

CABINET held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on TUESDAY, 20 FEBRUARY 2024 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor P Lees (Chair)
Councillors J Evans, N Hargreaves (Vice-Chair) and M Sutton

Officers in attendance: J Etherington (Director of Finance, Revenues and Benefits), P Holt (Chief Executive), A Knight (Director of Business Performance and People), C Shanley-Grozavu (Democratic Services Officer) and A Webb (Strategic Director of Finance, Commercialisation and Corporate Services)

Also present: Councillors S Barker (Conservative Group Leader), R Gooding (Conservative Group), N Gregory (Chair of Scrutiny Committee), J Moran (Conservative Group) and G Sell (Liberal Democrat Group Leader)

CAB58 PUBLIC SPEAKERS

The Leader announced that Agenda Item 14 (Car Park Tariff and Changes to the Management and Use of Car Parks) would be moved forward and taken after the standing items.

The following speakers addressed the Cabinet. Copies of their statements have been appended to the minutes:

- Julie Redfern
- Matt Gurnett
- Toni Gabell
- Matt Grady
- Shara Vickers

Councillor Hargreaves made the following comments, in response to points raised by the speakers:

- Catons Lane in Saffron Walden would become a chargeable car park, with an available season ticket option.
- The parameters for dealing with petitions was outlined within the petition scheme in the Council's constitution. Saffron BID's petition was accepted as a valid petition, and the number of signatures triggered a discussion at the Scrutiny Committee.
- The Council had many statutory duties, and the funding for this was restricted both by government and Council Tax rises. Discretionary revenue from car parking was one way to help balance the budgetary need.

CAB59 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence had been received by Councillors Coote, Reeve and Pavitt.

Councillor Gregory declared that he was a user of the district's car parks. The Chief Executive clarified that all members were potentially users of the public car parks, and it did not need to be declared.

For transparency, Councillor Sell also declared that he was a member of Stansted Parish Council who owned the Crafton Green Car Park.

CAB60 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 18th December 2023 and 9th January 2024 were approved as a correct record.

CAB61 QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS FROM NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (STANDING ITEM)

There were none.

CAB62 CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES (STANDING ITEM)

The Chair of Scrutiny Committee provided an update on matters considered at its previous meeting.

He said that the Committee had noted the amendments made to the Corporate Plan, in particular the inclusion of the Council's strategies within the Performance Indicators. When members discussed the upcoming budget, it was felt that the General Fund was robust, but there were concerns around the long-term maintenance of the Housing Revenue Account.

In respect of the Car Park Tariff Review, the Committee noted the range and extent of price rises as well as the alterations to the original proposed. He said that he was surprised that the petition was withdrawn at the last moment.

Finally, he confirmed that a Task and Finish group had been set-up on Operational Resilience with the Terms of Reference and a schedule of both public and private meetings to be shortly agreed.

CAB63 REPORT OF DELEGATED DECISIONS TAKEN BY CABINET MEMBERS (STANDING ITEM)

The following delegated decisions were taken by Cabinet Members since the previous Cabinet meeting:

- Decision - Establishment of Local Plan Panel on 31 January 2024.
- Decision - Designation of Lindsell Neighbourhood Parish Area and Lindsell Parish Neighbourhood Forum on 11 January 2024.

CAB64 REPORT ON ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE DETERMINED BY THE ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE AND LOCAL HERITAGE LIST COMMITTEE (STANDING ITEM)

There were none.

CAB65 CAR PARK TARIFF AND CHANGES TO THE MANAGEMENT AND USE OF CAR PARKS

Councillor Hargreaves presented the report regarding the Car Park Review and Consultation Responses. He confirmed that there had been alterations to the proposals, including a reduction to the season ticket rates, which were available within the supplementary agenda pack. He addressed a number of comments raised within the consultation, such as the free parking scheme in Ely and the unviability of a Park and Ride scheme.

He requested members made a decision as to the whether to bring the seasons tickets for Stansted in line with those for Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow; it was noted that this, however, would be a significant percentage increase in comparison to the other areas.

The following points were raised:

- It was part of the Great Dunmow Co-op's retail offering to refund customers for their parking at the Chequers Lane Car Park. This was not a formal arrangement with the Council.
- Free season tickets had previously been issued to parents dropping off and picking up their children from St Marys Primary School to address the limited parking issues in the area. As these season tickets had no time restrictions, and thus parents could use the car park freely outside of these hours, it was proposed that an alternative option be set up to assist in traffic congestion during the school hours.
- The newly introduced hybrid season ticket would be purchased and administered through MiPermit. An Enforcement Officer would be able to use this app to check the registration plates of a vehicle and see how many days had been used.
- The North Essex Parking Partnership currently managed both the on and off-street parking provisions for the Council. This contract would be extended for the new arrangements.
- Waitrose plc, the joint owner of Fairycroft Road Car Park, had formally objected to the tariff increases. There was a dispute as to whether the branch had received payments for their share of the income generated and officers confirmed that the last payment was made in October 2023.
- The proposed price rises were not disproportional to the charges of neighbouring authorities.

- The petitioner's suggestion to offer free parking on a Sunday by raising the Saturday tariff had not been considered, however there was scope to examine this as part of the biannual review.
- There were concerns that the proposals for Stansted would have a detrimental impact to those who were employed locally as well as push more parking into residential side roads already affected by the issue of airport fly-parking.

