

## Cabinet



Report subject	<b>Harmonisation of car parking across Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole</b>
Meeting date	6 September 2023
Status	Public
Executive summary	<p>This report sets out the proposals consulted on to harmonise car parking and on street chargeable location high season dates, daytime tariff structures and flat rate evening and Sunday charging times. This harmonisation is in relation to tariff structures, including dates and times tariffs are applicable but is not a review of tariff amounts.</p> <p>A public consultation was conducted from Thursday 11 May until Thursday 8 June 2023 received 1,491 responses. All feedback has been reviewed and used to inform the recommendation detailed in this report.</p>
Recommendations	<p><b>It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Agree to respond to the consultation feedback by implementing Option 2 as outlined in paragraph 36.</li> <li>(b) Agree to the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) advertisement and consultation process required to implement the car parking harmonisation proposals, in line with legislation.</li> <li>(c) Delegates authority to the Director of Commercial Operations, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance to implement the recommendations outlined in this report.</li> </ul>
Reasons for recommendations	<p>To support the delivery of the harmonisation of the car parking service for residents and visitors across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole ensuring consistency and certainty for all areas of the borough.</p> <p>To support the corporate strategy objective of sustainable environment including encouraging visitors to our town centres to walk, cycle, use the train or bus.</p>
Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Mike Cox, Portfolio Holder for Finance

Corporate Director	Jess Gibbons, Chief Operations Officer
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Wards	All
Classification	For Decision

## Background

1. The Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole areas all have legacy car parking charging regimes. These include different times of years that charges apply, different times of the day that charges apply and different tariff structures.
2. A detailed review of the differences in charging regimes across off street and on street parking locations was undertaken and proposals were identified which would deliver a harmonised approach across the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole area.
3. The proposed changes which were consulted on were, (further details can be seen in Appendix A):
  - Harmonise the high season charges to 1 March to 31 October.
  - Remove the goods vehicle tariff from Christchurch parking locations.
  - Harmonise the tariff lengths for car parking.
  - Implement tariff charges, 24 hours a day 7 days a week, removing overnight flat charges, Sunday flat rate charges and non-chargeable periods.
4. The proposed harmonisation changes are in relation to tariff structure including the dates and times tariffs are applicable. None of the proposals in the consultation include any change to tariff amounts.
5. The proposed changes would not affect blue badge holders and those holding disabled tax-exempt vehicle permits. Blue badge holders would still be able to park for free at all on-street parking places as per the conditions of their badge and persons with disabled tax-exempt vehicle permit holders would also be able to park free of charge across all BCP Council Pay & Display car parks.
6. The proposed harmonisation will help:
  - 6.1. Reduce operating costs associated with undertaking multiple tariff changes during the year (sign changes, reprogramming of pay and display machines and adjustments of pay by phone software).
  - 6.2. Eliminate inconsistencies for customers across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.
  - 6.3. Encourage increased uptake of sustainable transport by supporting the work done by the Sustainable Travel and Transport teams by avoiding promoting short car trips, which in turn would have the benefit of reducing congestion at peak times and improving air quality.

## **The public consultation process and responses**

7. A public consultation was carried out and ran from Thursday 11 May until Thursday 8 June 2023. A copy of the consultation document can found in Appendix B.
8. The consultation was designed and hosted on the BCP Council Engagement HQ platform along with a brief description of the project on a dedicated page: <https://haveyoursay.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/parking-harmonisation>. Details of the proposals, including changes for specific car parks, were available in an information document. The information document and paper questionnaires were available upon request at all BCP Council libraries and an email address was provided for queries.
9. The consultation was promoted through various channels including:
  - 9.1. Press release issued by BCP Council PR Team
  - 9.2. Social media posts (Facebook, Twitter)
  - 9.3. Posters displayed in all BCP Council car parks across the conurbation
  - 9.4. An email to local community groups
10. Throughout the consultation period there were over 6,800 visits to the engagement page, with 5,700 aware visitors (i.e. a visitor who has made at least one single visit to the webpage) and over 2,600 informed visitors (i.e. a visitor who has taken the 'next step' from being aware and clicked on something).
11. 1,491 responses were received to the consultation, less than 1% of the BCP Council area population, a response rate inline with that of other similar scale public consultations.
12. Just under a third (32%) of respondents were individuals who live in Poole and the same proportion were individuals who live in Bournemouth. Just over a quarter (26%) were individuals who live in Christchurch. Just over one-in-ten (11%) were people who work in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole and 7% were visitors to the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole areas.
13. Communication on the harmonisation proposals was sent to a number of local businesses, the responses from businesses made up only a small proportion (3%) of responses with approximately 43 respondents to the survey, doing so on behalf of a business or organisation.
14. Over two-thirds of all respondents (71%) reported that they felt the proposed changes to parking across the BCP Council area would decrease how often they visit town centres, whilst over a quarter (28%) suggested it would stay the same and 2% suggested their visits to town centres would increase. Looking at respondent type, the frequency of visits to town centres which would decrease

