insofar as there should be no unacceptable residual demand for parking in CPZs from new development.

6.25 Some residual parking on existing streets may be acceptable but where it is considered to add pressure to existing residents' and businesses' parking provision, new development will be required to provide for its own parking and possibly provide a financial contribution towards protecting existing residents' and businesses' parking.

6.26 Where new roads are adopted and off-street parking is provided in new development, the Council will work with developers and Hertfordshire County Council to ensure that the detailed design of new development does not create unnecessary parking overspill onto existing streets, especially in areas where there is pressure for parking space. The Council will consider the availability of existing on and off street parking space in determining planning applications.

¹New developments in this case are considered to be those developments that have been built after CPZs or other TROs were implemented on adjoining streets.

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- 6.27 As a result of many 'brownfield' sites being redeveloped adjacent to CPZs the Council faces increasing pressure to issue permits to residents of new development. Each case will need to be considered on its merits and careful consideration will need to be given to the availability of parking space for residential areas that pre-dated the CPZ and have little or no off-street parking.
- 6.28 Increasingly new developments in urban areas have been provided with at least one allocated parking space although car ownership per household may be higher and there may be limited space for visitors so there is demand for on street parking.

Policy 23 - New Developments and Existing Controlled Parking Zones

The Council will consider the need for including residents of new developments in existing CPZs on a case by case basis. As general guidance the following will be considered:

- 1) The amount of off-street parking provided formally or informally in the new development
- 2) The extent to which the parking standards used in the new development comply with 'Parking Standards at New Development' guidance
- 3) The availability of existing roadspace for additional residential parking
- 4) Any constraints on a development site that may have restricted the provision of parking (e.g. need to retain Listed Buildings)
- 5) The potential for imposing a limit on the amount of permits provided per household for new developments
- 6) Any other issues for example Planning Conditions or Legal Agreements that may prevent or restrict the issuing of permits.

In all cases priority will be given to residents and/or businesses that existed prior to the CPZ being implemented and who have little or no off street parking.

For further information or If you would like to discuss this Parking Strategy in more detail please contact:

Simon Young
Transport Policy Officer
01462 474846

Brian Perkins
Parking Services Manager
01462 474475

simon.young@north-herts.gov.uk

brian.perkins@north-herts.gov.uk

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More detailed information on car parks, tariffs and Controlled Parking Zones can be found at:

www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/living/travel/car_parking_in_north_herts.htm

North Hertfordshire District Council
June 2009

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This report was presented to Cabinet on 23 June 2009

TITLE OF REPORT: DRAFT CAR PARKING STRATEGY 2009-2019

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING & BUILDING CONTROL

PORTFOLIO HOLDER: COUNCILLOR R.A.C. THAKE

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The draft Parking Strategy attached as Appendix 1 covers a range of parking issues under the broad headings of 'town centres' and 'elsewhere'. Within the town centre section of the draft Strategy there is consideration about the future approach to both on and off-street parking provision and management.
- 1.2 The draft Strategy also considers future on-street parking controls outside town centres areas, the need to consider them on an area wide rather than piecemeal basis and the possibility of reviewing existing on-street controls.
- 1.3 The draft Strategy is intended to cover the next ten years, reflecting the lifetime of off-street car park ticket machines and a realistic timescale for implementing on-street parking controls. Due to uncertainties associated with development sites in town centres and the wider economic context, it is envisaged that the Strategy be kept under review to reflect changing circumstances.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision. A key decision will occur in relation to the approval of the final Parking Strategy and the Strategy has been included on the Forward Plan for June.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council's current Parking Strategy covers the period 2004 - 2009 and the Transport Fundamental Service Review (FSR) in 2008 identified the need to review the Parking Strategy.
- 3.2 At its meeting in January 2009 Cabinet resolved as follows:
 - (1) That the differential car parking tariffs, as recommended by MVA Consultancy and set out in Appendix 2 to the report, be introduced with effect from 1 April 2009, and that these differential tariffs be reviewed for 2010/11;
 - (2) That a revised Parking Strategy be produced in 2009/10, having regard to items contained within Paragraphs 4.9 to 4.11 of the report, including charges in Baldock and Royston, and that parking tariffs be reviewed annually to assess performance of tariffs against the Council's priorities for Green Issues and Town Centres;

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(3) That the proposals for investment in new ticket machines be noted, and that this be considered as part of its budget setting process for 2009/10 and beyond, with strong support for capital funding being used for “on foot/barrier” investment rather than replacing the existing machines.

