

**TITLE OF REPORT: REFERRAL FROM ROYSTON & DISTRICT COMMITTEE –
2 APRIL 2008 – CAR PARKING CHARGES IN ROYSTON**

The following is an extract from the Draft Minutes of the Royston & District Committee meeting held on 2 April 2008.

**93. REPORT ON CAR PARKING CHARGES IN ROYSTON
Car Parking Trial**

The Head of Leisure and Environment had submitted a written report to update the Royston and District Committee Meeting at the request of the Chairman, on the issues regarding car parking charges in Royston. The basis of the report was Minute 83 from the Royston and District Committee Meeting dated 30 January 2008.

The report revealed that there is currently a parking trial taking place in Royston, and that car parking will be considered as part of North Herts District Council's Fundamental Service Review, from which will come recommendations and guidance towards an integrated approach towards car parking, allowing the Council to review the charges and how they relate to transport and town centre parking.

The Projects Manager declared that the basic issue was that it was too late to alter the budget considerations for this financial year, but that the Committee should look towards the next financial year's considerations.

The report stated that if there were two trials running concurrently, it would be difficult to tell which one had caused more shoppers to come into Royston. Discussion ensued, and the Committee resolved that it is possible to run two trials and obtain separate statistics from each, but it would not be easy. The concern was that at the current rate of deterioration there would not be much left of Royston Town Centre for shoppers to visit, and it was considered that to run one trial after the other would take too long, but the first trial which is currently in progress was welcomed. Both trials would need to run together.

The Committee believed that car parking charges in Royston would be looked at differently in the future, and supported the idea that different charges could be used in different car parks. What is required is a broader view of the problem. There should be serious consideration as to whether the present system is correct for Royston and whether expansion of the Town Centre will be affected by car parking charges.

The Committee asked for clarification of paragraph 4.4 of the Report, as one of the dates taken into account was a Sunday, on which no car parking charges are levied. The Community Development Officer offered to seek clarification on this and report back to the Royston and District Committee.

Christmas Car Parking

In recent years, Royston has offered shoppers free parking in all their car parks for the three weekdays just prior to Christmas Day. The Committee wanted to know whether this offer of free parking had been successful, and the general consensus of opinion was that it had been. During the discussion which followed, it was suggested that, with Christmas Day 2008 falling on a Thursday, not just the three weekdays before Christmas Day, but also the Thursday, Friday and Saturday of the week before should share the free parking. Therefore this would affect Thursday 18 and Friday 19 December and Saturday 20 December, followed by Monday 22, Tuesday 23 and Wednesday 24 December. The Committee agreed with this suggestion, and it was further proposed that this scheme was given better publicity as a special event, advertised well beforehand, and that the car parking machines need to be labelled at least a month in advance of the period of free car parking.

RESOLVED: That the Royston and District Committee unanimously agreed that the proposals for two car parking trials to run at the same time should be pursued and that Cabinet be requested to take due consideration of the following proposals at the meeting of Cabinet to be held on 24 June 2008.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:

- 1) That the Committee did not agree that two car parking trials could not work together, and would still like its proposed trial to be considered by Cabinet and full Council;
- 2) That the Royston and District Committee regarded the Report by the Head of Leisure and Environment on Car Parking Charges as positive, and that Royston car parking issues should be considered as part of the North Hertfordshire District Council's Transport Fundamental Service Review, as part of the Royston Car Parking Strategy, and in the Budget process for 2009/10;
- 3) That different systems should be considered within the Royston car parks when setting charges (proposed free or lower charges in certain Royston car parks) and that each car park in Royston Town Centre should be treated on an individual basis;
- 4) That each town in North Hertfordshire could be assessed individually and on their own merits when considering changes (e.g. "one size does not fit all");
- 5) That various systems are considered, including the following:
 - barrier entry systems and
 - change given from the ticket machineswithin the Royston car parks;
- 6) That the number of spaces allocated in Royston town within the Car Parking Strategy be carefully considered;
- 7)
 - a) That the free Christmas parking charges for 2008 should apply on Thursday 18, Friday 19, Saturday 20, Monday 22, Tuesday 23 and Wednesday 24 December 2008;
 - b) That publicity for the free Christmas parking charges should be implemented at least one month in advance of the period agreed.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

The Committee feels that Royston needs imminent action on car parking to improve the vitality of the Town Centre.

The following is the report considered by the Royston & District Committee at its meeting held on 2 April 2008.

TITLE OF REPORT: REPORT ON CAR PARKING CHARGES IN ROYSTON

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 At the request of the Chair of this committee an update report is being provided on the issues regarding car parking charges.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 Not included within the Forward Plan

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At your last committee meeting on the 30th January 08 minute 83 states:-

83. NOTE: ROYSTON PARKING POLICY AND OTHER HIGHWAYS ISSUES

The Chairman introduced a discussion on the proposed trial reduction in car parking charges in one of the Royston car parks.

She began by reminding the Royston and District Committee that they had rejected the Royston Parking Strategy proposed by Martin Hempell of MVA Transport Consultancy at the Royston and District Committee Meeting on 28 November 2007.

However, it was vital that this was eventually agreed, with amendments to the Committee's satisfaction, as the Parking Strategy would be used to inform the Town Centre Strategy consultation.

The Chairman proposed that there was a trial for two to three months in a designated car park, with the first hour costing 10p and thereafter reverting to the standard charge for that car park. This would also be beneficial to people using the Health Centre and Town Hall.