is highest among those who work in the BCP Council area (78%) and those who visit the area (77%). Those who live in Poole (69%) and those who live in Christchurch (70%) were less likely to feel their visits would decrease.

15. Over half (57%) of all respondents suggested that the length of time that they stay per visit to town centres would decrease under the proposed changes. Just under two-fifths (39%) suggested it would stay the same and 4% suggest their length of stay would increase.
16. Over a third (37%) of all respondents suggested their frequency of visits to out-of-town areas would stay the same under the proposed changes. Just over a third of all respondents (34%) suggested it would decrease how often they visit out-of-town areas, whilst over a quarter (29%) suggested it would increase.
17. Nearly two-thirds of all respondents (64%) suggest that their evening/night-time and Sunday parking would decrease as a result of the proposed changes to parking. Just over a third (34%) of respondents suggested their parking habits in evenings/night-time and Sundays would stay the same and a very small percentage (3%) suggested it would increase.
18. 1,251 respondents answered the question to explain how the proposed changes to high season may impact them. The following is a summary of these responses:
  - 18.1. 180 comments said that the proposed changes to high season parking would not impact them, would have no effect or no change.
  - 18.2. 46 comments were in support of the proposals around harmonising high season across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.
  - 18.3. 11 comments opposed harmonisation indicating the view that different areas in the conurbation have different needs and therefore high season dates should differ.
  - 18.4. 15 comments oppose seasonal charges altogether and suggest parking should cost the same at all points of the year.
  - 18.5. 255 comments relate to the impact on residents specifically, in particular that the proposals are unfair for residents and that residents should benefit from discounts or more favourable parking rates as they live in the area year-round.
  - 18.6. 72 comments (5% of those who responded to this proposal) suggested or were in favour of harmonising seasons so that high season in all areas begins in April, the same as it is currently in Bournemouth.

19. There were 1,178 responses to the question relating to length of stay tariff structures. 151 respondents said that they would experience no impact from the proposals. Almost a third of responses (358) said that the changes would lead to fewer visits to areas where they park with many saying that they would go to supermarkets or out-of-town centres such as Castlepoint where parking is free, or to other towns such as Southampton, Salisbury, Wimborne where parking is better value, or shop online more often.
20. 1,113 respondents answered the question to explain how the proposed changes to overnight and Sunday parking charges may impact them. 347 of these stated no impact and 30 were in support.

### **Review of the public consultation**

21. Careful consideration has been given to the results of the consultation including the impact on residents, the financial impact, the equality and environmental impact of the harmonisation proposals and opportunities to adjust the proposals in order to respond to and mitigate concerns raised in the consultation feedback.

### ***High Season Harmonisation***

22. To address the consultation feedback that 1 March start to high season is too early, officers have reviewed:
- The feasibility of harmonising the high season period to match that of Bournemouth (1 April to 31 October)
  - The feasibility of harmonising the high season period to commence on 15 March rather than the proposed 1 March date.
23. The high season is currently from March in Poole and some Christchurch locations. Harmonising in line with the Bournemouth high season would reduce current parking income by approximately £58,000.
24. Harmonising the high season period to commence on 15 March rather than the proposed 1 March date is estimated to reduce the previously calculated additional income but provide a positive increase in the budget of £178,000 for a full financial year. **On this basis high season commencement on 15 March is recommended.**

### ***Goods vehicle tariffs***

25. The review of the consultation findings does not show any objections to the removal of Goods vehicle tariffs which are currently only available in some

Christchurch car parks. It is therefore **recommended to remove the goods vehicle tariff from Christchurch parking locations harmonising with Bournemouth and Poole.**

