

Cabinet report



Report of head of economy, leisure and property

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Car park order 2011, consideration of objections and representations

Recommendations

1. That cabinet considers the objections and representations received on the council's proposed car park order 2011.
2. That cabinet makes no changes to the draft order.
3. That cabinet authorises the head of legal and democratic services to make the car park order 2011 and determine the date it comes into effect.

Purpose of report

1. This report invites cabinet to consider the objections and representations received on the Vale Council's proposed car park order 2011 so that it can decide whether to make any changes to the draft order and to authorise the making of the order.

Strategic objectives

2. The provision and pricing of car parking impacts on two of the Vale Council's strategic objectives: supporting a vibrant local economy and managing our business effectively. Introducing free parking may help sustain vibrant market towns, which is a corporate objective.

Background

3. In July 2011, cabinet agreed to introduce a two hour free parking period and to advertise a new draft car park order setting out the proposed changes at the Vale Council's car parks.
4. Cabinet also agreed to authorise the head of legal and democratic services to prepare and publish a draft order under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and carry out the necessary consultations in accordance with the requirements of the Act and the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996 and to report back to cabinet on the responses received after the end of the consultation period.
5. The main changes at the Vale Council's car parks are to:
 - have a period of up to two hours free parking, which will require users to display a ticket
 - increase the other daily fees by 30p and permits by six per cent.
6. The new 2011 order does not include the Vale Council's car parks at Rye Farm and Hales Meadow, as they fall outside of the district boundary and require a separate agreement with South Oxfordshire District Council and a separate order. Please see 'other implications' in paragraph 20 below.

Consultation September to October 2011

7. Officers carried out a statutory consultation exercise on the proposed car park order. The consultation process included advertising the proposals in a local newspaper (The Oxford Times), at each car park in the district, on the Vale Council's website, consulting a number of statutory organisations and notifying the parish and town councils that the consultation was taking place.
8. Besides the formal response from Oxfordshire County Council, which had no objections to the proposal, 17 responses were received in support of the proposals and 12 responses were received opposing the proposals. The responses are set out in appendices 1 and 2 attached to this report and include officers' comments where appropriate. The objections and replies are summarised below.

The high cost of the scheme

9. Six respondents oppose the proposals due to the high cost of the scheme and three expressed concerns that the Vale Council was going against the financial officer's recommendations. The Vale Council considers the offer of free short stay parking will boost the vitality of its market towns. We will carry out surveys that will provide a good evidence base to assess the impact of the new parking scheme on the vitality of the Vale's town centres. Whilst the Vale Council's financial officer recommended against the free parking on purely financial grounds, councillors exercised their political choice to prioritise economic development and other non-financial factors above car parking income generation.

Other objections

10. One respondent is against the proposals as they consider that it will become more difficult to get a parking space, that the benefits are not assured, that it affects the

air quality and that there is no coherent strategy. One respondent questions whether the proposals will increase the number of people shopping in the towns and believes that shop keepers over estimate the importance of the car in terms of a means of getting customers into shops.

11. In reply to this, officers refer to the Vale Council's scrutiny committee meeting on 22 September 2011. The scrutiny committee considered proposals by officers on how to monitor the impact of the free two hours. Appendix 1 of the scrutiny report lists the surveys that were agreed to be carried out, which include car park usage, air quality and the economic benefits to the towns. The surveys will be used to identify the impact of free parking on the towns. Officers have agreed to report back at a later date with the results of the surveys, which will aim to show the impact of the free parking on the towns.
12. One respondent believes that parking should be free all day. Officers consider that this is not financially viable without either an increase in the council tax or the reduction of other services.
13. Two respondents thought that it was an inconvenience to have to display a ticket for the free period. Officers consider that obtaining a ticket for the free period is the most cost effective way of ensuring that the free parking offer is not abused.
14. One respondent is concerned about the effect on on-street and residents parking and the lack of enforcement of residents' parking spaces. As part of the monitoring of the impact of the free parking, officers will work with Abingdon Town Council to measure how the free parking impacts on the on-street parking, as measured by the income taken, and work with the town council to consider any changes required to the monitoring of the on-street parking.
15. One respondent is against the proposals as they believe that more effort should be made to encourage alternatives modes of transport, such as walking, cycling or using the bus. Officers consider that for many people living in rural locations in the district, taking the bus or cycling or walking is not always feasible and using the car is the only real means of transport.

Financial Implications

16. The report to cabinet on 8 July 2011 considered the financial implications of offering the free two hours parking, which will cause a significant loss of income, estimated at £250,000 a year. As cabinet has agreed to increase some other charges, the loss of income reduces to an estimated £192,500 per year. However, the increases in the other charges will not include Rye Farm and Hales Meadow car parks, which will mean an increase in the loss of income of an estimated further £7,500, increasing the overall loss to an estimated £200,000.

Legal Implications

17. At its meeting on 8 July 2011, cabinet considered how the new draft order would accord with the purposes and other matters set out in Section 122(g) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984

18. Cabinet is required to consider the objections and representations upon the order and decide whether it wishes to modify the order in response to them or authorise the making of the order as advertised.

