

7d REFERRAL FROM HITCHIN COMMITTEE: 2 MARCH 2021 – WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS (INCREASES IN CAR PARKING TARIFFS)

NB: To be considered with Item 16

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:

- (1) That the Proposed 2021/2022 Inflationary Tariff Increases for NHDC Off-Street Managed Car Parks be implemented;
- (2) That Officers be encouraged to review the balance of short, mid-term and long stay spaces in the car parking estate in Hitchin;
- (3) That Officers be encouraged to explore options for pay-on-exit or other alternative payment collection systems to facilitate ease of use and accurate charges.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS: To protect and support the economic vitality of Hitchin town centre while respecting the need to meet revenue needs in the car parking estate.

The Chair led a discussion on the proposed 2021/2022 Inflationary Tariff Increases for NHDC Off-Street Managed Car Parks.

The following Members took part in the discussion:

- Councillor Paul Clark
- Councillor Richard Thake
- Councillor Keith Hoskins
- Councillor Simon Harwood
- Councillor Martin Stears-Handscorn

Issues raised included:

- Charges were not raised last year and if they are not raised this year revenues would struggle to break even in view of increased costs;
- Members were conscious that raising charges during a post-pandemic recovery period could have an impact on businesses;
- The 1 hour charge had remained static;
- Rounding up to the nearest 5 pence was related to the prevalence of app/telephone based payments
- There was the option to delay the increase in charges to June/July/September to accommodate a pandemic recovery period;
- There was widespread disruption when responsibility for parking charges and enforcement came in to NHDC control without notice;
- The balance of car parking available in the estate should be re-evaluated to feature less expensive short to medium term parking with high charges for very long stays to encourage access to the town and shops;
- Price increases should be based on the rate of inflation;

- Raising parking charges always led to ill feeling and should be counterbalanced by improvements in alternative payment methods, more accurate time recording, discounts for electric vehicles;
- It was important that cash- or card- at terminal payment options continued for accessibility reasons;
- Other methods of payment should be explored for convenience and accuracy.

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NB: The documents considered by Hitchin Committee at the meeting held on 2 March 2021 can be viewed at Minute 56 here:

<https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=147&MId=2449&Ver=4>