

CUSTOMER FOCUS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

2 DECEMBER 2021

CAR PARKS AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

This briefing paper seeks to lay out our existing approach to managing car parks against environmental considerations. It also summarises some future options being reviewed.

Background

For many years the Council's approach to car parking was a simple one. The city centre car parks were aimed at short-stay shoppers with a pricing structure designed to encourage high turnover in sites such as Guildhall and Mary Arches Street.

Meanwhile, those more peripheral sites such as Triangle and Howell Road provided cheaper long-stay parking for commuters.

The emphasis was on facilitating as many cars as possible as this was deemed to be beneficial to the city centre economy. Being 'full' was considered to be a success and an indicator of a thriving city.

As the global financial landscape began to change in 2007/08 the income derived from car parking became ever more important in order to allow the Council to deliver both the level and range of services it desired for the citizens of Exeter.

Regular tariff increases followed as the Council sought to maximise income generation while still ensuring car parking was supporting city centre business need.

Current Position

Much work was done around 2016 to help inform a revised parking strategy. Part of that work involved workshops with representatives from city centre business, the general public and partner organisations.

It emerged that key players in the commercial sector didn't consider tariffs alone to be a barrier for trade but instead cited the congested arterial routes and slow journey times as a major factor in deterring people visiting the city.

The strategy adopted as a result of this work can be summarised as follows:-

1. Reduce the number of cars travelling into the city centre
2. Increase the dwell time of those cars that do
3. Do so without detrimentally affecting city centre footfall
4. Increase, or at least maintain, car park income

This was broadly being achieved during the two years immediately before the Covid pandemic by means of a revised tariff structure.

The new structure made it more expensive to park the closer to the city centre someone drove. So travelling along the Alphington Road corridor, for example, a motorist would have

the option of parking at Haven Road or Okehampton Street for £3.50 a day. Continuing further in as far as Cathedral & Quay would cost £11.00 a day, closer still to Magdalen Street would be £13.00 and centrally in Guildhall, Mary Arches Street or John Lewis would be £15.00

The intention being to prevent congestion within the central area by encouraging drivers, where possible, to walk a longer last leg of their journey.

The new structure also did away with the previous large rise in tariff for anyone staying beyond 3 hours in a short stay car park. This was changed in order to encourage a longer dwell time in central car parks as the emphasis changed from the High Street being somewhere to 'nip in' and shop to being somewhere to visit at leisure to shop, eat and drink.

Future Position

Consideration is being given to future tariffs including the introduction of 'dynamic charging' which would seek to levy an additional fee on top of the usual parking tariff for those arriving or leaving a car park during designated 'rush hour' periods. The aim being to smooth out peak travel times by encouraging car use outside of these times.

With the Council's ambition being to reduce the number of cars entering the city centre the current parking stock is being reviewed to ascertain where it might be prudent to either repurpose or redevelop current car parks, particularly in instances where there may be under-used car parks in close proximity to each other.

Other Environmental Initiatives

Solar arrays have been in place at John Lewis and Mary Arches Street car parks for a number of years.

A small number of EV charging points are available within a handful of car parks. The need to expand this is recognised and the Net Zero team are working on plans to roll out an installation programme to meet anticipated future demand.

A number of parking bays at Princesshay 3 car park have been given over to provide cycle locker facilities for businesses within the Broadwalk House offices above.

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