- 3.3 The section of the report to the January 2009 Cabinet referred to in resolution (2) above stated as follows:

“4.9 Aside from consideration of tariffs it is also important to bear in mind that the Council loses revenue due to non-payment of tariffs (there is a considerable volume of people staying for less than 15 minutes in short stay car parks who may be most likely to risk non-payment) as well as ticket transfer. As part of the wider car parking strategy considerations the Council may wish to assess the benefits of ‘Pay on Foot/Pay on Exit’ parking systems that are widely considered to benefit users and be better for retaining income. The Capital Budget for 2009/10 and 2010/11 includes investments in new parking machines/control measures which could have the following benefits:

- > Greater flexibility of payment methods, including pre-payment*
- > Improved flexibility over charging bands*
- > Information on actual car park usage*
- > Ability to pay for actual time used in car parks rather than anticipated stay (this may encourage an increase in time people spend in our town centres)*

4.10 As well as pay on exit the Council should also consider cashless payment methods which are being introduced by other authorities around the country.

4.11 Despite observing very high demand and use of on-street parking and considerable evening and Sunday parking both on and off-street parking in town centres, there is no recommendation that on-street, evening or Sunday parking tariffs are introduced in 2009/10. The introduction of parking charges in The Twitchell car park in Baldock needs to be considered once the town centre enhancement scheme is complete and parking patterns settled. In addition there may be potential for introducing charges in the St Martins Road car park in Knebworth to assist with parking management issues in the village centre. These issues identified in this paragraph should be considered as part of the wider parking strategy work to be undertaken in 2009/10 for implementation in 2010/11 together with a long term charges policy.”

- 3.4 The above issues are addressed in the draft Parking Strategy although since the January Cabinet it should be noted that the Council’s financial circumstances have been significantly affected by the wider economic downturn.
- 3.5 In preparing the draft Parking Strategy officers have considered the role of the Parking Strategy as part of the Council’s wider commitment to its three immediate priorities; Town Centres, Sustainability and Green Issues.
- 3.6 The draft Parking Strategy has been informed by cost estimates from suppliers for various parking charging systems as well as various types of physical improvements to car parks. In addition officers have considered the future implementation costs of on street parking controls and, for both on and off street parking, the management and enforcement resources required.
- 3.7 Discussions have also been held with other Local Authorities on parking issues including neighbours Stevenage Borough Council, and East Herts District Council as well as Huntingdonshire District Council, Test Valley District Council, Winchester City Council and Taunton & Deane District Council.

4. ISSUES

Town Centres

- 4.1 There is the need to consider the off-street car park ticket machines which are in need of replacement. As coin only Pay and Display (P&D) machines that provide very little information on tickets purchased, the machines are limited in terms of providing a modern facility for customers, retaining revenue in line with the level of usage and providing information to inform tariff and other parking management decisions.
- 4.2 Modern P&D systems allow payment by 'Chip & Pin' or credit card as well as have machines equipped to provide accurate information on tickets purchased and even day to day management where machines are linked to the back office. There are various options available but the main benefit is that, relative to other systems, P&D is the cheapest and simplest system to implement in terms of capital cost.
- 4.3 P&D requires regular enforcement to ensure compliance with car park regulations. A P&D system suffers from non-payment, meter feeding and transferring of tickets. Some machines are available that require customers to input car registration details for printing onto a ticket. Experience elsewhere suggests that this type of system is not popular and requires more management. It also needs an enforcement presence in car parks and is still a system that requires users to anticipate how long they wish to remain in a car park before purchasing a ticket.
- 4.4 Another feature of P&D that customers do not like is the inability of machines to provide change. There is a level of overpayment for parking where customers do not have the correct change. It is difficult to quantify this but it may go some way to off-set non-payment or transferral of tickets.
- 4.5 The Council has suffered from some theft from ticket machines in the past. As cash payment is the only method available in car parks at the moment there is a need to consider whether cashless payment as an option. There is a cost to the Council of a cashless option (via debit and credit card charges) but there may be benefits in reductions of losses to theft and cash handling charges.
- 4.6 In recent years many Local Authorities with P&D systems have provided payment by telephone as an additional service. This system allows cashless payment and flexibility for customers who do not have change and/or may wish to extend stays in car parks without having to return to ticket machines. It may also have some benefits in terms of reducing ticket transfer or non-payment. Payment by phone will also work when ticket machines are out of operation. Discussion with other authorities suggests such a system is 'cost neutral' in terms of revenue implications, has minimal capital and set up costs but is well received by those who use the service, especially medium to long stay users. Other authorities also report that there has been steady growth in use of pay by phone month on month over the last 18 months or so.

