

Report to South Norfolk Alliance

Provision of Car Parking in South Norfolk

1. Background

- 1.1. The Council owns and operates 18 car parks across South Norfolk. In the market towns of Diss and Wymondham, charges are made for the 13 car parks- a total of 643 spaces. In the remaining towns- Loddon, Harleston and Long Stratton- there are 5 car parks with 340 spaces and no charges are made.
- 1.2. Car park charges are reviewed by the Council on an annual basis. The process is that once this Cabinet determines its strategy for car parking provision and charges, a consultation process is undertaken with stakeholders. Following any revision necessary following this consultation, parking orders are placed and then charges become effective..
- 1.3. Norfolk Constabulary will from April 2008 withdraw the current traffic warden service. This Council has yet to determine whether to take on such a role, engage with another partner or take no role at all.

2. Car Park Strategy

- 2.1. There are a number of key drivers for Car Park Strategy for South Norfolk. These emanate from the Council's corporate priorities:
 - Be business like and efficient providing the services people value the most
 - Get to grips with anti-social behaviour and environmental crime
 - Preserve the special character of our market towns and villages
 - Make South Norfolk a culturally and economically richer place to live and work
- 2.2. In terms of developing a strategy for car parking in South Norfolk, the following principles were agreed by Cabinet and are now presented for consideration by the Alliance:
 - a) The public should expect to receive an improved standard of service in terms of maintenance, security etc. There is a history of low levels of maintenance and this presents a poor image and a risk to the security & safety to our residents & users. Parking standards from the public have grown in recent years and we have not kept pace with these expectations.
 - b) The charging for car parks should be on a consistent basis across the district, recognising the need to encourage the use of our market towns rather than as previously to discourage the use of the motor

car. Encouraging the use of our market towns by motorists as well as pedestrians, cyclists and users of public transport, may encompass such methods as allowing a period of time for parking free of charge in short stay car parks.

- c) Charges should be set to encourage short stay use in the town centres, and long stay use in other areas. A free parking period followed by hourly increases for short stay, and a flat daily rate for long stay, would encourage appropriate use of our car parks. It would discourage use of 'park & ride' in our town centre car parks that should support our local traders & businesses.
- d) The cost of maintaining car parks should fall on the users rather than the general council tax payer. Car park charges are set arbitrarily at present with little relationship to the cost of running and maintaining the service. Therefore costs of providing and maintaining car parks falls on the general council tax payer of South Norfolk. There is no reason why the council tax payer in one part of the district such as Costessey should be funding car park provision elsewhere, especially if the Costessey resident has to pay when using car parks in say Norwich. There is no public appetite for significant increases in general council tax so we would have to fund current running costs and improved maintenance improvements through the raising of income from another source. The most logical of these is through car park charges being set to cover costs;
- e) If surplus income is generated a significant proportion should be given back to the area in which it is generated via the Neighbourhood Forums.

- 2.3. Cabinet has endorsed this set of principles, and agreed that this report is made to the South Norfolk Alliance so their views can be sought. Additional consultation with local representatives will also be taken. Following the agreement of the principles some detailed working on potential charging regimes will be undertaken to determine the best method of implementing the principles. Cabinet has agreed to delegate the establishment of detailed charges to be effective from April 2008 to the Head of Finance and Property Services in liaison with the Portfolio Holder for Commercial Services.

3. Issues for the Alliance

- 3.1 There are clearly a number of implications which would arise from this new approach to car parking in South Norfolk- from access to services, to environmental issues and transport. The members of the Alliance are invited to consider any implications which should be considered in developing the approved strategy into a detailed set of recommendations to be taken by to the Council's Cabinet in December 2007.

3.2 In particular, the Alliance is asked to endorse the principles set out above at para 2.2 and to advise of any unintended consequences such an approach could bring.