Councillor Hargreaves proposed approval of the recommendations set out in both the committee and supplementary reports, however requested that the Stansted season tickets be set at the same level as Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow.

This was seconded by Councillor Evans.

A copy of the agreed tariffs have been appended to the minutes.

RESOLVED: that following consideration of the consultation responses and the petition submitted by Saffron Walden BID.

- i. Approve the parking tariffs and changes to the management of the car parks as set out in paragraph 10, and as amended in paragraph 11 of the supplementary report.
- ii. Agree the season ticket option for Stansted to be as set out in table 4.
- iii. Officers be authorised to implement the approved tariff and management changes as set out in the timetable at paragraph 50 of the committee report.

CAB66 LORD BUTLER LEISURE CENTRE - RAAC

The Leader announced Agenda Item 10 (Lord Butler Leisure Centre – RAAC) would be moved forward.

Councillor Hargreaves presented the report regarding RAAC and Lord Butler Leisure Centre in Saffron Walden. He confirmed that the required work was now complete, and the Council had no legal obligation to contribute to the costs. The contribution would be made in the spirit of partnership working and would be paid for by an underspend from within the PFI budget which had been budgeted to support the significant increases in the cost of utilities.

Members welcomed the corrective works which had been undertaken, and the reopening of the squash court.

Councillor Hargreaves proposed approval of the recommendation as set out in the report.

This was seconded by Councillor Lees.

RESOLVED: to approve funding a 25% share of the cost of the RAAC in the sum of £41,147.

CAB67 **ALLOCATION OF GRANT FUNDING (SPORTS PROVISION MAJOR PROJECTS)**

The Leader announced Agenda Item 12 (Allocation of Grant Funding – Sports Provision Major Projects) would be moved forward.

Councillor Sutton presented the report on the allocation of Grant Funding for Sports Provision Major Projects. She gave thanks to officers and proposed the approval of the two grants, as recommended by the grants panel.

In response to questions from Councillor Sell, officers clarified that previous allocations of the grant funding had gone to a range of projects across the district, however there would be no further allocations due to changes around the rules for generating income from assets. The Council were working with the voluntary sector to find alternative funding streams, including building a pipeline of future need to prepare organisations for government funding.

It was also confirmed that the criteria for applying for the grants was circulated and organisations were chased on several occasions where it was found that documentation was missing in their application.

Councillor Lees proposed approval of the recommendations outlined within the report.

This was seconded by Councillor Hargreaves.

RESOLVED: that

- i. A grant of £37,000 is awarded to Takeley Parish Council for major improvements to the recreation ground.
- ii. A grant of £17,000 is awarded to Dunmow United Football Club towards rebuilding their clubhouse, which was removed due to asbestos.

CAB68 **QUARTER 2 FINANCIAL FORECAST - 2023/24**

Councillor Hargreaves presented the Quarter 2 Financial Forecast for 2023/24. He said that there was a forecast net underspend on the General Fund of £1.286m meaning that the actual deficit to be funded from the MTFS reserve in 2023/24 was now predicted to be £1.654m. Members were asked to approve two revenue virements, one from Planning and another in Information Governance, as well as three reserve movements and the repurposing of the HRA revenue projects reserve.

In response to a question from Councillor Barker, officers confirmed that the new external audit framework had commenced in April 2023, and the PSAA had raised the scale fees by 150%.

In addition, officers clarified that Uttlesford Norse Limited was not a trading company, and therefore the profit share from the partnership was recycled Council money.

Councillor Hargreaves proposed approval of the recommendations outlined within the report.

This was seconded by Councillor Evans.

RESOLVED: to

- i. Note the contents of this report, in particular the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and capital programme forecast outturn positions, and updated prudential indicators.
- ii. Approve the General Fund revenue movements set out at paragraphs 20-21.
- iii. Approve the General Fund reserve movements set out at paragraphs 29-34, namely:
 - i. to separately identify £1 million of the £6.903 million Medium Term Financial Strategy reserve balance as at 1 April 2023 as a transformation reserve;
 - ii. to transfer £1 million from the business rates reserve to the transformation reserve; and
 - iii. to transfer £4 million from the business rates reserve to the MTFS reserve.
- iv. Approve the repurposing of the £160,000 HRA revenue projects reserve as a transformation reserve, and the transfer of £420,000 of the forecast HRA surplus into this reserve in 2023/24, as set out at paragraph 41.

Councillor Gregory left the meeting at 20:30.

CAB69 **TREASURY MANAGEMENT QUARTER REPORT - 2023/24**

Councillor Hargreaves presented the Treasury Management Quarter 2 Report for 2023/24.

The report was noted.

CAB70 **ENDING INTRODUCTORY TENANCIES**

Councillor Lees presented the report on ending Introductory Tenancies. She said that the removal of Introductory Tenancies would provide more stability for Council Housing tenants and enable them to settle into their home. Furthermore, it would be a better use of Housing Officers' time in order to focus on a new programme of tenancy audits for all tenants.

She confirmed that a further paper would be brought considering the succession rights of tenancies, following further discussion at the Housing Board.

Councillor Lees proposed approval of the recommendations set out within the report.

This was seconded by Councillor Sutton.

RESOLVED: to

- i. approve the ending of introductory tenancies and the granting of secure tenancies to all new tenants.
- ii. approve and adopt the revised Tenancy Policy, pending further review.
- iii. approve the issue of new secure tenancies to all tenants currently on introductory tenancies unless there is current enforcement action being taken to end the tenancy.

