

7 December 2021		ITEM: 7
Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Introduction of additional Pay and Display sites within Thurrock		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key	
Report of: Phil Carver – Strategic Lead – Environmental Enforcement		
Accountable Assistant Director: David Kleinberg – Assistant Director – Counter Fraud and Enforcement		
Accountable Director: Julie Rogers – Director, Public Realm		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

Following the Cabinet Report outlining the medium term financial position for the Council, this paper has been prepared to provide additional background and detail in relation to the potential income generation for the creating of additional pay and display car parks within the Borough.

The medium term financial position was set out to Cabinet on 7 July 2021. This highlighted a cumulative £34.3m funding gap for 2022/23 and 2023/24. This also set out proposed mitigations grouped between income generation, operational efficiencies, providing services differently, staffing reductions and member decisions.

The committee is reminded there remains a significant funding gap to address in both years if all of these proposed mitigations set out in the report are delivered. Hence any savings proposals not taken forward will further increase the funding gap and hence will require further reassessments of core service delivery with associated impacts on levels of staffing. The delivery of the financial position remains a significant risk to the Council in the medium term.

This report to this committee seeks specific comment on the relevant items which fall within its remit and which require further member scrutiny prior to final cabinet decisions being made on the relevant items.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 To consider the proposal, in view of the Medium Term Financial Plan and efficiencies required to meet a balanced budget, and support the**

recommendation to Cabinet to create additional pay and display facilities and car parks in Thurrock.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Thurrock Borough Council owns, manages and maintains a large number of car parks, 10 of which sit directly under the Parking Team whilst many others are managed by Housing or Clean and Green.

2.2 The car parks fall within two categories, Pay and Display Car Parks that hold a tariff charge and Car Parks that are unrestricted and FREE. Car parks with a tariff are supported by a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) which enables the Parking Enforcement Team to issue Penalty Charge Notices to vehicles that either fail to Pay and Display, over stay their paid for time or park outside of marked bays causing a hazard or nuisance.

2.3 There are 6 pay and Display car parks located within the Grays area and one in South Ockendon. On the whole the car park fees and charges are consistent based on the categorised use of the car park. There are 3 main variants which determine the car park fees and charges:

1) Commuter Short stay (all located in Grays)

There is only one short stay car park in Grays. namely Darnley Road car park and the fees and charges are consistent with the same park and stay periods as the long stay car parks.

2) Commuter Long stay (all located in Grays)

6 of the 7 Pay and Display car parks are long stay and the fees and charges are consistent for all except Grays Beach Car Park which is currently subject to review in the fees and charges paper being considered at PTR O&S in December.

3) Non commuter car parks (all car parks outside Grays)

There are 6 non commuter car parks, 5 of which provide total FREE parking and 1 being Canterbury Parade which provides 1 hour FREE then introduces charges for any further stay. The tariff is currently subject to review in the fees and charges paper being considered at PTR O&S in December. However this car park will continue to offer the 1st hour of parking for FREE to all customers then look to introduce a tariff more consistent with other car parking charges for any additional stay.

2.4 The remaining car parks are all located across the borough and are unrestricted. These car parks do not have a tariff and are FREE to all users, with no maximum stay time or fees applying. They are not supported with Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) and receive no parking enforcement which results in vehicles parking for hours, days and weeks free of charge with no means of management. The lack of parking enforcement also means these

car parks do not receive regular patrols leaving these areas more prone to abandoned vehicles, fly tip, traveller incursions, ASB and nuisance behaviour.

- 2.5 It is also worth noting that due to a lack of income from these car parks, they have not been maintained to the same standard as charged car parks. In many instances the surfaces are damaged and uneven. It is intended that should the proposal be accepted, remedial work on the car park will be undertaken prior to charges being levied. This will ensure that in future these car parks are maintained to the same high standards as others.
- 2.6 The proposal is to introduce tariff charges and the relevant Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) at the following car parks 7 days a week, 24 hours a day:

