

**Committee:** Environment Committee

Agenda Item

**Date:** 22 January 2008

**10**

**Title:** **REVIEW OF CAR PARK FEES AND CHARGES**

**Author:** Simon Taylor, Temporary Parking Services  
Manager, ext 608

Item for decision

---

## Summary

1. The report discusses the Council's options regarding increasing fees and charges for off-street car parking and for on-street dispensations.

## Recommendations

2. That Committee approves the adoption of off-street tariff proposal 5 and also approves the adoption of the suggested dispensation fee.
3. That, to expedite the process of changing fees, Committee delegates the authority to address objections made against the proposed Order to a nominated sub-group of the Committee.

## Background Papers

4. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author.
  - Current UDC Off-Street Parking Places Order, including charges schedule.
  - Tariff schedules of close neighbour authorities and other competitors within Uttlesford.

## Impact

Communication/Consultation	Informal consultation has been carried out with key stakeholders. Formal consultation forms part of the statutory Order-making process.
Community Safety	None.
Equalities	None.
Finance	Proposed fees will generate increased income – details in report.

	There are some minor set-up costs.
Human Rights	None.
Legal implications	Requirement of draft, consult and seal a new Off-Street Parking Places Order.
Sustainability	Charge increases will encourage increased use of sustainable transport where available.
Ward-specific impacts	Primarily affects town centre wards where the car parks are located, but users may come from any part of the District.
Workforce/Workplace	None

## Situation

5. The Council's current car park fees and charges tariff has been in place since April 2005 and is therefore felt to be ripe for review. It is also timely as the tariff forms part of the Council's Off-Street Parking Places Order, an imminent redraft of which is already required by new legislation (Traffic Management Act 2004 – which becomes statute on 31 March 2008), thus avoiding the cost of drafting and advertising the Order twice.
6. This report proposes a number of alternative tariffs and options, based on the aim of maximising income whilst still maintaining:
  - Viable alternatives for motorists.
  - The Council's parking management objectives.
  - Competitive charges compared to neighbour authorities.
7. The current tariff structure is shown in appendix 1. Appendix 2 shows two proposed revised tariffs: proposal 1 is based on a general inflationary increase while proposal 2 also attempts to standardise charges across the District. As an initial guide (and as a projection based on current usage figures – see Risks later) and not including any increases from season ticket sales:
  - Proposal 1 net increase in income per annum: £67,147
  - Proposal 2 net increase in income per annum: £151,214
  - For context, the total original annual parking income estimate for 2007/8 is £719,480.

8. Proposal 2 includes some relatively steep increases for certain charge bands in Great Dunmow and Stansted Mountfitchet – up to an increase of £1.00, in some cases more than doubling the current fee. The mitigation for this is that it will standardise charges across the District so that there can be no arguments of the Council favouring certain areas over others, but there would be inevitable outcry from parts of the commercial community that would have to be withstood. It should also be noted that such steep increases would almost certainly impact upon usage and, initially at least, realise less revenue than projected above, although the increase would still be likely to be considerably more than for proposal 1.
9. If Members wished to approach a standardised District-wide fee structure they may prefer to make the current exercise a step towards this, with a larger increase in Dunmow and Stansted than in Saffron Walden, while still maintaining cheaper fees in the former sites for now. This would obviously produce an estimate somewhere between those for proposals 1 and 2 above.

### **Further Options**

10. Preliminary informal consultation has produced a number of additional suggestions which could be incorporated into a new tariff structure:
  - i. 'Stop and Shop' bays: Pay-and-display tariffs with a minimum band of 1 hour are often considered discouraging of 'casual' use of car parks and to encourage abuse of yellow lines. Introducing shorter-term bands such as 30 or 45 minutes would help address this and has been requested by certain stakeholders in both Dunmow and Stansted. There are potential downsides: there would be some impact on total parking revenue and longer tariff bands are considered to encourage longer stays in town centres (and hence greater spend with retailers).
  - ii. Further short-stay variation: Great Dunmow Town Council have suggested a short-stay banding in White Street car park of 45 minutes, 1.5 hours and 3 hours, bearing in mind the relocation of the public library and the lack of any free parking at the new site. However, too much variation from whole hours can be confusing for the user and result in contentious parking fines, so it is recommended that whole hours be stuck to as much as possible.
  - iii. Greater definition of short and long-stay in Dunmow: In Saffron Walden, long-stay parking is largely restricted to Swan Meadow, whereas in Dunmow it is permitted in any of the car parks. Introducing a maximum length of stay in some of the Dunmow car parks (e.g. 3 hours) would increase turnover and restrict long-stay to those areas where capacity exists. As such, a 3-hour limit is proposed for Angel Lane and New Street.