CAB71 ZERO CARBON COMMUNITIES GRANTS

Councillor Sutton presented the report for Zero Carbon Communities Grant report. She confirmed that there were 15 projects recommended, as detailed in Appendix 2.

Members commended the successful applications. It was confirmed that the funding would not be repeated, due to amendments to the governments rules around generating income from investments.

Councillor Sutton recommended approval of the recommendations set out within the report. This was seconded by Councillor Evans.

RESOLVED: to

- i. Note the evaluation and selection process that has been undertaken to determine the successful projects in this funding round.
- ii. Approve the list of successful projects agreed by the selection panel as listed in Appendix 2.
- iii. Note that five of the successful applications (Appendix 2, nos. 1, 2, 10, 12, 15) meet the Rural England Prosperity Fund criteria for capital funding, for community net zero infrastructure projects. These projects are to receive full funding.

CAB72 CORPORATE PLAN 2023-27

Councillor Lees presented the revised Corporate Plan for 2023-27. She highlighted that, following consideration at two meetings of the Scrutiny Committee, a number of recommendations had been implemented such as the inclusion of every Council strategy within the Performance Indicators.

Councillor Barker requested that a report be brought forward around broadband coverage in the district as AI was not possible when there were still areas without coverage.

Councillor Lees proposed approval of the recommendation set out in the report. This was seconded by Councillor Hargreaves.

RESOLVED: that the updated Corporate Plan 2023-2027 is recommended to Council for approval.

Councillor Barker left the meeting at 20:58

CAB73 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2024-2029 AND ANNUAL BUDGET 2024/25

Councillor Hargreave presented the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2024-29 and Annual Budget 2024/25. He thanked officers for their work and drew members attention to a number of points including the freeze of Green Waste charges, the increase in both Council Tax and Social Housing rent and the capital fund spends on additional provision for bin collections.

He concluded to say that this was a cautious budget. The Council needed to find £6.9m in net savings that year, of which £2.1m had already been found from Blueprint Uttlesford. Providing that Blueprint Uttlesford continued to deliver, the Council were on track to balance the deficit within five years.

Councillor Lees noted that there had only been 147 responses to the Budget Consultation and requested that more be done to get further responses in future.

Councillor Hargreaves proposed that the recommendations outlined in paragraph 6 of the report go to Full Council. This was seconded by Councillor Sutton.

RESOLVED: to

- i. note and have regard to the section 25 report when considering the budgets for 2024/25;
- ii. note the risk assessment relating to the robustness of estimates as set out at paragraph 9 of the section 25 report;
- iii. recommend to Council that the working balances for 2024/25 be set at £1.909million for the General Fund and £654,000 for the Housing Revenue Account;
- iv. recommend to Council the approval of the Commercial Strategy 2024-29;
- v. note the key risks and assumptions set out at paragraph 30 of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-2029;
- vi. recommend to Council the approval of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-2029 (as amended by the Addendum to this report);
- vii. recommend to Council the approval of an increase in the sector limit for other investments from £2million to £3million, as detailed at paragraph 50 of the Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25;

- viii. recommend to Council the setting of the treasury management prudential indicators as set out at paragraphs 63-71 of the Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25 (as amended by the Addendum to this report);
- ix. recommend to Council the approval of the Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25 (as amended by the Addendum to this report);
- x. recommend to Council the approval of an increase in both the authorised limit and operational boundary for other long term liabilities from £5million to £10 million, as set out in paragraphs 25-26 of the Capital Strategy 2024/25;
- xi. recommend to Council the approval of the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2024/25 as set out at Annex E1;
- xii. recommend to Council the setting of the capital prudential indicators as summarised at Annex E2 (as amended by the Addendum to this report);
- xiii. recommend to Council the approval of the Capital Strategy 2024/25 (as amended by the Addendum to this report);
- xiv. recommend to Council the approval of the Capital Programme 2024/25 - 2028/29, including the planned application of capital financing set out at Annex F4;
- xv. recommend to Council the approval of increases in HRA rents as follows:
 - General needs, supported accommodation and temporary accommodation – a 7.7% increase in accordance with the cap set by government for social rents;
 - Garage rents – to be increased in line with September 2023 CPI (6.7%)
- xvi. recommend to Council the approval of the changes in HRA support and service charges set out at paragraphs 21-27 of the Housing Revenue Account budget report;
- xvii. recommend to Council the approval of the proposed HRA reserve movements for 2024/25 set out at paragraphs 47-50;
- xviii. recommend to Council the approval of the Housing Revenue Account Budget 2024/25;
- xix. recommend to Council the approval of the Council Tax Requirement for 2024/25 of £7,055,774, equivalent to £176.74 for a band D property, representing a £5.13 increase on the 2023/24 amount;
- xx. recommend to Council the approval of the proposed General Fund reserve movements for 2024/25 as set out at paragraphs 63-66 of the General Fund budget report (as amended by the Addendum to this report), including the use of £1.176million from the Medium Term Financial Strategy reserve to balance the General Fund budget;
- xxi. recommend to Council the approval of the schedule of fees and charges for 2024/25 as set out at Annex H5 (as amended by the Addendum to this report);

- xxii. recommend to Council the delegation of authority to the Strategic Director of Finance, Commercialisation and Corporate Services (Section 151 Officer) to set and/or amend fees and charges in relation to services which are operating in competition with commercial providers, for example trade waste;
- xxiii. recommend to Council the approval of the General Fund budget for 2023/24 (as amended by the Addendum to this report); and
- xxiv. note the contents of the Budget Consultation Report 2024/25

CAB74 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED: to exclude the public and press for the following item on the grounds that they contained exempt information within the meaning of section 100I and paragraph 3 (Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person, including the authority holding that information) part 1 Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972.

