

TITLE	Woodley Car Parking Trial
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on 25 January 2018
WARD	None specific
DIRECTOR	Josie Wragg. Interim Director of Environment
LEAD MEMBER	Chris Bowring Executive Member for Highways and Transport

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Woodley Town Centre Management Initiative (WTCMI) proposed an alternative charging regime to the borough wide Evening and Sunday Charges regime proposed during the public consultation of 2016. At the time WTCMI expressed their concerns over the viability of Woodley town centre during the hours of operation for the proposed Evening and Sunday Charges regime. The trial was aimed to see if their alternative proposal met their wider objectives and was financially viable in comparison to the Evening and Sunday charging regime that was introduced elsewhere across the borough. The trial has been previously extended to allow longer periods for car parking data to be collected and analysed to inform a permanent decision relating to Woodley.

RECOMMENDATION

In place of the borough wide Evening and Sunday Charges regime operating elsewhere to make permanent the Woodley Car Parking Trial including the increase of the 1 hour parking charge increase in the Woodley car parks of Crockhamwell Road, Headley Road, Lytham Road East and Lytham Road West from 70p to 80p.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

Analysis of parking data has demonstrated the trial operating from September 2016 has met the wider objectives originally proposed by WTCMI and met financial requirements of the Evening and Sunday Charges regime operating elsewhere borough wide.

Background

On the 17th May 2016 Executive approved the introduction and implementation of the borough wide Evening and Sunday Charges regime. In line with the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) legal process, which established the ability for the council to implement charging in car parks and enforce the compliance with these charges, the council followed consultation on the proposed new charging regime. During the consultation, some groups expressed concern about the impact of these proposals on their communities. These concerns were addressed within the original report to the Executive and were fully considered at the time of the decision.

At the time one group being the WTCMI proposed an alternative to the Evening and Sunday Charges regime in Woodley, which was assessed and considered financially viable. The alternative proposal was to increase the 1 hour parking charge in the Woodley car parks of Crockhamwell Road, Headley Road, Lytham Road East and Lytham Road West from 70p to 80p in place of implementing Evening and Sunday Charges regime in these car parks.

Although other alternative parking and charging regimes were proposed elsewhere in 2016, these were assessed but not progressed further as they were not considered likely to meet the financial requirement of the Evening and Sunday Charges regime.

Whilst the WTCMI proposal had merit and wider benefits in Woodley, there was a risk that the proposal may not deliver its wider nor financial expectations. Due to this Executive approved a trial of the proposal on 28 July 2016 with a requirement to report the results back to the Executive in March 2017 in order to measure the income generated in comparison with that of the borough wide Evening and Sunday Charges regime. A report was presented to Executive on 23 February 2017 as required, however it stated the parking data time period was too short to allow an informed permanent decision, therefore the decision was made to extend the trial to September 2017. A further report to Executive dated 28 September 2017 again stated that the parking data and analysis was still inconclusive and requested a further extension to the trial, which was approved until the end January 2018, when it was anticipated the data would allow a permanent decision.

Issues for consideration

Woodley Car Parking trial has been operating since September 2016 and without a further Executive decision will expire at the end January 2018, when parking in Woodley would revert to the Sunday and Evening Charging regime that operates elsewhere across the borough.

Wider benefits from Woodley Car Parking trial

Having liaised with local Councillors and a representative for the WTCMI it is considered that the Woodley Car Parking trial is meeting the wider objectives proposed during the original consultation in 2016 with the following information having been recently submitted.

Woodley's night time economy is in a fledgling state with the mix including some established retail units moving towards food & drink oriented outlets. Such a fledgling

economy is welcome and needs to be nurtured at this early stage. WTCMI consider the Sunday and Evening charging regime if implemented would significantly restrain this opportunity for economic growth. Furthermore the potential extra income from this use would be limited in contrast to the many car parks on Wokingham Town where the night time economy is extensive and well established.

