

IMPLEMENTATION OF PARKING CHARGES AT CAMBRIDGE PARK AND RIDE SITES

To: **Economy and Environment Committee**

Meeting Date: **3rd February 2015**

From: **Executive Director: Economy, Transport and Environment**

Electoral division(s): **All**

Forward Plan ref: **Not applicable** *Key decision:* **No**

Purpose: **To provide Committee with information around the recent implementation of parking charges at the five Cambridge Park and Ride sites**

Recommendation: **It is recommended that Committee note:**

- a) The revenue raised by the charge to date**
- b) The changes in ridership of the Park and Ride bus services since the charge was introduced (detailed in Appendix 1)**
- c) The customer feedback following the introduction of the parking charges**
- d) The improvements that have been made to the system since it was implemented and the further actions planned; and**
- e) Comment on the process of implementation and lessons that can be learnt for the future.**

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Business Plan relies on income being raised from parking charges at the Park and Ride sites around the fringe of Cambridge. The system costs about £1M per annum to operate. The charging for parking at the Cambridge Park and Ride sites has been discussed as far back as 2008. County Council Cabinet approved the principle of introducing the charge in September 2013.
- 1.2 In October 2013, Stagecoach made an offer to run the sites at no cost to the Council. This offer was noted and Cabinet confirmed their earlier decision at a meeting in November 2013 as overall it would have been less financially advantageous for the Council given the details of the proposition from Stagecoach. Implementation of the charges started in November 2013. The charges were introduced on 22 July 2014.
- 1.3 Consultants provided technical advice to the Council on the likely impact on passenger numbers and parking revenue estimates if a charge were to be introduced. For the 12 months to June 2013 the Park and Ride bus services carried 3.7 million single passenger trips.

2. MAIN ISSUES

Reduction in passenger numbers

- 2.1 It was forecast that the £1 parking charge for cars would result in passenger numbers dropping by 5.4 % and would take 4.3 years to recover to the level experienced prior to the charge being introduced. This assumed a 1% background growth in passenger numbers resulting from new employment and residential development creating travel demand and new Park and Ride trips. It was assumed that there would be a similar drop in number of cars accessing the sites too.
- 2.2 Since the introduction of the parking charge the passenger numbers on Park and Ride Bus services are about 12% lower compared with the identical period in 2013. Detailed figures are provided in Appendix 1.
- 2.3 There are a number of reasons that may explain the reduction in passenger numbers:
 - Bus passengers may be switching to other bus services and not parking and riding at all.
 - Trips may no longer be made into Cambridge
 - People may be driving into Cambridge
- 2.4 The different ways in which people use the Park and Ride sites have not been surveyed and therefore the behaviour changes can only be surmised. In reality it is likely that a combination of most, if not all of the above, have occurred.
- 2.5 Concessionary fare expenditure over all bus services has increased, which may indicate concessionary passengers switching to local services.