CAB75 SALE OF A COMMERCIAL PORTFOLIO ASSET(S)

Councillor Hargreaves presented the report regarding the Sale of a Commercial Portfolio Asset(s). He outlined the feedback received from the recent Investment Board meeting, held on 15th February 2024.

Members discussed the report.

Councillor Hargreaves proposed approval of the report recommendations. This was seconded by Councillor Lees.

RESOLVED: to

- i. Endorse the view of the Investment Board that the Directors of Aspire (CRP) Limited should commence marketing and complete the sale of the 50% share of Chesterford Research Park, subject to Full Council approval.
- ii. Recommend to Council that, in accordance with CIPFA guidelines, the receipt is used to reduce short term borrowing.

Meeting ended at 21:25

APPENDIX 1: PUBLIC SPEAKER STATEMENTS

APPENDIX 2: APPROVED CAR PARKING TARIFFS

Statement from Julie Redfern

We were extremely disappointed that our concerns won't be discussed at full council.

Meeting and surpassing the 3600 threshold set by UDC, more than 4100 people signed our petition. However, despite exceeding the required number of signatures, the petition was rejected on the grounds that not enough signatories were from within the Uttlesford district.

We would argue that the physical presence of signatories in the town centre implies their direct stake in the issue, even if they reside just outside the district's boundaries. Please don't underestimate the importance of including town centre workers, many of whom may commute from neighbouring areas, in this decision-making process. Your papers state that you had 485 responses, with our petition we would argue that you in fact had 4591.

We and our members understand that parking creates revenue for UDC and we appreciate that parking has not been increased since 2015. However we are concerned that having commissioned consultants to assess tariffs for parking in Uttlesford, aligned to other towns in Essex and the surrounding counties, it appears that UDC has chosen to disregard most of their recommendations and increase prices on all areas of parking between 60% and 70%.

Given that the increase in 2015 was an average of 22% on the 2008 prices it seems excessive to be increasing charges at three times the previous rise.

We would prefer to see lower increases overall given the change in the national economy and cost of living crisis since your consultants prepared their report. But you have chosen to apply even higher rises than the consultants recommended. These increases take £385,406 of additional profit across the whole district but £300,000 of this figure is solely out of the Saffron Walden town centre economy. This is surely unfair to place this burden on just one of your town centres?

We and our members are worried that the increased parking fees will negatively impact the town centre's vitality and therefore should be a crucial consideration for councillors. If the majority of revenue generated from car parks is derived from individuals who work and shop in the town centre, raising parking fees could potentially deter these people, leading to a decline in footfall, the ability to recruit staff, overall economic activity and in turn parking revenue.

The increases to season tickets is also concerning our members. The proposed annual increase from £300 to £450 is a whopping 50% hike. We are aware that some businesses in the town cover the cost of their employees parking and this will have a significant impact, perhaps, if the cost to our office based businesses is too much they may well decide that they would be better off relocating outside of the town centre.

And that brings me to Catons Lane: Our members are concerned about the knock on effects of making this a chargeable car park. They recognise that it is used primarily by town centre employees. If the reason we've been given for this is honestly because UDC maintain it but SWTC own it and neither council wants to bear the cost, we can see the issue, but why do these proposals show that there will be an expected profit of £64,000 per year? Thats not for maintenance. If you really must add charges to this car park and they are to match Swan Meadow could they not have the various season ticket options too? We don't want to see all regular users pushed across town adding to rush hour congestion.

Businesses are worried that staff recruitment will be negatively impacted. Potential employees will be deterred from working in the town centre as parking is already expensive

and diminishes their earnings. If businesses can't recruit locally they could look to relocate their premises elsewhere thereby negatively impacting the vibrancy of our town.

Our Ref: 14010/2024/02
Your Ref: n/a
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31 January 2024

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Sent by email to business@uttlesford.gov.uk

CAR PARKING IN UTTLESFORD CONSULTATION – CONSULTATION RESPONSE BY FIRSTPLAN LIMITED ON BEHALF OF WAITROSE & PARTNERS

Firstplan act on behalf of Waitrose & Partners (“Waitrose”), who operate a Waitrose foodstore at Hill Street, Saffron Walden. As one of only three large-format foodstores present in Saffron Walden – and the only large foodstore in Saffron Walden town centre, the Waitrose store plays an important role in meeting the food shopping needs of residents of Saffron Walden and the wider surrounding area. The store forms part of the policy-defined town centre of Saffron Walden (as defined by the Uttlesford Local Plan 2005) and can be considered to perform a role as an “anchor” store to the wider offer of the town centre. Its location on the southern edge of the town centre provides it with strong connections with other shops and services in the town centre.