Woodley's existing retailers including independents and national chains, who are also key members of the WTCMI, are enthusiastic supporters of the Woodley Car Parking trial even though the effect of Evening and Sunday Charges regime would have limited effect on their operations. They, and others on the WTCMI including the Town Council and residents, realised that Woodley Town is a complete package and implementing Evening and Sunday Charges regime in place would reduce the attractiveness of Woodley Town Centre overall. They stated the extra 10p charge was a small amount when put into context of a total spend of a visitor or shopper, that it would have minimal impact. Anecdotal evidence suggests that they were correct with sales and town centre visitors holding up well over the trial period since August 2016.

One of the key objectives of WTCMI is to create an appropriate environment to enable the town centre to thrive not just from an economic perspective, but also from making it a hub of social activities. This is achieved through the creation of a number of events during the year. These range from regular markets, car boot sales and big events like the "Winter Extravaganza". It is these events that build on and enhance the community spirit and makes it a "go to" location for both local residents and visitors from afar. Many of these are held on a Sunday and some are overnight. Imposing the Evening and Sunday Charges regime would severely impact the attractiveness and success of these events, and would discourage residents and visitors from attending.

These points are significant in their own right, however when considered cumulatively their impact would be far greater. Anything that discourages individuals to come to Woodley Town Centre has a serious knock on effect of the attractiveness of the centre with the potential to reduce the economic viability of Woodley Town Centre.

Financial analysis

Making a direct parking data comparison of the 10p increase in Woodley against the Evening and Sunday Charges regime operating elsewhere has proved problematic for reasons including the inability to breakdown individual tariff on some machines, difficulties to separate the evening and weekend tariffs from daytime daily tariffs, occasional car park traveller encampments over the trial period and the temporary distortion of data from the ongoing town centre regeneration works.

Due to these complexities parking income has been assessed on a broader base for the car parks in Woodley subject to the car parking trial, against the other car parks operating elsewhere across the borough with the figures for a year before the trial plotted against a year during the trial for both scenarios. The results are summarised in the table below.

Woodley	From	To	Income	Difference
Pre Car Parking trial	Sept 15	Aug 16	£571,580	
During Car Parking trial	Sept 16	Sept 17	£662,221	
				+£90,641
				+15.9%
Borough Wide (excluding Woodley)	From	To	Income	Difference
Pre Sunday and Evening regime	Sept 15	Aug 16	£882,945	
During Sunday and Evening regime	Sept 16	Sept 17	£982,846	
				+£99,901
				+11.3%

The data and analysis available for comparison demonstrates that the borough wide Evening and Sunday Charges regime, along with other factors and general growth has returned an increase of 11.3%, while an increase of 15.9% has been achieved the Woodley Car trial over the same period. This additional return of 4.6% provides adequate assurance to state that the Woodley Car Parking trial has met its financial objectives.

Summary

Analysis of parking data available has demonstrated the trial operating from September 2016 has met the wider objectives originally proposed by WTCMI and met financial requirements of the Evening and Sunday Charges regime operating elsewhere borough wide.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year from 1 st September 2016 to 31 st March 2017	£0k	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)- is trial period is extended into 2017/18	£0k	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)- if trial period extended and continued into 2018/19	£0k	Yes	Revenue

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

If the trial is not extended nor made permanent then the Evening and Sunday Charges regime would be brought into operation in Woodley from the 1st January 2018, which operates elsewhere across the borough. However it has been demonstrated that the Woodley Car Parking trial would not reduce the level of income to the council, therefore there are no financial implications associated with this decision.

Cross-Council Implications

None

List of Background Papers

31 March 2016 Executive Report - Introduction of Sunday and Evening Charging
28 July 2016 Executive Report – Woodley Car Parking Trial Proposal
23 February 2017 Executive Report – Woodley Car Parking Trial Extension
28 September 2017 Executive Report- Woodley Car Parking Trial Extension

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Date 1 December 2017	Version No. 3

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