- iv. Variation in Stansted: it has been mooted that charges in Stansted should vary to promote use of the Crafton Green car park. However, it is felt that current usage is dictated by surrounding facilities and the distance between this and the Lower Street site is unlikely to promote any migration between the two sites prompted by price.
11. Proposal 3, based on proposal 1 but also including some of the above, is presented at appendix 3. New price bands make a budget projection for this tariff a more complex exercise, but it is anticipated to be approaching that for proposal 1, with an annual net increase in the region of £60,000. A further tariff combining the above with the previous proposal 2 can also be produced (appendix 4) – again it is projected that the net additional income would be only minimally affected from the original tariff.
12. A further tariff – **appendix 5** – includes the above but also reflects a partial move towards District-wide equality of charges as suggested in paragraph 8 above. **This is projected to raise net additional income of £90,000 per annum and is the option recommended to Committee.**
13. In summary, the charging options are endless, but if Members decide to go for an inflationary or equalising basic tariff, then the appropriate version of the augmented proposals 3 or 4 are recommended. Should further specific increases be agreed, these can still be costed by officers into a revised projection of net increased income.

## Implementation

14. The legal process is somewhat lengthy and involves two statutory periods of consultation, during which there will almost certainly be a number of objections received. However, if the proposed tariff structure can be agreed quickly then the implementation process can proceed and the new charges be introduced as early as possible in the 2008/9 financial year. Committee may also wish to delegate authority to address the objections to the Chair or an agreed sub-Committee to expedite the Order making process.
15. The one-off costs of implementation relate to the publishing of the proposed Order, signage alteration, reprogramming of equipment plus some sundries but should not exceed £5,000.
16. The Order-making process also presents the opportunity to include other off-street sites where it may be desirable to introduce enforcement, even if no charge is payable (e.g. to prevent abuse of disabled-only bays or to ensure parking only within marked areas), to revise plans of the car parks where boundaries have changed (e.g. White Street). And to introduce charges in areas which are currently free (e.g. Council Offices car park at weekends, Thaxted car

parks). Obviously the latter would require some investment in equipment and may be an issue for the longer term.

## Justification

17. Inevitably, as noted above, objections will be received during the statutory consultation period and throughout the whole process of increasing parking charges. Much of the reasoning has already been discussed, but the following is a summary of all lines of argument used in establishing the proposed tariff options:

- Maintaining comparable and competitive charges with other operators, including local authorities, locally and nationally (see benchmarking below).
- UDC parking charges have been unchanged since April 2005.
- The charges encourage sustainable transport (including car sharing).
- There has already been some input from key stakeholders.
- Car park running costs should be funded by users rather than all Council Tax payers.
- Increases are kept to whole numbers to avoid payment machinery problems associated with multiple coinage and/or five pence pieces.
- Surpluses raised help towards the Council's costs of other services, which would otherwise have to be funded via Council Tax.

## Benchmarking

18. There is considerable variation amongst the tariffs of near-neighbour local authorities and other operators. The industry-standard key benchmark is the 1-hour short-stay tariff and the proposed 50p/60p is in keeping with towns of a similar size to, or slightly bigger than, those within Uttlesford (e.g. those in East Herts., Braintree, St. Edmundsbury). It also significantly undercuts the larger town centres of Chelmsford and Cambridge.

19. A similar pattern is followed at the longer-stay ends of the tariff with, if anything, Uttlesford's prices being slightly more competitive as the stay gets longer, particularly in Dunmow and Stansted if the tariffs remain unequal across the District.