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- 4.7 Payment by telephone may also offer benefits via the data provided on usage. It could help refine decisions on future ticket machine purchases insofar as payment by phone may negate the need for Chip & Pin functions on ticket machines (which adds a considerable capital and revenue cost to a machine). In addition, payment by phone may also inform decisions on the total number of ticket machines actually required. Payment by phone is not considered to be a way of completely removing the problems associated with P&D but it provides flexibility with regard to payment and could reduce the enforcement resource requirement in car parks by a small amount.
- 4.8 Currently it is possible to trial payment by phone for a minimum of a year and the draft Parking Strategy identifies this as a way forward whilst further detailed investigations can be made into off-street parking equipment. There will be a one-off set up cost of approximately £6,000 for a one year payment by phone trial and, subject to identifying the detailed arrangements for managing and running pay by phone as well as the implications in terms of cashless payment charges, it is recommended at 9.2 that the Council considers a trial pay by phone arrangement over the next 12 to 15 months.
- 4.9 A 'Pay on Foot'¹ (POF) parking system is widely acknowledged to be the most efficient and cost effective way of running car parking. POF offers several benefits but these must be considered against the considerable costs and the necessary change in management resource required to run POF. The following points summarise POF benefits:
- It removes the element of 'non payment' that exists in P&D as well as ticket transferral and should increase income simply by virtue of revenue retained
 - Customers pay for however long they stay and the need to anticipate length of stay is removed so this should support increased duration of stay in town centres – this may be an issue for car park capacity on busy days if spaces do not 'turnover' enough
 - Ticket machines generally offer change, alongside coin, banknote and cashless payment
 - There is greater flexibility in tariff setting and monitoring
 - There is a wealth of data on usage and duration of stay that is invaluable in setting tariffs and managing car parks
 - Car park operations can be monitored and run remotely from back office systems, potentially shared with other local authorities
 - Season Tickets can be purchased in car parks reducing the need for back office management
 - Pre-paid 'smartcards' can be used and topped up at payment machines
 - There is potential for income from advertising on screens on pay machines
 - Charging for evenings and Sundays is made more cost effective (operationally) as a barrier system supports 24 hour operation
 - There is likely to be little or no need for off-street car park enforcement as car park users need to pay before they can leave a car park.

¹ 'Pay on Foot' meaning payment for parking on foot at a payment machine before returning to a vehicle and leaving a car park rather than payment at a barrier on exit (i.e. 'Pay on Exit')
LETCHEWORTH (22.7.09)

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- 4.10 Considering a POF system must, however, consider the costs and management implications of running POF. These can be summarised as follows:
- The considerable capital cost of implementing POF, even just for the POF equipment
 - Cost of CCTV for all entry/exit barriers
 - Cost for 'Variable Message Signing' on approaches to car parks to advise motorists when car parks have spaces/are full
 - Physical changes to car parks to allow POF equipment
 - Provision of shelters for payment machines in surface car parks
 - Some concern about the relative security of payment machines compared to P&D machines
 - Cost of cabling, CCTV links and power supply to both machinery and back office
 - Cost of other works to car parks (mainly surface) that will prevent vehicles bypassing exit barriers
 - Potential loss of spaces to accommodate barriers/machines and queuing space
 - Possible off-site highways works where there may be highway implications of vehicles queuing at entry to car parks
 - In terms of management there is a need to have enough resources to be able to respond to a problem in a car park within a very short time period
 - Linked to the above point, there may be concerns regarding the reliability of some manufacturers' equipment
 - If 24 hour operation is required there is a need to consider how management issues are handled during evenings and Sundays.
 - Currently blue badge holders park for free in P&D car parks but this is unlikely to be possible in POF car parks without significant costs being incurred
 - Currently staff park free of charge and the cost of issuing free passes for POF is likely to be more expensive than the current paper pass
 - The considerable maintenance cost of a POF system compared to P&D
- 4.11 Officers have spent some time considering the above as well as visiting and overseeing the operation of the POF system at Stevenage Borough Council. There is potential for partnering the management of POF with Stevenage, thus sharing the back office management and maintenance of the system but the main issue to overcome is the likely cost of a POF system.
- 4.12 The estimates received from suppliers confirm that there will still be a need for some P&D car parks in our towns where POF is not a practical solution. This means there will still need to be an enforcement regime for remaining P&D car parks.
- 4.13 In terms of looking at whether POF may be implemented in the larger capacity car parks such as the two multi storeys, it is generally true to say that, physically, both multi storey car parks lend themselves to POF infrastructure. The main issue to be considered for both car parks, however, is the amount of long stay parking in both that reduces the benefits from income retention/longer stay that could be expected from a short stay POF car park. In addition much of the Letchworth multi storey long stay is taken up by NHDC staff who park free of charge.