Income generated to date

- 2.6 It was estimated that the gross income to the Council would be £1.5M per annum which would be £1.2m once VAT is deducted at 20%. The current revenue projection for the first year of operation of the charge is £1M gross which will mean a net income of £800 000. This is significantly less than expected.
- 2.7 The income projections are currently running at around 30% less than predicted. Full data for the last quarter of 2014 is attached as Appendix 1. This means that 30% less cars than predicted are accessing the Park and Ride sites following the implementation of the charges. The reduction in parking income compared with the forecast is therefore far greater than the reduction in bus patronage.
- 2.8 In addition to the possible explanations for the reduction in patronage the greater reduction in parking income may be a result of:
- Car sharing to the Park and Ride sites may have increased since the introduction of the parking charge
 - Kiss and ride where cars drop bus passengers on their way to another destination may have increased
 - Those parking and cycling, or parking and walking may be parking elsewhere.
- 2.9 Again these behaviour changes can only be surmised and it is likely that a combination of most, if not all of the above, have occurred. It is important to recognise that these behaviours can be expected to continue if and when bus patronage figures return to their previous levels.
- 2.10 If greater car sharing to the sites is taking place this will reduce traffic on the roads to the sites and make more parking capacity available to cater for future growth in passenger numbers. This is important as jobs are created at the Cambridge Biomedical Campus and other strategic locations and Park and Ride and Busway services are used to access those jobs.
- 2.11 Prior to the introduction of the charges there were concerns that parking would displace onto neighbouring streets. However there have been no complaints received and before and after surveys in Milton showed no significant change in on-street parking.
- 2.12 It is important to understand what other changes have occurred in how Cambridge has operated since the introduction of the charges.
- 2.13 Data has been provided by Cambridge City Council on the occupancy of city centre car parks during 2013 and 2014. Since the implementation of the car parking charge, there has been an average increase of 2.46% per month in the total number of cars parked in the city centre car parks at Grand Arcade, Park Street, Queen Anne Terrace and the Grafton Centre car parks. This equates on average to around 5,000 cars per month. The full data is attached as Appendix 1.

- 2.14 The increases are substantially less than the approximately 40,000 reduction per month in the numbers of cars parking at the Park and Ride Sites. Other factors may also have affected city centre car park use.
- 2.15 It has been suggested that the introduction of parking charges has led to an increase in congestion in the autumn of 2014. An analysis of real time bus information showing the delays to buses in Cambridge for the six weeks from the start of November has shown that the proportion of late running buses in 2014 was higher than for the same period in 2013 but very similar to the same period in 2012. Again there are a large number of factors that can affect congestion.
- 2.16 To allow further assessment of the impact of the implementation of the car parking charges the following data will be examined when it becomes available:
- Footfall at the main destinations in the city including the Grafton Centre and Grand Arcade
 - Changes in overall concessionary fares expenditure as it relates to key routes into Cambridge – this requires the co-operation of the bus operators

Installation of the parking charging system

- 2.17 The specification for the system stipulated that a barrier less parking system should be implemented and that Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) system should be the technical solution. ANPR is essential to allow an on line payment system to be provided that would allow regular users to set up an automatic payment process. Consideration was given at the time about the type of management system to be used. The advantages of the system in place are:
- No need to return to vehicle to place a parking ticket on the windscreen
 - No barrier system to manage egress and access
 - Advance payment system available for all ticket types and bookable in advance
 - No queues to pay for parking prior to leaving the site

The benefits of the system are now being seen. The initial problems are discussed below.

- 2.18 The contractor was appointed following the normal procurement process. The appointed contractor was the only feasible bidder for the contract.
- 2.19 The on-line advance payment system was not ready until the week before the parking charge was launched. This had a fundamental effect on advance publicity for the introduction of the charge. It was not possible to publicise the advance payment system prior to the launch. This was a significant opportunity missed as advance payment would have ensured that many passengers would have not needed to queue at the sites to pay for parking and the queuing problem noted above would have been significantly eased.
- 2.20 The approach used for the parking payment system is unique and is not in use at any other public car parks in the country. Only one feasible bid was

received following the invitation to tender. As such there was not a range of technical solutions available to implement the modern system that is in place.

- 2.21 The latest figures available show that currently 15% of parking charges are being made using the on-line payment system

Customer feedback on the parking charging system and improvements made

- 2.22 This section notes the feedback received, the actions taken and the future work. The following key concerns were raised:

- Some customers have found the machines difficult to use.
- The number of bus ticket and parking payment machines installed caused problems at implementation as a result of technical difficulties with intermittent connections these transaction times were not achieved. Seventeen machines were installed prior to the launch in July 2014. As part of the new system the new machines were connected onto a Local Area Network to manage credit card payments. This was on the advice of the contractor and should have speeded up transaction time
- As a result of both of the above, plus general unfamiliarity with the machines excessive queues resulted, which in turn led to considerable adverse publicity.
- The Park and Ride co-ordinators advise customers on a daily basis about use of the machines. This advice is continuing and was supplemented during December 2014 by additional staff at all 5 sites. However there is still a perception that the machines are difficult or confusing to use. The contractor has been tasked with amending the software that runs the bus ticket and parking payment machines to simplify the payment process. Improvements will made by March 2015.