## Dispensations

20. As an ancillary to this report, Committee are asked to approve the introduction of a fee for the issue of dispensations to park a vehicle on-street in a space where there is a waiting restriction. The Council's Enforcement Policy states:

*"Dispensations may be granted for the following:*

1. *Funerals – For the hearse and cortege vehicles.*
2. *Weddings – Bridal Vehicles.*
3. *Maintenance to adjacent buildings.*
4. *Furniture Removals.*
5. *Any other reason accepted by the Council.*

*Applications for dispensations must be received at least 5 working days prior to the required date and must be made to the Council's Parking section. The Council's decision is final.*

*If granted, dispensations will be issued to the applicant by way of written authority, which must be clearly displayed on the vehicle whilst parked. A copy will be held, with the application, by the Parking Section.*

*A charge, per vehicle per day, may be made except in the cases of Wedding and Funeral vehicles.”*

21. Dispensations are granted for specific locations and specific dates, and will only be granted in locations where it is felt safe to have a vehicle parked for a limited period of time. Dispensations will generally not be granted on double yellow lines. While items (1), (2) and (4) above are relatively straightforward circumstances, problems can be caused particularly by property maintenance vehicles in town centres. Very often there is no actual need for these vehicles to be parked close at hand but in being so they can cause considerable inconvenience and disruption to pedestrians and or motorists. This flies in the face of the two central aims of the Council's parking enforcement operation, namely road safety and cutting congestion.
22. Making a fee payable reduces the number of such requests and also tends to ensure that only those genuine cases apply, for example when access to a vehicle for multiple tools is required or where the vehicle houses specialist equipment such as a compressor.
23. UDC is currently the only authority in Essex not to charge a fee for a dispensation. Such a fee forms part of the business model upon which the Council's DPE Agency Agreement with Essex County Council is based.
24. From benchmarking with other authorities, the most common fee structure is £15 for the first dispensed day and £5 per day or part of a day thereafter. Such a fee structure is therefore recommended to the Committee.
25. Unfortunately, due to the fact that DPE is far from universal throughout the UK, not all drivers are aware of the existence of dispensations. However, they are in

existence throughout all metropolitan areas and therefore most maintenance / building contractors' drivers will be aware of them. An application form is also available on the Council's website and the Council's Parking Attendants are fully aware of the situation and tasked with instructing motorists as and when the necessity arises.

## Risk Analysis

26. For the off-street parking charges increases:

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Variation of charges has an impact on usage levels/patterns.	Low to medium.	May result in less additional income than projected.  Possible criticism from the local business community.	Detailed analysis prior to setting of new fees and budget estimates.  Benchmarking.
High volume of objections from the public.	Low to medium.	Delay of implementation and hence reduction in additional income for 2008/9.	Detailed consideration of level of increases and their justification prior to public consultation.
Objection from key stakeholder.	Low	Delay of implementation and hence reduction in additional income for 2008/9.	Prior informal consultation with key stakeholders.

27. For the introduction of a charge for on-street dispensations:

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Current situation (no charge) encourages multiple and/or spurious applications leading to congestion and traffic hazards.	High – It is already happening.	Defeats the object of having DPE.	Introduction of a fee.
Criticism from Essex County Council due to both road safety issues and audit questions around the DPE business model.	Medium without the fee.	Low, until a road traffic accident occurs involving a dispensated vehicle.	Introduction of a fee.

List of Appendices:

- Appendix 1            Current off-street charges tariff.
- Appendix 2            New tariff proposals 1 & 2
- Appendix 3            New tariff proposal 3
- Appendix 4            New tariff proposal 4
- Appendix 5            New tariff proposal 5



**APPENDIX 1: EXISTING TARIFFS (WITH EFFECT FROM APRIL 2005)**

**Saffron Walden**

Fairycroft	up to 1 hr	50p
Common	up to 2 hr	90p
	up to 3 hr	£1.70
Rose & Crown	up to 1 hr	50p
	up to 2 hr	90p
Swan Meadow	up to 1 hr	50p
	up to 2 hr	90p
	up to 4 hr	£1.50
	up to 6 hr	2.10
	up to 10hr	£2.70
Coaches	up to 5 hr	£2.50
	up to 10hr	£5.00

**Swan Meadow  
 Season Tickets per annum £275 inc.vat**

**Great Dunmow**

White Street	up to 1 hr	40p
Chequers Lane &	up to 3 hr	80p
Angel Lane	up to 5 hr	£1.20
New Street	up to 10 hr	£2.20