### **Tariff lengths for parking**

26. We have reviewed suggestions to keep a number of short stay spaces in town centres and particularly in districts / local shopping areas. Statistical records show that more than 50% of the transactions at the locations that currently offer 20 minute and 40-minute tariffs are for tariffs more than 1 hour, this indicates that at least half of users are already parking for the longer durations.
27. By removing the short stay tariffs of 20, 30 and 40-minutes, this supports sustainable transport aims by reducing short car journeys, it may also increase footfall by encouraging those that would have parked for a shorter duration to park for longer to utilise a larger number of local businesses, supporting local economic development.
28. In relation to Bournemouth town centre on street locations, if the proposed 20, 40 minute etc tariffs were not removed and replaced with hourly, 1 or 2 hour tariffs, parity across the BCP Council area would not be achieved and the proposed increase in income linked to this item would not be met.
29. In response to the feedback related to those who need to park for a working day, we have accessed that the tariff options support these requirements. In addition to the daily tariffs there are longer stay permits available in all Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole town centre long stay car parks which offer competitive rates for parking. In most instances the season ticket permits offer a 50-60% discount on the daily parking rates. These permit offers will currently remain alongside any changes to daily tariff structures.
30. On this evidence **the implementation of harmonised tariff lengths for car parking is recommended.**

### ***Overnight and Sunday flat rates and free periods***

31. We have looked at the overall comments in relation to overnight and Sunday flat rates and free periods. These comments include:
  - 31.1 Providing an overnight flat rate and free parking on Sunday to entice people into town centres during these times when the car parks are mostly used less.

- 31.2 The effects on those who wish to park at the beach early in the morning or in the evening to go for a walk or swim.
- 31.3 There are concerns that the price will be much higher for visitors and residents parking for shows under the changes which may stop them from going to these venues.
32. If overnight and Sunday flat rates and the free periods are not harmonised, introducing 24-hour pricing, the forecasted income in relation to this item for would not be achieved and parity across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole would not be delivered.
33. It is **recommended that the harmonisation of overnight and Sunday flat rates and free periods are not part of the recommendation in this report** further work will be completed to bring forward alternative proposals.

### ***Residents Card***

34. The consultation report shows a number of references to discounts for residents. A working group which has been established which is reviewing proposals for a resident card, car parking is an element of the potential offer being considered as part of this working group activity.
35. Council teams will continue to work closely together to strive to support suitable alternatives to driving and parking especially during evenings and weekend. In particular through proposals for resident card offers.

### **Options for car parking harmonisation changes**

36. Following the review of the consultation feedback on the car parking harmonisation proposals, three options have been identified. **Option 2 is recommended for implementation.**

**Option 1:** implement the proposals as of 1 January 2024, as outlined in the public consultation.

**Option 2:** respond to the consultation feedback by implementing the following proposals from 1 January 2024:

- Harmonise the high season changes to 15 March to 31 October.
- Remove the goods vehicle tariff from Christchurch.
- Harmonise the tariff length for car parking, the minimum tariff for car parking in the vicinity of town centres to be 1 hour on street.
- Remove short tariff options such as 20, 30 and 40-minute parking tariffs. The minimum tariff for car parking in the town centres including multistorey car parks will be 2 hours.
- Implement a minimum tariff for car parking in district and out of town areas to be a minimum of 1 hour.



**Option 3:** maintain existing tariff structures and do not implement any changes

### **Implementation of recommendations**

37. Following the approval of the recommendations, a statutory notification process for the Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's) linked to these proposals, including advertisement of the notices in the press and across all car parking sites will need to be undertaken.
38. An implementation plan is already being drafted to plan the advertising process and changes that would need to be made to signage, machine configuration and configuration of cashless payment options to ensure we can meet the timeframe of implementations as of 1 January 2024.

### **Summary of Financial Implications**

39. It is estimated that if the proposed recommendation is approved, for a full financial year approximately £678,000 of additional parking revenue would be generated based on average car parking data.
40. Table 1 below provides a summary of estimated increased income if proposals as outlined in the recommended option were implemented for a full financial year:

**Table 1:**

<b>Proposal from consultation</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>£ Approximate income for full financial year</b>
(i)	Harmonise the high season charges to 15 March to 31 October.	£178,000
(ii)	Remove goods vehicle tariff.	£0 (this tariff has very low usage)
(iii)	Harmonise the tariff lengths for car parking - the minimum tariff for car parking in the vicinity of town centres to be 1 hour on-street. This includes removal of short tariff options such as 20, 30 and 40-minutes. - the minimum tariff for car parking in the district and out-of-town areas a minimum of 1 hour.	£500,000

41. Please note that the calculations are based on previous recorded usage at parking locations and using estimated projections based on likely customer behaviour but there is an element of elasticity in the calculations due to the values being dependent on car park usage in the future.
42. The costs to implement the proposed car parking harmonisation changes would be in the region of £40,000. This includes the advertising costs linked to the TRO's, software changes and staff time associated with this activity.
43. The changes proposed will provide reduced operating costs associated with undertaking multiple tariff changes during the year, including signage changes, reprogramming of pay and display machines and adjustments of pay by phone software.