- 2.23 A number of actions were taken to address these issues:

- Eight additional machines were installed in October 2014
- Signing at the sites has been revised in the light of customer feedback
- A video was made and put on the Council website to explain how to use the machines
- Links to the on-line payment system from the Council's website were improved
- The on line payment system was promoted on the Park and Ride buses
- Additional staff were deployed through December to assist customers to use the machines
- Simplifications to the machines have been agreed with the contractor These will be implemented in March.

- 2.24 As a result, primarily of the extra machines, excessive queueing no longer occurs and complaints have significantly reduced.

Further Actions

- 2.25 Despite the changes above, patronage remains below the expected levels. Further actions are being planned to encourage customers back to Park and Ride.

- 2.26 The County Council and Stagecoach are undertaking a joint customer satisfaction survey with Park and Ride customers. The survey is seeking views on all aspects of the system including the bus services, vehicle quality, the facilities at the Park and Ride sites and the new ticket machines. Feedback will be used to implement additional improvements wherever possible.
- 2.27 The Council and Stagecoach are also working together to develop and implement a joint marketing and promotion strategy. Given that the County Council has a direct financial stake in the success of the Park and Ride system it is considered appropriate that the Council should invest to more actively market the system to help ensure passenger numbers return to 2013 levels as soon as possible. This may also require short term adjustment to the access charge that the bus company pays, to promote growth in passenger numbers and provide a long term increase in overall income.

3. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

3.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

- The role of Park and Ride remains critical to the success of the City of Cambridge and its employers and businesses. Park and Ride continues to ensure that car traffic is intercepted at the city fringe and does not add to the existing congestion experienced in the City.
- Even with the recent dip in numbers the annual patronage figures for the 12 months to December 2014 exceed over 3.4M passenger journeys.

3.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives

The following bullet point set out details of implications identified by officers:

- The Park and Ride system offers a convenient way of accessing employment, businesses and public services; hence allowing people to live independently. That role is illustrated by the fact that 25% of journeys made are undertaken by concessionary pass holders.

3.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people

There are no significant implications under this heading.

4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Resource Implications

The following bullet point set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- The revenue raised by the car parking charge is vital to ensure other services within the County Council are protected

4.2 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.3 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.4 Engagement and Consultation Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- Customer feedback and the current customer satisfaction survey are the engagement approaches that have been undertaken to ensure the parking charges system operates in a customer friendly way.
- The use of additional staff to help customers in December 2014 is a further example of positive engagement.

4.5 Public Health Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- The Park and ride system helps ensure people are connected to key services and facilities and helps prevent isolation amongst residents
- Many of those parking at the Park and Ride sites continue their journey on by cycle or on foot to their destination. Hence healthy lifestyles are encouraged and supported by the Park and Ride system.

Source Documents	Location
Consultants' report on possible impact of parking charges' as set out in the Cabinet Report and Minutes Tuesday 8 October 2013	http://www2.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/CommitteeMinutes/Committees/Meeting.aspx?meetingID=725

Appendix 1

1. Passenger figures

1.1 Overall (by month)

	2013	2014	%Change
July	336338	310077	-7.8
August	328926	291133	-11.5
September	286305	257769	-10
October	322931	285618	-11.5%
November	349333	292230	-16%
December	354259	304154	-14%

2. Parking Revenue

Parking income (gross)	£
Average Weekly	19 600
52 week projection	1 019 222
Parking income (net)	
Average weekly	16 333
52 week projection	849 352

15% of the parking payments are taken on-line