**White Street & Chequers  
 Season Tickets per annum £250 inc.vat**

**Stansted Mountfitchet**

Lower Street & Crafton Green	up to 1 hr	40p
	up to 3 hr	80p
	up to 6 hr	£1.70
	up to 10hr	£2.20

**Season Tickets**  
 Coaches per visit £5.00  
 per annum £200  
**Available to local businesses & employee Per annum**  
**Season tickets purchased by others £350**

**APPENDIX 2: TARIFF PROPOSAL FOR 2008/9 – PROPOSAL 1 (inflationary)**

**Saffron Walden**

Fairycroft	up to 1 hr	60p
Common	up to 2 hr	£1.00
	up to 3 hr	£1.80

Rose & Crown	up to 1 hr	60p
	up to 2 hr	£1.00

Swan Meadow	up to 1 hr	60p
	up to 2 hr	£1.00
	up to 4 hr	£1.80
	up to 6 hr	£2.30
	up to 10hr	£3.00

Coaches	up to 5 h	£3.00
	up to 10hr	£6.00

**Swan Meadow  
 Season Tickets** per annum **£300 inc.vat**

**Great Dunmow**

White Street	up to 1 hr	50p
Chequers Lane & Angel Lane	up to 3 hr	90p
New Street	up to 5 hr	£1.50
	up to 10 hr	£2.40

**White Street & Chequers  
 Season Tickets** per annum **£275 inc.vat**

**Stansted Mountfitchet**

Lower Street & Crafton Green	up to 1 hr	50p
	up to 3 hr	90p
	up to 6 hr	£1.80
	up to 10hr	£2.40

**Season Tickets** Coaches per visit **£6.00**  
**per annum £225**  
**Available to local businesses & employee per annum**  
**Season tickets purchased by others £375**

**TARIFF PROPOSAL FOR 2008/9 – PROPOSAL 2 (inflationary + standardises charges across the district)**

**Saffron Walden**

Fairycroft	up to 1 hr	60p
Common	up to 2 hr	£1.00
	up to 3 hr	£1.80
Rose & Crown	up to 1 hr	60p
	up to 2 hr	£1.00
Swan Meadow	up to 1 hr	60p
	up to 2 hr	£1.00
	up to 4 hr	£1.80
	up to 6 hr	£2.30
	up to 10hr	£3.00
Coaches	up to 5 h	£3.00
	up to 10hr	£6.00

**Swan Meadow  
 Season Tickets** per annum **£300 inc.vat**

**Great Dunmow**

White Street	up to 1 hr	60p
Chequers Lane &	up to 3 hr	£1.80
Angel Lane	up to 5 hr	£2.20
New Street	up to 10 hr	£3.00

**White Street & Chequers  
 Season Tickets** per annum **£300 inc.vat**

**Stansted Mountfitchet**

Lower Street & Crafton Green	up to 1 hr	60p
	up to 3 hr	£1.80
	up to 6 hr	£2.30
	up to 10hr	£3.00

**Season Tickets** Coaches per visit **£6.00**  
**per annum £300**  
**Available to local businesses & employee per annum**  
**Season tickets purchased by others £375**

**APPENDIX 3: TARIFF PROPOSAL FOR 2008/9 – PROPOSAL 3 (inflationary + some further options as in paragraph 9 of the report)**

**Saffron Walden**

Faircroft and Common	up to 30 mins	40p
	up to 1 hr	60p
	up to 2 hr	£1.00
	up to 3 hr	£1.80
Rose & Crown	up to 30 mins	40p
	up to 1 hr	60p
	up to 2 hr	£1.00
Swan Meadow	up to 1 hr	60p
	up to 2 hr	£1.00
	up to 4 hr	£1.80
	up to 6 hr	£2.30
	up to 10hr	£3.00
Coaches	up to 5 h	£3.00
	up to 10hr	£6.00
<b>Swan Meadow Season Tickets</b>	<b>per annum</b>	<b>£300 inc.vat</b>
<b>Great Dunmow</b>		
White Street and Chequers Lane	up to 30 mins	30p
	up to 1 hr	50p
	up to 3 hr	90p
	up to 5 hr	£1.50
	up to 10 hr	£2.40
Angel Lane and New Street	up to 30 mins	30p
	up to 1 hr	50p
	up to 3 hr	90p
<b>White Street &amp; Chequers Season Tickets</b>	<b>per annum</b>	<b>£275 inc.vat</b>

Continued...