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- 4.14 The table below summarises the costs that have been identified to date, based on suppliers' estimates and assumptions regarding other works. More difficult to identify is the changes that could arise from POF for the purposes of management and enforcement. It is likely that efficiencies can be identified should a POF system be implemented but further work needs to be done to understand the full scope of efficiencies in the wider context of the Councils parking service. In addition the revenue costs associated with both types of charging system need to be more accurately assessed (e.g. cashless payment charges, machine connectivity charges).
- 4.15 Looking beyond the Council's own car parks there may be potential to roll out any future car park system to other town centre car parks operated by third parties, especially in the case of POF.
- 4.16 Set out below is a summary of capital cost estimates for installation and potential annual maintenance costs:

System	Estimate for parking equipment	Estimate for other works	Total estimated capital cost	Annual maintenance costs (beyond 1 year warranty)
Pay on Foot ² Coin, note & Cashless	£700,000	£500,000	£1.2 million	£35,000
Pay and Display Coin only	£168,000	£32,000	£200,000	£20,000
Pay and Display Coin and Chip & Pin	£200,000	£50,000	£250,000	£20,000
Pay and Display Coin & Pay by Phone	£168,000	£38,000	£206,000	£20,000
Current machines with Pay by Phone	NIL	£6,000	£6,000	NIL for Pay by Phone £16,500 for machines

- 4.17 The above figures do not include the two off street car parks in Baldock and Knebworth but do include both Birdshill in Letchworth and Hitchin Swimming Centre. With regard to Baldock, it is recommended that the recent changes to town centre parking are given at least six months to 'settle down'. In considering Car Park charges earlier in the year Cabinet concluded that charging be considered for 2010/11 for the Twitchell off-street car park to support short-stay usage of that car park.
- 4.18 In Knebworth recent survey work has identified that the off street car park in St Martins Road is used by a significant amount of people for durations beyond what may be considered 'short stay'. Discussion with local ward Members, representatives of the Parish Council and traders suggests that introducing charging in this car park would help support the local shops and remove long stay parking. It is recommended that P&D machines be considered for this car park as part of investment proposals.

² This includes some Pay and Display machines in smaller car parks
LETCWORTH (22.7.09)

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- 4.19 It is recommended that a more detailed feasibility study of the most appropriate car park management system should be undertaken, via advice of a consultant specialising in car park management systems, to inform final decision making on this significant capital investment. This work should include POF and it is suggested that consideration of POF should pay close attention to partnering car park management, data gathering and possibly even maintenance with another authority. The operation of the existing CCTV control station is a good example of how this can work.
- 4.20 The feasibility study should also include an in depth analysis of the Council's current revenue costs associated with managing and enforcing on and off street parking. The potential for partnering and sharing resources with neighbouring authorities should be considered in order to assess the future resources required for a new P&D or POF system alongside ongoing demand for more on street parking management.
- 4.21 The draft Parking Strategy sets out a suggested approach towards reviewing tariffs. It includes many of the issues considered in the 2009 tariff review. Whilst not specifically referring to differential tariffs the approach suggested is likely to perpetuate different tariffs between car parks and between towns. Should a new parking management system be introduced it is likely that it will provide better information on usage and be more responsive to tariff changes for short term or experimental periods. It is important to note that the draft Strategy suggest a two year review of tariffs, starting in 2010.
- 4.22 The draft Strategy considers charging for Sundays and evenings and that this should take place at the same time tariffs are reviewed. Charging outside normal hours is heavily dependent on resources to enforce parking regulations and, in the case of POF, resources to manage car park operations.
- 4.23 Turning to physical improvements to car parks, the majority of concern regarding physical condition and therefore attractiveness of car parks is associated with multi story car parks, especially in Letchworth. Issues such as parking bay size, lighting, surfacing, waterproofing and décor are issues that need to be considered.
- 4.24 In Hitchin the Lairage has recently been improved although there are still concerns expressed about the lack of information on available spaces as users descend from the upper levels. It is possible to install a system that monitors usage of bays which could also be linked to advance messages on approach to the car park.
- 4.25 The following table summarises some preliminary cost estimates for potential improvement works (excluding CCTV) to car parks for consideration as part of the Corporate Business Planning process for 2010/11 and beyond:

