

Committee: FINANCE AND RESOURCES

Date: 19 February 2007

Report: CAR PARK CHARGES AND ENFORCEMENT

Purpose of the report

1. To apprise Members of the proposed changes in car park charges for 2007/08 and to seek agreement to a revised enforcement procedure.

Strategic Planning Framework

2. The information and recommendation(s) contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and its approved strategic planning framework:

Best Value Performance Plan objectives

Recreation Management - Objective 5 – 'To optimise annual income generation from car parks and toilets provided by the Authority and maintain customer satisfaction level year on year at 80% of users rating them satisfactory or above.

Car Park Charges

3. The current car parking charges in Authority car parks are:

Short stay (up to 2 hrs)	Long stay (over 2 hrs)	Residents permits
£2.00	£3.00	£30 per annum

The short and long stay charges were set in April 2004 and the residents pass charge in 2006

4. The setting of car park charges is delegated to the Head of Park Management and it is proposed that the charges be raised to the levels set out below. It is always difficult to decide on the best course of action on this issue as an annual inflationary rise is technically difficult but if the charges are left too long at one level, a large increase to account for inflationary pressures is unpopular with the public. However, whatever the proposal, the issue always raises such a degree of public attention it is considered prudent to make members aware of the decision to raise charges.
5. It is proposed that, from 1 April 2007 parking charges will be:

Short stay (up to 2 hrs)	Long stay (over 2 hrs)	Residents permits
£2.20	£3.20	£30 per annum

Financial Implications

6. The budget estimate for car parking income in 2007/08 is £495k. Budget setting for car park income is never an exact science as so many factors affect visitor numbers, and this figure was set on fairly ambitious assumptions based on 2006/07 parking charges. In 2006/07 the budget income estimate was set at £485k and on current forecast it is likely that income will be short of this estimate by £30k. Assuming ticket sales remain similar to 2006/07 levels in 2007/08, the new charges should, at least, meet the budget target.

Enforcement

7. A key part of meeting car park income targets is actually getting the public to pay the required charges. Enforcement to date within the Authority has always been informal and is managed by the Ranger Service who have 'ticketed' offending vehicles with a slip that requests payment of the daily rate (£3) within twenty-four hours before further action is taken. Further action has never been taken and 723 'fines' (£2169) have been received in 2006/07.
8. It is not possible to tell whether this level of paid fines represents a high percentage of non payers but it does suggest that a stronger form of deterrent might induce more non payers to comply. It is therefore proposed that an enhanced warning ticket be issued to those vehicles not displaying a valid parking ticket saying:

"This is a Pay and Display car park, and you have not complied with the conditions. This is unfair to people who do pay, and reduces the money we have to look after the National Park. In this instance no further action will be taken if you purchase a daily rate car parking ticket and present it with this notice at any National Park Centre within the next twenty four hours (or post to ...address...).
However a note has been taken of the vehicle registration number, and if a further infringement occurs within 6 months you will be prosecuted under the bye-laws, and may be fined up to £100".

Financial and Staffing Implications

9. The financial implications are likely to be favourable in that this revised approach is likely to increase the payment of parking fees. There are limited staffing implications firstly in ranger time in maintaining registers of 'offences' and it is considered that this can be accommodated within the current ranger workloads. Secondly, in those instances where we proceed to prosecution, it is estimated that the costs incurred would probably average around £150 per case, the full amount of which is unlikely to be recovered through any order for costs by the court. However, the main purpose of such enforcement would be to generate publicity, in order to discourage infringement of the byelaws in future.

Legal implications

10. There is no doubt that the byelaws require payment for parking in Authority car parks, and failure to comply with the byelaws can result, on summary conviction, in a fine not exceeding £100.

Conclusion

11. The above enhanced system of enforcement is considered to be a very reasonable approach that whilst strengthening the current system continues to provide people with the opportunity to pay up easily and at the same time is likely to further discourage non-compliance.

RECOMMENDATION

12. It is recommended that members:
 - (a) note the revised car park charges for 2007/08 future car park charges; and
 - (b) agree to the revised enforcement procedure described in the body of this report.

Jon Avison
Head of Park Management

31 January 2007

Background documents: None