We have been made aware of a formal consultation which is being undertaken by Uttlesford District Council ('the Council') on car parking charges across the local authority area. This consultation is of direct relevance to our client's interest in respect of the Fairycroft car park, which is a decked car park adjacent to the rear of the Waitrose store which is used by both Waitrose's customers and wider users of the town centre. The joint role which this car park plays is reflected in the fact that signage on the exterior of the car park carries Waitrose branding, and the car park is stated as being for “Waitrose & Town Centre” above the entrance. Signage within the car park also carries Waitrose branding, and the car park includes Waitrose trolley bays for customers to return their trolleys once they have finished loading their vehicles. Waitrose customers are able to have their parking charges refunded when spending over £10 in the store; the Fairycroft car park thus acts as the defacto car park for the Waitrose store.

The Fairycroft car park is a short-stay car park with parking capped at a maximum of three hours. Currently, the Fairycroft car park operates with the following payment arrangements (Monday to Saturday 8am to 5pm):

- Up to 30 minutes: £0.50
- Up to 1 hour: £0.70
- Up to 2 hours: £1.20
- Up to 3 hours: £2.00
- Sunday parking: free

The proposals which are the subject of the current consultation suggest the following adjustments to the price of short stay car parking at Fairycroft:

- Extension of chargeable hours from Monday to Saturday 8am-5pm to Monday to Saturday 8am-6pm
- Removal of short stay (up to 30 minutes) option
- Up to 1 hour: £1.20 (**71% increase**)
- Up to 2 hours: £2.20 (**83% increase**)
- Up to 3 hours: £3.20 (**60% increase**)

- Flat Sunday parking rate of £1.50

The consultation is also of relevance to our client's Partners, many of whom work for shifts at the Waitrose store which exceed the maximum three hour stay at the Fairycroft Car Park. Consequently, many of Waitrose's Partners who drive to work park at the Swan Meadow Car Park, on the western side of the town centre, under ten minutes' walk from Waitrose. This a Long Stay car park which operates with the following payment arrangements (Monday to Saturday 8am to 5pm):

- Up to 1 hour: £0.70
- Up to 2 hours: £1.20
- Up to 4 hours: £2.00
- Up to 6 hours: £2.50
- Up to 9 hours: £3.50
- Sunday parking: free

In addition, the following monthly parking permits are currently offered for people employed in Saffron Walden. Given the nature of their roles within the store, many of Waitrose's Partners utilise the monthly and annual permits.

- £30.00 for one month
- £90.00 for three months
- £175.00 for six months
- £300.00 for 12 months.

The proposals which are the subject of the current consultation suggest the following adjustments to the price of short stay car parking at Swan Meadow:

- Extension of chargeable hours from Monday to Saturday 8am-5pm to Monday to Saturday 8am-6pm
- Up to 1 hour: £1.20 (**71% increase**)
- Up to 2 hours: £2.20 (**83% increase**)
- Up to 4 hours: £3.20 (**60% increase**)
- Up to 5 hours: £3.70
- Up to 10 hours: £4.70
- Flat Sunday parking rate of £1.50

The pricing of the monthly permits is proposed to be increased as follows:

- £75.00 for one month (**150% increase**)
- £200.00 for three months (**122% increase**)
- £350.00 for six months (**100% increase**)
- £550.00 for 12 months (**83% increase**)

On behalf of our clients, we wish to strongly object the proposals to increase the car parking charges at both the Fairycroft and Swan Meadow sites. Specifically, we object to:

- (i) The proposed increase in fees within all parking time brackets at both Fairycroft and Swan Meadow.
- (ii) The extension of charging hours from 5pm to 6pm, Monday to Saturday.
- (iii) The proposal to introduce charging for parking on Sundays at both Fairycroft and Swan Meadow.
- (iv) The significant increases in permit parking fees proposed for Swan Meadow.

The increases in the charge rates for short-stay parking at both sites is almost 75%, and for longer permits at Swan Meadow, the cost of a monthly, three monthly and six monthly permit is proposed to at least double, with an annual permit also increasing by 83%. It is not considered that such a significant level of increase in parking charges is justifiable, particularly in the context of the ongoing cost of living pressures.

In respect of points (i) to (iii), our client is firmly of the view that increasing the parking fees across the town centre car parks will simply have the effect of dissuading residents to visit the Waitrose store and wider town centre, or to reduce the amount of time they spend in the town centre when they do visit. This will have a negative impact on the town centre as a whole, as it will discourage residents to spend longer in the town centre, reducing “dwell time” and spend in the town centre’s range of shops, cafes and restaurants. The proposals to extend charging hours from 5pm to 6pm have potential to negatively impact on the town centre’s early evening economy, which Waitrose supports by being open until 8pm between Monday and Thursday and 9pm on Fridays and Saturdays.

Significantly, the proposed changes to the parking charges have the potential to dissuade residents to visit the town centre to undertake their food shopping. Waitrose already operates at a competitive disadvantage in this respect on account of the charges levied by the Council-operated car park adjacent to the store. The increased charges will instead push residents to other foodstores outside the town centre to undertake their food shopping, which are able to offer free car parking. This will have a detrimental impact on the wider town centre, given that Waitrose acts as an “anchor” store, meaning it drives footfall and helps support other businesses in the town centre.