### **Stansted Mountfitchet**

Lower Street and Crafton Green	up to 30 mins	30p
	up to 1 hr	50p
	up to 3 hr	90p
	up to 6 hr	£1.80
	up to 10hr	£2.40
Coaches	per visit	£6.00
<b>Season Tickets</b>	<b>per annum</b>	<b>£225</b>
	<b>Available to local businesses &amp; employee per annum</b>	
	<b>Season tickets purchased by others</b>	<b>£375</b>

**APPENDIX 4: TARIFF PROPOSAL FOR 2008/9 – PROPOSAL 4**  
**(Inflationary + standardises charges across the district + some further options as in paragraph 9 of the report)**

**Saffron Walden**

Faircroft and Common	up to 30 mins	40p
	up to 1 hr	60p
	up to 2 hr	£1.00
	up to 3 hr	£1.80
Rose & Crown	up to 30 mins	40p
	up to 1 hr	60p
	up to 2 hr	£1.00
Swan Meadow	up to 1 hr	60p
	up to 2 hr	£1.00
	up to 4 hr	£1.80
	up to 6 hr	£2.30
	up to 10hr	£3.00
Coaches	up to 5 h	£3.00
	up to 10hr	£6.00
<b>Swan Meadow Season Tickets</b>	<b>per annum</b>	<b>£300 inc.vat</b>
<b>Great Dunmow</b>		
White Street and Chequers Lane	up to 30 mins	40p
	up to 1 hr	60p
	up to 3 hr	£1.80
	up to 5 hr	£2.20
	up to 10 hr	£3.00
Angel Lane and New Street	up to 30 mins	40p
	up to 1 hr	60p
	up to 3 hr	£1.80
<b>White Street &amp; Chequers Season Tickets</b>	<b>per annum</b>	<b>£300 inc.vat</b>

Continued...

### **Stansted Mountfitchet**

Lower Street and Crafton Green	up to 30 mins	40p
	up to 1 hr	60p
	up to 3 hr	£1.80
	up to 6 hr	£2.30
	up to 10hr	£3.00
Coaches	per visit	£6.00
<b>Season Tickets</b>	<b>per annum</b>	<b>£300</b>
	<b>Available to local businesses &amp; employee per annum</b>	
	<b>Season tickets purchased by others</b>	<b>£375</b>

**APPENDIX 5: TARIFF PROPOSAL FOR 2008/9 – PROPOSAL 5**  
**(inflationary + part standardises charges across the district + some further options as in paragraph 9 of the report)**

**Saffron Walden**

Faircroft and Common	up to 30 mins	40p
	up to 1 hr	60p
	up to 2 hr	£1.00
	up to 3 hr	£1.80
Rose & Crown	up to 30 mins	40p
	up to 1 hr	60p
	up to 2 hr	£1.00
Swan Meadow	up to 1 hr	60p
	up to 2 hr	£1.00
	up to 4 hr	£1.80
	up to 6 hr	£2.30
	up to 10hr	£3.00
Coaches	up to 5 h	£3.00
	up to 10hr	£6.00
<b>Swan Meadow Season Tickets</b>	<b>per annum</b>	<b>£300 inc.vat</b>
<b>Great Dunmow</b>		
White Street and Chequers Lane	up to 30 mins	40p
	up to 1 hr	60p
	up to 2 hr	£1.00
	up to 4 hr	£1.50
	up to 6 hr	£2.00
	up to 10 hr	£2.70
Angel Lane and New Street	up to 30 mins	40p
	up to 1 hr	60p
	up to 2 hr	£1.00
	up to 3 hr	£1.30
<b>White Street &amp; Chequers Season Tickets</b>	<b>per annum</b>	<b>£300 inc.vat</b>



Continued...

**Stansted Mountfitchet**

Lower Street and Crafton Green	up to 30 mins	40p
	up to 1 hr	60p
	up to 2 hr	£1.00
	up to 4 hr	£1.50
	up to 6 hr	£2.00
	up to 10 hr	£2.70
Coaches	per visit	£6.00
<b>Season Tickets</b>	<b>per annum</b>	<b>£300</b>
	<b>Available to local businesses &amp; employee per annum</b>	
	<b>Season tickets purchased by others</b>	<b>£375</b>