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Car park	Description of work	Cost estimate
Letchworth multi storey	Repair damaged surfacing, improve water proofing, re-lining, clean & fix lighting to current levels	£160,000
	Option: improve lighting to higher levels	£238,000
Letchworth multi storey	Replace sodium lighting with white lighting	£90,000
Letchworth multi storey	Resin deck coating and wall/ceiling repainting	£360,000
Hitchin multi storey	Replace sodium lighting with white lighting	£70,000
Hitchin multi storey	Install bay monitoring sensors, external 'spaces available' sign and internal level guidance info	£80,000

The above reflects some of the improvements that could be made to the two multi storey car parks and in the case of Letchworth will need to be considered alongside a new ticketing system so as to maximise the potential of the car park. There are other significant security and vandalism issues to be addressed and other 'routine' maintenance costs that have not been included in this report but will need to be considered in any future programme of works.

- 4.26 With regard to on street parking the draft Strategy identifies that the amount and location of free on street parking is an important asset for each town centre. At this point in time there is limited scope for additional on street parking and the durations available are suitable for each location. In all towns there will be a need to consider additional on-street provision where off-street car parks may form part of redevelopment sites. The draft Strategy seeks to monitor this situation both in terms of amount & location of parking and durations of stay.
- 4.27 The draft Strategy identifies the need to consider the case for on-street charging each time off-street tariffs are reviewed. The current economic downturn suggests that now may not be the right time to introduce on street charging. The draft Strategy does identify that there is a cost associated with managing town centre on street parking and that, unlike in off street car parks, users do not pay for parking at source.
- 4.28 In addition it is clear from the town centre parking surveys that took place last year that there is, potentially, a significant amount of income that may be generated by on-street charging. Whilst this may be perceived by users as 'another charge on the motorist' the legal position regarding charges levied for on street parking is that any surplus income must be used for transport related projects or environmental improvements. Clearly there is the potential to consider how any excess income generated could be used to enhance town centres, in line with Corporate objectives.

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- 4.29 There would be a capital cost associated with introducing on street charging. This includes providing pay and display machines, associated works and amending orders. As 'on street' is highway, the views of the County Council and Hertfordshire Constabulary are important considerations. The revenue costs of management and enforcement will also need to be carefully considered, albeit in the context of any income generated.
- 4.30 Turning to residential and other non-town centre areas, the provision of parking controls to remove long stay non-residential parking has been successful in many respects. It is clear, however, that there are still parts of the district that have problems with commuter or employee parking competing with residential parking. The draft Strategy sets out the approach to identifying problem areas, initial appraisal on solutions to problems and the consultation process that will take place before any solutions can be implemented.
- 4.31 The draft Strategy suggests that an area wide approach to addressing parking problems, rather than a street by street piecemeal approach if it is considered to be a priority for investment as part of the Corporate Business Planning process for 2010/11 and beyond. In addition the draft Strategy confirms that there is a key role for Hertfordshire County Council in addressing parking problems that are largely to do with safety or amenity concerns, regardless of whether they involve competition between residents and non-residents.
- 4.32 A programme of area wide parking control areas can be identified and considered as an action plan resulting from the draft Strategy. Initial appraisal of the potential areas has taken place with a view to identifying resource implications for implementing new schemes. For the purposes of resource planning as a general guide approximately £50,000 will be required to implement one parking control area over an 18 month period. This assumes one member of staff progressing the project. Currently approximately 15 areas have been identified. This these would be a significant investment should the Council wish to support this approach.
- 4.33 The draft Parking Strategy specifically refers to 'Parking Control Areas' rather than 'Controlled Parking Zones' (CPZs). This reflects the experience that a CPZ solution is not always the correct solution. Members will no doubt be aware of the cost of running on street parking enforcement as compared with the lower than expected income from permits sold in CPZs. In future much closer attention will need to be paid to the most effective solution given the limited enforcement resources available to the Council.
- 4.34 In addition to new parking control areas the draft Strategy identifies the need to review existing CPZs in the light of recent years' experience. This includes the need to review whether a CPZ remains the best, most cost effective solution as well as policy for running CPZs, e.g. approach to permit charges, eligibility, concessions and impact of new developments.
- 4.35 The final key issue the draft Strategy will address is the need to develop a policy and programme for delivering parking bays for Blue Badge holders outside town centres. The Council has a growing list of potential schemes and needs policy to determine entitlement and how and when bays may be delivered. There is considerable best practice from elsewhere and this plus discussion with Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire Constabulary and relevant stakeholders should enable a robust policy to be identified.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Cabinet are responsible under their terms of reference for approving and adopting a car parking strategy and for setting car parking fees and fines.
- 5.2 There are no direct legal implications arising from the contents of the draft Strategy but there will be legal implications of new and revised Traffic Regulation Orders for on and off street parking.
- 5.3 Should on street charging proposals come forward then the requirements of the Traffic Management Act 1984 (and subsequent revisions) will need to be considered. The agreement between the Council and Hertfordshire County Council regarding Decriminalised Parking Enforcement will also need to be reviewed.