The Council have recently commissioned a consultant, Nexus Planning, to provide strategic advice on the District’s town centres and the need for new retail floorspace, in support of their new Local Plan. This advice was supported by a detailed survey of patterns of usage of town centres across the District. This identified that:

- **76.4% of residents who use Saffron Walden town centre access the town centre by driving, with only 2.6% accessing by bus.** This confirms that the availability of affordable car parking is of critical importance to the retail health of the town centre. Given there is no train station serving the town centre and very low levels of accessibility by public transport, increasing car parking rates will not result in a modal shift to other forms of transport, it will simply discourage people to visit the town centre.
- **16.0% of residents living in the Saffron Walden area visit the Waitrose store for “main” (i.e. trolley-based) food shopping trips.** These type of shopping trips require adjacent car parking, and indeed the popularity of our client’s store for this purpose is reflected in the fact that the Fairycroft car park was subject to extensive upgrade and extension works under ten years ago. As stated above, by increasing car parking fees, residents will be put off from visiting the store to undertake main food shopping trips, particularly those which are combined with visits to other facilities in the town centre (for which parking charges cannot be refunded by Waitrose), and will instead direct their spending elsewhere in the town (i.e. to Tesco and Aldi) where free parking is available. Waitrose already operate at a competitive disadvantage to other supermarkets in Saffron Walden on account of the parking charges, and our client is of the view that this situation will be significantly worsened if the proposed changes to parking arrangements are adopted.
- **39.7% of residents in the Saffron Walden area visit the Waitrose store for “top up” / basket shopping.** This confirms that the store acts as an important footfall driver in the town centre, and it is reasonable to expect that many people who use our client’s store for “top up” shopping will also undertake similar shopping purchases elsewhere in the town centre. As Waitrose is only able to refund shoppers when over £10 is spent in store, the increased charges are likely to dissuade shoppers from doing small scale “top up shopping” in Waitrose alongside similar trips to other town centre stores.
- **41.4% of residents who live in the Saffron Walden area undertake “linked trips” as part of their main food shopping trips.** This includes including non-food shopping (10.9%), other food shopping (7.3%), leisure

activities (5.4%) and visiting food & beverage outlets (4.3%). The scope for these “linked trips” will be reduced if there are price-critical considerations such as increases in parking fees.

The above points confirm importance of the Waitrose store in supporting the overall vitality of Saffron Walden town centre, and by increasing the parking charges to the Fairygate car park, our client is of the view that there will be an adverse impact on the store, and, given the role our client’s store plays in supporting the wider vitality of the town centre, there is also scope for other businesses in the town centre to be negatively impacted.

In respect of point (iv), as we have noted above, the Swan Meadow Car Park is used by many Partners who work at the Waitrose store given the restriction on the Fairygate car park as a short stay car park. The increases to the parking fees which are proposed here, including a 150% increase on a monthly permit and a 122% increase on a three month permit, are wholly unjustified. Such increases will represent a substantial additional financial commitment for Partners and other residents who purchase permits for the car park, during a cost of living crisis and continued and persistent high levels of inflation. For other uses, as above, they will serve to discourage usage of the town centre and towards competing facilities where free or cheaper car parking is available.

Whilst the financial benefits to the authority of increasing parking charges is noted (and indeed is understood to be the driver behind the proposals), seeking the introduction of such measures is failing to understand the wider impacts of such measures on town centre vitality and viability. The evidence which has been prepared by the Council’s consultants in support of increasing the parking charges fails to fully consider this point. Instead, the discussion between town centre footfall and parking charges which has been included in the report appears largely generic, references a number of reports which could be argued to be out of date (various reports dated from between 2012 and 2015 are cited) and cites evidence from the University of Rotterdam, the findings of which should not be assumed to be directly relevant to the proposals in question. There appears to be a clear lack of assessment at the local level of what the impacts of the proposed increases in parking charges will be on the health and viability of Saffron Walden town centre.

We are also of the view that proposals to increase parking goes against the grain of the approach taken by many authorities, who have recognised that affordable / free car parking can positively impact a town centre by bringing in additional footfall and spend. Bedford Borough have recently trialled four hours free car parking in Bedford town centre, and proposals for two hours free car parking on a daily basis is shortly to be debated by Swindon Borough Council. Durham County Council has confirmed they plan to reconsider recent proposals to charge for car parking after 2pm following concerns it may be contributing to a decline in footfall in the County’s town centres.

On the basis of the above, on behalf of our clients we object to the proposals and strongly request that the Council consider alternative means of additional revenue generation. The Council will be aware that town centres in general remain in a precarious position as a consequence of changing consumer habits, and many authorities across the country have sought to reduce or remove town centre car parking charges in order to help support healthy town centres. The current proposals by the Council thus seem highly counter-intuitive in this respect, and it is hoped the Council will reconsider its approach.

I would be grateful if you could please acknowledge receipt of these comments. On behalf of our clients, we wish to be kept informed with any further consultations and the next steps which the Council are proposing to take in respect of this matter.

Yours sincerely



ADAM BUNN
Senior Associate

cc — Lisa McDonald, John Lewis Partnership

Statement from Toni Gabell

My name is Toni Gabell, I am the shop manager of St Elizabeths charity shop in Saffron Walden and a resident. We are a small charity, and we are one of 8 shops.

We, as all the other charity shops in Saffron Walden rely heavily on volunteers, they freely give up their valuable time to help us and we could not function without them. Usually these volunteers will be retired, hence having the time available to help. This will mean that their income could be limited. With the current state of the economy and annual rises for services (council tax, water, etc) due in April, everyone is having to watch their finances more closely. We all have volunteers that travel to work with us, this incurs using their own vehicle, fuel and paying parking.