Area	Description	Capacity	Recommended Tariff	Comments
*South Ockendon	South Ockendon Recreational Centre	30 vehicles	Long Stay up to 1 hour = £1 up to 2 hours = £1.50 up to 4 hours = £2.50 up to 6 hours = £4 over 6 hours = £6.50	The tariff set for long stay parking charges is consistent with the charges set for the same parking duration at short stay car parks, example below: Short stay tariff: up to 1 hour = £1 up to 2 hours = £1.50 up to 4 hours = £2.50 There will be permits offered to groups who visit to play sports matches during the operational hours. This system will be devised by the Parking Team in coordination with the Recreation and Leisure Team and the local sports clubs based at the site.
South Ockendon	Tamarisk Road Car Park	30 vehicles	Long Stay up to 1 hour = £1 up to 2 hours = £1.50 up to 4 hours = £2.50 up to 6 hours = £4	The tariff set for long stay parking charges is consistent with the charges set for the same parking duration at short stay car parks, example below: Short stay tariff: up to 1 hour = £1 up to 2 hours = £1.50

			over 6 hours = £6.50	up to 4 hours = £2.50
*Tilbury	Coalhouse Fort Car Park	70 vehicles	Long Stay up to 1 hour = £1 up to 2 hours = £1.50 up to 4 hours = £2.50 up to 6 hours = £4 over 6 hours = £6.50	The tariff set for long stay parking charges is consistent with the charges set for the same parking duration at short stay car parks, example below: Short stay tariff: up to 1 hour = £1 up to 2 hours = £1.50 up to 4 hours = £2.50
*Langdon Hills Country Park	High Road	76 vehicles	Long Stay up to 1 hour = £1 up to 2 hours = £1.50 up to 4 hours = £2.50 up to 6 hours = £4 over 6 hours = £6.50	The tariff set for long stay parking charges is consistent with the charges set for the same parking duration at short stay car parks, example below: Short stay tariff: up to 1 hour = £1 up to 2 hours = £1.50 up to 4 hours = £2.50
	Old Church Hill	15 vehicles		
	Westley Heights	15 vehicles		
	Beacon Car Park – Dry Street	20 vehicles		
	One Tree Hill upper car park	22 vehicles		
	One Tree Hill lower car park	30 vehicles		
				Permits will be offered to groups who wish to host events and sections of the car park may need to be cordoned off. This will be carried out with the support of the Parking Team in coordination with the Recreation and Leisure team

*** Annual Country Park Parking Season Pass (3hour Max Stay)** - In support of regular walkers/dog walkers to the Country Parks, it is recommended that Thurrock Borough Council will offer an annual parking season pass at a charge of £75 per annum. This entitles the season pass holder to park for up to 3 hours with their season pass in the following locations:

- **Coalhouse Fort**
- **South Ockendon Recreation Park**
- **Langdon Hills Country Park**

2.6.1 The pass has been restricted to 3 hour max stay per day to avoid abuse from commuters. The minimum charge for 1 hour parking of £1 across all car parks is recommended as part of the fees and charges review. Based on 5 x 1 hr visits per week, per annum the cost for the customer without the annual permit would be £5 x 52 = £260. The purchase of the annual Country Parking Permit would be a saving of £185 per year for the customer. This saving would be increased if the customer was to visit the parks 7 days a week

2.6.2 It is also proposed to extend the Flowers Estate PPA area to include Tamarisk Road which is currently a hot spot area for commuter vehicles, who are parking daily in numbers exceeding 60 vehicles which are taking valuable on street parking spaces instead of utilising the commuter car parking available across the borough. Shared use bays are being considered in Tamarisk Road which will provide additional permit parking for residents but also offer pay and display parking options.

2.7 In addition to the generation of income from the parking areas, the additional objectives to be achieved through these changes include:

- Improve the car park environment, to the benefit of motorists and pedestrians
- Reduce obstructions/hazards to pedestrians and motorists
- Improve car park security and safety for users
- Reduce ASB in the areas
- Increase turnover of vehicles and ensure fair access to all users

2.8 A further positive impact that needs to be considered as part of this proposal is the intention of the service to increase the number of Civil Enforcement Officers by 10 on the basis that they will be self-funding. This additional headcount will provide the resource required to ensure compliance with parking charges by users as well as carrying out the necessary inspections to parking areas.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 There is an expectation that Civil Enforcement Officers, whilst undertaking their normal enforcement duties in car park areas will also carry out routine inspections and report any faults or defects for remedial works. Inspections of the unrestricted car parks are not carried out routinely as with the chargeable car parks. It is apparent that the current inspection regime for the unrestricted car parks is not sufficient and the lack of enforcement presence in the car park area has resulted in them falling into disrepair. All 4 car park areas now require extensive maintenance works.