Risks

19. Officers have benefited from the counsel opinion obtained by South Oxfordshire District Council in the recent making of its car park order. Officers have followed a very similar procedure and the order, notices and reports have been written along similar lines to those produced by South. We are now in a position to make the order and to implement the changes for all Vale Council car parks, apart from Rye Farm and Hales Meadow as explained below.

Other implications

20. The two car parks at Rye Farm and Hales Meadow are owned by the Vale Council but located in the district of South Oxfordshire. These two car parks will need to be operated under a separate car parking order to the rest of the Vale car parks. However, we will be able to introduce the free two hours in Rye Farm and Hales Meadow car parks in line with cabinet's proposals at the same time as the other Vale car parks. This change can be effected by the display of notices in the car parks and in the local newspaper. However, until such time as a new order can be made and confirmed, users of those car parks will not have to display a ticket when parking for free and we will not be able to introduce the proposed increase in fees or permits or extend the charging period until then.

21. Therefore, officers will prepare reports for South and Vale councils to authorise an updated agency agreement and for the Vale Council to operate these car parks in accordance with a separate order, which it is intended would bring these two car parks fully in line with all the other Vale car parks by 1 June 2012.

Conclusion

22. Cabinet is asked to consider the objections and representations received on the Vale Council's car park order 2011 and decide whether to change the order in the light of these objections and representations. Officers do not recommend any changes. In addition, cabinet is asked to authorise the head of legal and democratic services to make the order and to determine the date it comes into effect.

Background Papers

- none

Appendix 1 Objections received to the proposals during the consultation

Comment	Response
<p>1. Dear Sirs,</p> <p>With reference to the article in the Abingdon Herald about the views being sought on the proposed "free parking" scheme, I wish to repeat what has already been spoken about in detail at the Scrutiny Meeting on this subject. Surely this speaks for itself!</p> <p>The Vale's scrutiny committee carried out an in-depth review of the council's plans to introduce free parking.</p> <p>Given the high cost of the scheme (£250,000 each year), the committee suggested that detailed monitoring of the impact of the scheme on town centre vitality should be carried out and that it be modified in the light of experience.</p> <p>Given that the council's chief financial officer strongly recommended that the scheme should not proceed, as he was concerned that it could not be afforded, the committee asked a series of probing questions about how it would be paid for.</p> <p>In the first year, much of the cost will be paid by using the New Homes Bonus - money recently awarded by Government to reward the council for building homes, which it was presumed would be used to fund infrastructure improvements in the towns and villages in which the houses had been built.</p> <p>The committee also learnt of a series of changes to car park charges throughout the Vale. Drivers will now pay to park from 8am - 6pm (instead of 8am - 4pm), so two hours' free parking at the end of the day will be lost to help pay for the two hours free parking.</p> <p>The cost of annual permits will increase, eg by up to £16 for residents in Abingdon and up to £44 for commuters to Abingdon. The cost of parking will increase eg two and half hours will increase from £1.20 - £1.50 in all Abingdon car parks.</p> <p>Council papers also show that it is planned to introduce charging on Sundays in all Abingdon car parks for stays longer than two hours, though somewhat surprisingly Wantage and Faringdon are spared this.</p> <p>How the scheme will be paid for in future years?</p> <p>In summary, it seems that nothing is "free" at all!</p>	<p>You refer to the scrutiny committee meeting of 4 August 2011, which considered the call-in of the cabinet's decision to introduce two hours free parking taken on 8 July 2011. Please note that on 22 September 2011 the scrutiny committee considered a further report from officers about proposals to monitor the impact of the free two hours car parking scheme. Officers agreed to carry out both car park usage surveys and surveys measuring how many people come into the towns. This will be done before the introduction of the free two hours and again after six to 12 months to measure the impact. This report can be viewed on the council's website, see:</p> <p>http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/local-democracy/councillors-and-committees</p> <p>The new order proposes to extend the charging period to 6pm but allow for two hours free parking. This means that in essence, nothing changes as you will still be able to park for free after 4pm but you will have to display a free ticket obtained from the machine.</p> <p>Yes, the proposal is to increase the other fees by 30p and the permits by six per cent. This will help reduce the loss of income from the proposed introduction of the free two hours.</p> <p>No, there was an error in the council report, and I confirm that it is not proposed to introduce charging on Sundays in all Abingdon car parks. The draft schedule to the car park order shows that only Abbey Meadows car park will charge on Sunday, as this is the current arrangement, so no changes are proposed from what already exists.</p> <p>In response to your question about how the scheme will be funded in future years, like all council service costs and income, any estimated changes in car park income will be factored into the council's annual budget-setting and medium term financial planning process. Councillors will determine which council services can be afforded within its finite resources.</p>