The Committee, together with the Royston Town Centre Manager at the Chairman's invitation, discussed this suggestion, and Members agreed that a report should go to Cabinet to request agreement to undertaking a reduced rate of parking charge in an area of the Civic Centre Car Park, for a trial period.

It was noted that any decision made would have to go to Cabinet first, and then to the full Council Meeting.

The Leader of the Council suggested that to demonstrate that Royston is a special case to the other North Herts District councillors, they should all be invited to visit Royston to familiarise themselves with the area and the problems Royston is currently undergoing.

The Committee decided that they needed a report back on the facts and figures of the free Christmas parking, and if it proved to be a successful event, it would be made a permanent feature of Royston Town Centre at Christmas and publicised as such.

Royston and District Committee were informed that Cabinet had agreed to a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) in Rock Road, and it was suggested that Briary Lane and Sun Hill were also given TROs. The advertisements would go out in the first week of February 2008, subject to the finance being available.

One Member had an issue with parking on the length of carriageway in Orchard Road from Minster Road, but this was subject to a separate investigation.

It was noted that the original proposition to free up some loading and unloading bays for short-term parking was made in March 2006, and it was agreed that this should be pushed to be dealt with imminently. The Committee authorised the Chairman to get this actioned without delay.

A Member mentioned that the damage to Melbourn Street above Royston Cave had made the national news. Discussion followed on ways to alleviate further damage, and suggestions were made, including: smaller lorries only being allowed to use this stretch of road; goods lorries parking elsewhere and moving the goods to retail outlets using moveable cages along the pavement; the use of a fence, raised kerbstones or black metal bollards to discourage vehicles parking with their wheels on the pavement in the area; and the construction of a low road bridge to take the weight off the part of the carriageway above Royston Cave. It was noted that general traffic pauses close to the Cave at traffic lights, and the constant vibration of their engines and the continual effect of exhaust fumes could also be damaging to the Cave.

The Chairman concluded that whatever decision was made, a weight limit should be imposed on the relevant stretch of carriageway.

It was decided that the Community Development Officer and the Town Centre Manager should try and speak to the drivers whose vehicles appear to be doing the damage in Melbourn Street.

RESOLVED: That a proposal be sent to Cabinet and Full Council, requesting a car parking charge of 10p for the first hour in part of the Town Hall car park for a trial period.

4. ISSUES

- 4.1 Car parking charges included within the Council's financial budgets are considered and approved as part of the Council's Corporate Business Planning process each year. The Council has resolved to increase charges across the district every two to three years, in line with inflation. The two year period for reconsideration was in 2008/9 but was put back until next year (2009/10 year 3). Historically, charges for long term and short term car parks and their rates have generally been standardised across the district, however, as part of the corporate business planning process officers will look at the current policy before recommending the increases for 2009/10 and onwards, see paragraph 4.3 below.
- 4.2 Officers are not aware that Cabinet have considered your committees resolution to minute 83. However, Officers would not support the recommendation as it would not allow the current trial that is currently being operated in Royston to be evaluated. Some local Royston businesses have agreed, that when customers purchase goods or services from their premises a refund on the car parking will be given on the production of a valid receipt. It is proposed that Officers will report back later this year on the success of

this trial. This trial will commence on the first of April 08 for a period of 12 months and is a joint initiative with the Royston Chamber of Commerce.

- 4.3 Car parking issues will be considered as part of NHDC's Transport FSR, which hopefully will give recommendations and guidance towards a more integrated approach on car parking charges that gives the Council the opportunity to review its current car parking charges and how they relate to transport and town centre planning. It is envisaged that this FSR will be completed in time for the Council's Corporate Business Planning process for 2009/10.

- 4.4 Your notes to the minutes referred to in para 2 state:

The Committee decided that they needed a report back on the facts and figures of the free Christmas parking, and if it proved to be a successful event, it would be made a permanent feature of Royston Town Centre at Christmas and publicised as such.

The results of the free car parking after 4pm prior to Christmas are as follows:-

Car Park	21/12/2007	22/12/2007	23/12/2007
Civic Centre	62	57	12
The Warren	56	43	2
Priory Gardens	8	9	NIL
John Street	10	12	3
Angle Pavement	13	NIL	5
Market Place	41	NIL	7
	<u>190</u>	<u>121</u>	<u>29</u>

- 4.4 Officers do not have comparison figures for previous years, however, it is believed that the usage over the three days is similar to a normal trading day with residents paying 10p after 4pm.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None relating to the content of this report

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There is no provision for any changes to the current car parking policies within the District's towns that may impact upon the Council's budget in 2008/09.
- 6.2 Before making changes to car parking charges, consideration of many other factors is required, otherwise there is the risk of either a negative impact on transport management or that it sets a precedent that could have wider implications for the Council.

7. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 None relating to the content of this report

8. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 8.1 Cllr Fiona Hill, Chair of Royston and District Committee

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 That members consider and note the report.

10. CONTACT OFFICERS

10.1	Vaughan Watson, Head of Leisure & Environment	Ext 4641
10.2	Barrie Jones, Head of Financial Services	Ext 4243
10.3	Steve Crowley, Contracts and Project Manager	Ext 4211
10.3	Louise Symes, Projects Manager	Ext 4359
10.4	Alan Fleck, Community Development Officer	Ext 4274