- 3.2 The Council have received 4 compensation claims, linked to personal injury at various council managed car parks, and linked to claims of hazardous flooring. Total costs awarded to date have been £24,837. Any costs awarded will result in a financial loss to the council.
- 3.3 A recent survey and inspection of these unrestricted car parks has identified extensive remedial works are required to bring the standards to an acceptable level. The Council will be at risk of frequent insurance and compensation claims if these essential works are not carried out.
- 3.4 The cost of preparing the sites for pay and display charging as well as the estimated annual income is detailed in the table below.

Car Park	Cost for remedial work	Pay and display machine installation	Estimated Annual Income
Coalhouse Fort	£27,575	£4,300	£34,680
Tamarisk Road car park	£1000	£4,300	£15,258
South Ockendon Recreation Ground	£11,692	£4,300	£21,840
Langdon Hills Country Park car parks	£71,000	£25,800	£88,186
TOTAL	£111,267	£38,700	£159,964

- 3.5 The estimated income is based on average vehicle turnover and stay time, and the fees structured outlined above.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 Based on the detail provided above, the introduction of parking charges at the 4 proposed sites, not only improves the quality and safety of the sites, but provides a revenue stream for the service. It is important to note that income from Parking Charges and Parking Enforcement is ring-fenced. This means that the income generated is required to be re-invested in either parking enforcement or maintenance of parking related infrastructure such as the surfacing of car parks, signs and lines to enable drivers to be aware of parking restrictions or other measures that can make our roads safer for all users. In addition Thurrock council have the cost of business rates for all these car parks, therefore if these fees are not introduced not only will the car parks not be maintained but we have the ongoing cost of continued provision.
- 4.2 Implementing these schemes will also ensure the car parks receive regular enforcement patrols which will deter and reduce crime and ASB at these locations and encourage and empower residents to make use of the facilities provided.

- 4.3 The introduction of parking charges at Langdon Hills would encourage genuine visitors old and new to use the facilities whilst also ensuring the car park locations are well maintained and managed to the highest standard providing a positive customer experience to the facility users. The introduction of Pay and Display charges would also discourage unnecessary journeys via car and encourage a more sustainable means of travel, thus reducing the environmental impact and reducing congestion at peak times.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 In order for the parking charges to be introduced, a full Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) process, taking approximately 17 weeks, will be required to be followed. This includes the following:
- 2 weeks TRO Notification 1 preparation
 - 3 weeks statutory consultation
 - 6 weeks for Delegated Decision Report process
 - 2 weeks TRO sealing and Notification 2 preparation
 - 4 weeks notice period and contractor implementation

This will provide residents and others who may be impacted by the proposals ample opportunity to comment and raise concerns.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 The improved surfacing and safety of the sites is anticipated to be of benefit for all. As with all Council managed car parks appropriate provision for Blue Badge holders will be ensured.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Laura Last**
Senior Management Accountant

The introduction of these proposed parking charges is estimated to generate £160k per year. However, in the first year, there would be £150k of costs to do remedial works to the car parks and install pay and display machines. It is important to note that income from parking charges and parking enforcement is ring-fenced. This means that the income generated is required to be re-invested in either parking enforcement or maintenance of parking related infrastructure.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Courage Emovon**

Principal Lawyer / Manager – Contracts & Procurement - Legal Services

The Council is empowered by the provisions of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (as amended), the Traffic Management Act 2004 and other specific legislation to provide additional pay and display facilities and car parks in its area of jurisdiction as outlined in this report.

Legal Services will be available to advice on any issue arising from the proposals in this report.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee**

**Community Development and Equalities
Manager**

Overall there are no negative equality impacts from this proposal to turn car parks into pay and display, which will be applied fairly and consistently regardless of protected characteristic with reasonable adjustments proposed for Blue Badge holders.

Positive equality impacts may be achieved, not least in relation to those that use pushchairs and prams as well as users of mobility aids including scooters and wheelchairs and individuals with visual impairments, given the nature of some illegal parking behaviours. A full Community Equality Impact Assessment will be completed in relation to the proposal prior to implementation

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

None

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None

9. Appendices to the report

- Not Applicable

Report Author:

Lisa Preston

Enforcement Operations Manager

Public Realm