The proposals that have been made seem excessive for example the long stay in Swan Meadow if it goes ahead will mean an extra £1.20 a day. This is a lot for someone who is already giving so much. I am fearful that this might just be one step too far and I as well as other charity shops in the town might start to lose our volunteers.

As a retailer I see customers who regularly visit us particularly on Saturdays and spend money in our town. Taking away the free parking/putting up the tariffs could make them think twice about coming every weekend.

As I have already stated I am also a resident of Saffron Walden. I park my vehicle on the road as I do not have a driveway. Parking is already difficult for residents due to

restrictions and households having more than one vehicle. With increased parking charges this could mean that parking will become worse as people working in the town, try to find somewhere else to park rather than using car parks.

With the proposed increases obviously it has been calculated how much the council will receive as an income, but has it been considered as to how much they might lose by charging higher tariffs and people not using the car parks?

High Streets all over the country are suffering with an increase in retailer choosing to close their shops and move to big shopping centres where shoppers can park for free.

We are lucky in Saffron Walden. We have a beautiful historical town, two markets a week, a variety of shops including many independents and places to eat. Coming to Saffron Walden is a day out for people and these proposed increases could seriously damage the footfall in our town.

Notes from Matthew Gurnett

- I am addressing the council tonight with regards the proposed rise in parking charges in saffron Walden.
- I am talking about how as a small business owner in the town I feel these rises will directly affect my business and the impact they could have on the town.
- I am also asking to council to consider other options that I have seen similar towns to saffron Walden adopted, such as free first hour of free parking on set days.
- I am also asking to consider a reduced season ticket price for businesses that use swan meadow car park.



UDC Cabinet Parking Meeting

20th February 2024

Shara

The removal of Sunday free parking seriously needs to be reconsidered. Free Sunday parking acts as a draw to our town and its shops and business and many are now trading on Sundays. Removing free parking could deter shoppers and visitors and could also have a negative impact on Sunday trading which has picked up over the years.

It will not fill the carparks up and generate UDC extra revenue, instead it will add to the unsociable parking that already takes place in town. You only have to drive down the High St in SW on a sunday to realise how incredibly badly people will park, as they are allowed to park on yellow lines during this time. Instead of paying the £1, the general public will choose to park on town centre roads, making it very hard for residents to move around town.

Increasing parking fees is the opposite approach to that taken by many other local authorities. We believe a free parking period would encourage footfall and in turn increase economic activity.

An alternative would be to look at what you charge on Saturdays. Perhaps a small increase to this busy day will cover the very small amount of income generated on a Sunday

I urge you to keep Sunday a free parking day.

At last weeks scouting Cllr Hargreaves suggested that the increases would create churn (more movement of shoppers) we already have parking time limits in the 3 TC carparks. The only day that these carparks are full is Saturday,

Please Weigh up the short-term financial gains from increased parking fees against the potential long-term consequences for the town centre's economic health, local business and the overall well-being of the community.

Again... Reconsider your proposals and at the very least bring the tariff price changes back in line with the recommendations made by Parking Matters. You commissioned this company, it is wise to take on the words of these experts.

Reconsider the enormous price changes both annually and monthly for Swan meadow season tickets primarily used by town centre workers. (It would be beneficial to create a special 12 month payment scheme for town centre employees since annual payment for some is an extremely large sum to pay up-front. Some larger companies offer this to employees but Saffron Walden mainly consists of small independent traders.)

Keep Catons Lane as a free car park for town centre employees and those parents who use the car park for school drop off and collection.

Introduce special loading permits for town centre businesses who don't have commercial vehicles. We have asked for this for many years on behalf of our members.

Thank you

Approved Parking Tariffs

Option 2 Consulted on
Recommendations + 0.20p

	<1/2 hr	<1hr	<2hr	<3hr	<4hr	<5hr	<10 hrs (all day)	Max Stay
Fairycroft								
Existing	£0.50	£0.70	£1.20	£2.00	-	-	-	3 hrs
Proposed	£0.80	£1.20	£2.20	£3.20	-	-	-	3 hrs
Increase (£)	£0.30	£0.50	£1.00	£1.20	-	-	-	
% Increase	60%	71%	83%	60%	-	-	-	
Rose & Crown								
Existing	£0.50	£0.70	£1.20	-	-	-	-	2 hrs
Proposed	£0.80	£1.20	£2.20	-	-	-	-	2 hrs
Increase (£)	£0.30	£0.50	£1.00	-	-	-	-	
% Increase	60%	71%	83%	-	-	-	-	
Common								
Existing	£0.50	£0.70	£1.20	£2.00	-	-	-	3 hrs
Proposed	£0.80	£1.20	£2.20	£3.20	-	-	-	3 hrs
Increase (£)	£0.30	£0.50	£1.00	£1.20	-	-	-	
% Increase	60%	71%	83%	60%	-	-	-	
Swan Meadow								
Existing	-	£0.70	£1.20	-	£2.00	£2.50	£3.50	All day
Proposed	-	£1.20	£2.20	-	£3.20	£3.70	£4.70	All day
Increase (£)	-	£0.50	£1.00	-	£1.20	£1.20	£1.20	
% Increase	-	71%	83%	-	60%	48%	34%	
Coaches								
Existing	-	-	-	-	-	£3.00	£6.00	All day
Proposed	-	-	-	-	-	£6.00	£14.00	All day
Increase (£)	-	-	-	-	-	£3.00	£8.00	
% Increase	-	-	-	-	-	100%	133%	