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The only direct financial implications of this report and the draft strategy is to consider the costs of a trial of the Pay by Phone system for a period of 12-15 months. In addition Cabinet is asked to endorse the need for consultancy advice towards a feasibility study into the best car park management system for the district.
- 6.2 The feasibility study can be funded from the capital programme to the extent that the study contributes directly to the scoping of the asset ultimately acquired. This may mean that the proportion of the study will need to be funded from revenue and it is suggested that the Strategic Priorities Fund be used for this purpose. The Strategic Priorities Fund is utilised to encourage innovations/invest to save bids to be financed, to enable the outputs from service reviews and continuous performance improvement strategies to be funded and to facilitate achievement of strategic priority projects.
- 6.3 Depending on future decisions on car park management, there will be implications for the revenue costs of managing on and off street parking and the resources required to do both to be considered as part of the Corporate Business Planning process for 2010/11 and beyond. At this stage it is not possible to advise on the detailed implications for future resources of the draft Strategy and the feasibility study into car park management options will help clarify the situation.
- 6.4 There is likely to be a considerable capital cost to the Council of implementing a new off street parking charging system. There is currently a total of £300,000 in the capital programme for "Car Park Management Systems". Funding for the capital programme would need to be reviewed if a further substantial commitment of resources was approved for, for example, a POF system given that it is the most expensive option by a long way albeit with the potential for better income returns.
- 6.5 The main risks involved with a new system is that predicted income forecasts do not materialise, the machines do not have at least a ten year life span or have significant reliability problems that affect income. There are also wider economic issues that may affect usage and income regardless of what system is used.

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- 6.6 The uncertainty about the future of several surface car parks in Hitchin, Letchworth and Royston is also a consideration. In all cases potential development sites may result in the car parks ceasing to exist or ceasing to be under the Council's control. Implementing a new system would, however, set a standard that a future developer should be expected to maintain or enhance.
- 6.7 Increasing on street parking controls will increase demand for enforcement resource. Experience suggest that income from CPZs will not cover that cost, adding further demand to off street car park income or other sources of revenue.
- 6.8 Implementing on street parking charging will incur considerable capital cost to implement and revenue cost to manage and enforce. Further analysis is need to establish if income from on street charging would off-set the costs of implementation, management and enforcement. Survey information gathered at the end of 2008 demonstrated a considerable volume of short stay on street parking in Hitchin and Letchworth so this data could be used as the basis for analysis.
- 6.9 Members will be aware of the special Cabinet meeting arranged on 15th July 2009 for consideration of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and efficiency proposals required for the 2010/11 budget. Members may wish to consider further capital and revenue implications at the July meeting in the light of the draft Strategy.

7. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The implications for the Council's human resources of the draft Strategy will only really be possible to identify once further progress has been made with a car park management feasibility study. A POF system will change the Council's approach to car park management considerably.
- 7.2 Resources for on street management and enforcement are stretched and adding additional parking controls will increase this problem. The type of car park management system and a review of existing CPZs will provide further clarity on future on street resource required.
- 7.3 With regard to equalities, consideration needs to be given to how Blue Badge holders use car parks if a POF system is implemented. The draft Strategy identifies the Council's commitment to providing town centre parking for Blue Badge holders and also that the Council will be considering concessions for CPZ permits and provision of bays for Blue Badge holders outside town centres.

8. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 8.1 Initial consultation has been undertaken with Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Constabulary on the issues reflected in the draft Parking Strategy.
- 8.2 It is proposed that the Area Committees be consulted on the draft Strategy prior to further consideration by Cabinet.
- 8.3 Many of the issues the Strategy covers were discussed by the Transport FSR Member Working Group and the FSR Action Plan reflects this work.

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- 8.4 Subject to Cabinet endorsement the Town Centre Managers in the District will be consulted.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That Cabinet comments on the draft Strategy and refers it to Area Committees for consideration with a view to finalising the Strategy for consideration at the September Cabinet meeting.
- 9.2 That Cabinet endorse the Pay by Phone trial for 12 to 15 months subject to a satisfactory service provider being identified and costs not varying significantly from those shown in this report.
- 9.3 In order to assist decisions on a future off street charging system, Cabinet is requested to endorse the appointment of a consultant to undertake a feasibility study on the most appropriate car park management system over the next ten years as a minimum.
- 9.4 That Cabinet notes the indicative estimates for both car park management systems, physical improvements to both multi-story car parks and indicative figure for any new parking management areas and considers them as part of the Corporate Business Planning process for 2010/11 and beyond.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To ensure Area Committees' views on the draft Strategy are taken into consideration before being adopted.
- 10.2 A trial of the Pay by Phone system is considered to be a relatively cheap way of assessing this system as an option for improving customer services and potentially informing decisions on a future off street charging system without committing the Council to any significant expense or longer term commitment.
- 10.3 Officers have undertaken a considerable amount of work on off street charging systems but as the cost of a new system is likely to be considerable and there is a need to take an independent overview on future resources to manage parking, there are benefits in seeking detailed independent advice from an industry expert.
- 10.4 Given the financial planning timetable in 2009/10, the estimates provided in this report offer the opportunity for consideration in the Corporate Business Planning process for 2010/11, subject to more detailed feasibility appraisal of car park management systems.

11. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

11.1 Other options for car park management systems that could be considered include:

- Pay on Exit – Car park users pay at barriers on exit of car parks. This system is generally considered to have been superseded by POF systems which now avoid cars queuing at exit barriers
- Advanced Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) – This system works with both POF and P&D and would allow monitoring of use of car parks. For P&D it would allow back office monitoring of usage and the existence of ANPR offers another incentive to ensure users pay for parking. An enforcement regime is still required to back it up and ANPR would provide evidence in the case of disputed Penalty Charge Notices. There is also a need to rely on the technology as well as clarity of number plates.

11.2 Neither system have been looked into in detail at this stage as the POF and P&D options are considered the most appropriate in terms of a replacing the current system (P&D) and bringing in the most customer friendly alternative (POF) with Pay by Phone potentially acting as a P&D 'add on'.

12. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – NHDC Draft Parking Strategy

13. CONTACT OFFICERS

David Scholes
Head of Planning & Building Control
David.scholes@north-herts.gov.uk
01462 474836

Vaughan Watson
Head of Leisure & Environmental Services
Vaughan.watson@north-herts.gov.uk
01462 474641

Simon Young
Transport Policy Officer
Simon.young@north-herts.gov.uk
01462 474846

Brian Perkins
Parking Services Manager
Brian.perkins@north-herts.gov.uk
01462 474475

Katie White
Senior Lawyer
Katie.white@north-herts.gov.uk
01462 474315

Tim Neill
Accountancy Manager
Tim.neill@north-herts.gov.uk
01462 474470

Kerry Shorrocks
Head of Human Resources
Kerry.shorrocks@north-herts.gov.uk
01462 474224

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

NHDC Parking Strategy 2004-2009
Transport FSR Action Plan

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT	AGENDA ITEM No. 8
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WARD AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS

To receive any oral reports from Members regarding Ward matters and Outside Organisations.

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