### **Summary of Legal Implications**

44. Section 122 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (the "Act") specifies that the functions conferred on local authorities under the Act should be exercised: "to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic (including pedestrians) and the provision of suitable and adequate parking facilities on and off the highway". This includes:
  - i, the desirability of securing and maintaining reasonable access to premises
  - ii, the effect on the amenities of any locality affected and the importance of regulating and restricting the use of roads by heavy commercial vehicles, so as to preserve or improve the amenities of the areas through which the roads run;
  - iii, the strategy prepared under Section 80 of the Environment Act 1995 [National Air Quality Strategy];
  - iv, the importance of facilitating the passage of public service vehicles and of securing the safety and convenience of persons using or desiring to use such vehicles; and
  - v, any other matters appearing to the local authority to be relevant.
45. Under section 45 of the Act, local authorities may designate parking places and may make charges for vehicles left in a parking place so designated. In exercising its functions under the Act, including the setting of charges for parking places, the Council must do so in accordance with the provisions of Section 122 above.
46. Under Section 35C and 46A of the Act, a local authority has powers to vary off and on-street parking charges.

47. The Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996 contain the order making procedures as well as those to be followed when varying charges by way of a 'notice of variation'.
48. In addition to requiring publication in a local newspaper, Regulation 25 requires a local authority to display in the parking place a copy of the 'notice of variation' and take all reasonable steps to ensure it continues to be displayed in a legible condition (from the date of giving notice until it comes into force); and, if appropriate additional copies are to be displayed within the parking place and in roads giving access to the parking place; and for on-street parking, the local authority may, if it thinks fit, display copies of the notice of variation in prominent positions in the road affected.
49. There is a duty to have full regard to the result of statutory consultation.

### **Summary of Human Resources Implications**

50. Staff resources will be required to implement the agreed changes following any decision. This will be delivered by the inhouse Parking Services Team.
51. In addition, resources will be required from the Transport Department in order to carry out the legal process of advertising the changes.

### **Summary of Sustainability Impact**

52. The harmonisation and changes to tariff structures will encourage more uptake of sustainable transport. In particular encouraging less short car trips, which in turn would have the benefit of improving personal health and wellbeing, reducing congestion at peak times and improving air quality.

### **Summary of Public Health Implications**

53. No Public Health implications to report.

### **Summary of Equality Implications**

54. The changes will likely have minor negative impacts on some persons with low income, women and the elderly (if they are less mobile), and potentially some local businesses, however, there are also positive benefits owing to the fact that the changes make using the service consistent across BCP and also simpler to use, specifically positively helping the race group due to language barriers impacting access to parking information.
55. Blue badge holders will not be impacted on-street due to the free parking their blue badge entitles them to; off-street all disabled tax-exempt vehicle (DTEV) permit holders (£25 annual fee) are able to park unrestricted in all BCP surface car parks and this is not changing with this proposal.

56. If the income is not generated then accessibility of the parking service would be impacted negatively as the level of service would decline leading to failing equipment and increased congestion through lack of enforcement. Further to the impact on the service, wider Transportation linked Council Services would be underfunded and that would result in negative impacts on persons in the protected characteristic groups.

57. The impacts are lessened through the availability of discounted parking permits that are generally available for both residents and non-residents for vehicle users and good quality alternative travel choices for the majority of residents e.g., bus, bikeshare, rail.

### **Summary of Risk Assessment**

58. In order to implement any changes by 1 January 2024, we require a decision at 6 September 2023 Cabinet, this will provide the time to proceed with the advertising process and implement the changes.

59. A recommendation in this report is approval is given to delegate authority to implement the TRO changes after consultation to Director Commercial Operations negating the need to return to cabinet. This will shorten the implementation process to ensure approved changes are made in Q4.

60. If the tariff structures are not aligned future stages of parking harmonisation across all BCP Council areas will be difficult to deliver.

61. If the recommendation is not approved, there will be a financial implication for the 2023/2024 financial year as these proposals go towards supporting a £200,000 income target, there would also be further financial implications for future years.

### **Background Papers**

62. There are no background papers linked to this report.

### **Appendices**

Appendix A – Proposed Harmonisation Tariff Changes in Consultation

Appendix B – Parking Harmonisation Consultation Report