	<1/2 hr	<1hr	<2hr	<3hr	<4hr	<5hr	<10 hrs	Max Stay
London Road - Saturday only								
Charges aligned with Swan Meadow Car Park	-	£1.20	£2.20	-	£3.20	£3.70	£4.70	All day

	<1/2 hr	<1hr	<2hr	<3hr	<4hr	<5hr	<10 hrs	Max Stay
Catons Lane								
Charges aligned with Swan Meadow Car Park	-	£1.20	£2.20	-	£3.20	£3.70	£4.70	All day

	<1/2 hr	<1hr	<2hr	<3hr	<4hr	<5hr	<10 hrs	Max Stay
Angel Lane, Chequer's Lane and New Street								
Existing	£0.40	£0.60	-	£1.20	-	-	-	3 hrs
Proposed	£0.80	£1.20	-	£1.70	-	-	-	3 hrs
Increase (£)	£0.40	£0.60	-	£0.50	-	-	-	
% Increase	100%	100%	-	42%	-	-	-	
White Street								
Existing	£0.40	£0.60	-	£1.20	£2.00	£2.40	£3.50	All day
Proposed	£0.80	£1.20	-	£1.70	£2.70	£3.20	£4.20	All day
Increase (£)	£0.40	£0.60	-	£0.50	£0.70	£0.80	£0.70	
% Increase	100%	100%	-	42%	35%	33%	20%	

Season Tickets - Option 3 and Alternative option

Table 4

	Existing				Option 3 - Proposals consulted on				Option agreed following consultation			
	1 month	3 months	6 months	12 months	1 month	3 months	6 months	12 months	1 month	3 months	6 months	12 months
Saffron Walden												
Swan Meadow (employed locally)	£30	£90	£175	£300	£75	£200	£350	£550	£45	£135	£260	£450
% Increase to existing	-	-	-	£70	150%	122%	100%	83%	50%	50%	49%	50%
Swan Meadow (Resident)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	£78
% Increase to existing	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11%
Catons Lane (employed locally)	-	-	-	-	£75	£200	£350	£550	£45	£135	£260	£450
London Road (Resident)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	£78
Great Dunmow												
Chequers Lane	-	-	£175	£300	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
White Street (employed locally)	£30	£90	£175	£300	£65	£175	£300	£450	£45	£135	£260	£450
% Increase to existing	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50%	50%	49%	50%
Stansted Mountfitchet												
Crafton Green	-	-	£220	£420	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Crafton Green(Employed Locally)	-	-	£130	£250	-	-	-	-	-	-	£260	£450
% Increase to existing	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100%
Lower Street (Employed Locally)	£30	£90	£130	£250	£65	£175	£300	£450	£45	£135	£260	£450
% Increase to existing	-	-	-	-	117%	94%	131%	80%	50%	50%	100%	80%
Lower Street (Resident)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	£78
% Increase to existing	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	123%
Lower Street	-	-	£220	£420	-	-	£490	£810	-	-	£490	£810
% Increase to existing	-	-	-	-	-	-	123%	93%	-	-	-	123%

Table 4.1

	Existing				Option 3 - Proposals consulted on				Option agreed following consultation			
	1 month	3	6 months	12	1 month	3 months	6	12	1 month	3 months	6 months	12
Stansted Mountfitchet												
Crafton Green	-	-	£220	£420	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Crafton Green(Employed Locally)	-	-	£130	£250	-	-	-	-	-	-	£195	£375
% Increase to existing	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50%	50%
Lower Street (Employed Locally)	£30	£90	£130	£250	£65	£175	£300	£450	£45	£135	£195	£375
% Increase to existing	-	-	-	-	117%	94%	131%	80%	50%	50%	50%	50%

Hybrid Season Tickets

Based on season tickets - apportioned costs	Annual cost	Season Ticket monthly cost	3 day per week monthly cost	Part time based on 5hr stay
White Street	£45.00	£22.50	£13.50	
Swan Meadow	£45.00	£22.50	£13.50	
Catons Lane	£45.00	£22.50	£13.50	
Crafton Green	£45.00	£22.50	£13.50	
Lower Street (Local)	£45.00	£22.50	£13.50	
Lower Street (Commuter)	£810.00	£810.00	£40.50	£28.50

	<1/2 hr	<1hr	<2hr	<3hr	<4hr	<5hr	<10 hrs (all day)	Max Stay
Crafton Green								
Existing	£0.40	£0.60	0	£1.20	-	-	£3.00	All day
Proposed	£0.80	£1.20	£1.70	£2.20	-	-	£4.50	
Increase (£)	£0.40	£0.60	£1.70	£1.00			£2.20	
% Increase	100%	100%	100%	83%	-	-	50%	
Lower Street								
Existing	£0.40	£0.60	£1.00	£1.20	£2.00	£2.40	£4.70	All day
Proposed	£0.80	£1.20	£1.70	£2.20	£2.70	£3.20	£5.20	All day
Increase (£)	£0.40	£0.60	£0.70	£1.00	£0.70	£0.80	£0.50	
% Increase	100%	100%	70%	83%	35%	33%	11%	
Coaches								
Existing	-	-	-	-	-	£3.00	£6.00	All day
Proposed	-	-	-	-	-	£6.00	£14.00	All day
Increase (£)						£3.00	£8.00	
% Increase	-	-	-	-	-	100%	133%	