<p>2. Dear Mr Backley Blewbury Parish Council opposes the free parking on the following grounds: Firstly, parking after 4pm and on Sunday was free anyway. The period in which the parking regulations operate has been extended to 6pm and takes in the whole of Sunday. In other words, you may get two hours free but the Council have taken time away a substantial chunk of the time when it was free anyway. Also, these changes are going to cost the Vale in the region £250,000 which will have to be paid for either by cutting some other service or by the council tax payer. Given that there are somewhere between 115,000 and 120,000 residents registered to vote in the Vale, that works out at over £2.00 per head of the electorate or a little over 3 hours parking per annum if they wanted to use a Vale car park. Most people in Blewbury will use Didcot rather than Abingdon or Wantage anyway so we will end up helping to fund free parking for other people to use Vale car parks. We strongly oppose this. Yours sincerely</p>	<p>The new order proposes to extend the charging period to 6pm but allow for two hours free parking. This means that, in essence, nothing changes as you will still be able to park for free after 4pm, but you will have to display a free ticket obtained from the machine.</p> <p>Regarding your concerns about the cost of the scheme, officers consider that for the next couple of years, this can be funded from the new homes bonus as detailed in the report to cabinet on 8 July 2011. In terms of long term funding, like all Vale Council service costs and income, any estimated changes in car park income will be factored into the Vale Council's annual budget-setting and medium term financial planning process. Councillors will determine which Vale Council services can be afforded within its finite resources.</p>
<p>3. What puts me off using Council carparks is the hassle of having to key in my car registration. Why shouldn't another person, who wants to park briefly, use the unexpired portion on my ticket if I want to hand it over? The total time parked is the same.</p> <p>The last time I tried to use a Council car park, the machine wouldn't accept my coin, and I couldn't remember my reg.no, so I went back to the car and drove off to park elsewhere - I only wanted to buy one thing!</p> <p>If a ticket is needed for the free 2-hours, that still involves the hassle of going to the machine and taking the ticket back to the car!</p>	<p>The council considers that having to put in your registration is a small inconvenience that helps the council with the enforcement of the car park. It means that if someone forgets to display their ticket for whatever reason, or if the ticket falls off, if they subsequently produce the ticket with the correct vehicle registration, we can consider cancelling the excess charge and save that person a fine of up to £80.</p> <p>Officers consider that having to obtain a free ticket for the free parking is the most cost effective way of managing the car park. Experience from neighbouring authorities is that if you do not have to display a ticket for the free period, then this leads to widespread abuse and a loss of income.</p>
<p>4. Whilst it would have been useful for Abingdon to have 2 hours free parking for the last 10 years, there is no justification for spending district council money on subsidising car parking in the current economic climate. I am concerned that the Council is going against the advice of its officers who feel that this initiative is unaffordable. The Council should not be taking money from other higher priority spending areas - such as housing - to subsidise car parking. This is taking from the poor to give to the rich.</p> <p>If the Council wishes to pursue this policy, then the retailers in the town should be asked to fund it, since they will (allegedly) be the main beneficiaries. The Chamber of Commerce could be asked to run a scheme for 2 hours car parking to be refunded against shopping expenditure using a token system. This system of refunding car parking charges is already successfully used in the doctor's surgery, so why not in our shops?</p>	<p>The council considers that having free short stay parking will boost our local market towns. This will help to make our towns a more attractive place to visit for shoppers, tourists and businesses.</p> <p>The council considers that in the current economic climate the retailers are not in a financial position to be able to pay for the proposed scheme.</p>
<p>5. I have in the past been bemused as to why places like Didcot could offer free parking when Abingdon could not</p>	<p>The council proposes to fund the cost of the free two hours parking by using money that the council</p>

<p>and this has at times swayed my shopping decisions. However, I am very concerned by press coverage stating that your financial officers have advised against moves to axe parking fees in Abingdon completely Local government funds are totally overstretched at the moment & if these cuts mean a choice between parking and social service provision or road maintenance, the choice is clear. I suspect that the move to continue with these cuts is pure political expediency.</p>	<p>receives from central government for building new homes (new homes bonus). So, at the moment there is no requirement to cut any other services to pay for the parking. Please note that Vale of White Horse District Council is not responsible for social services or road maintenance as these are Oxfordshire County Council functions.</p>
<p>6. We do not agree with your policy. Parking in centre of Faringdon should be FREE throughout the whole day for at least 4 hours. You cannot visit the dentist, lawyer, accountant and other businesses without having to run out to move the car in 2 hours or you can only go to the accountant, and NOT do any shopping in town. quite stupid.</p> <p>and why do we all have to pay Council tax for the guy who spends his time wandering around to check tickets. SAVE some money... Do not send a man from Wantage - which you presently do -- you have probably not costed the cost of car hire, car fuel, milage done from Faringdon to Wantage and return.</p> <p>Instead - get a man from Faringdon who can walk to work, or Ride a Bike. and while there he can service the dreadful toilets. SAVE money and it will be £3000 - £5000.</p> <p>Better still, get rid of your very difficult car parking ticket machines. You councillors, with your GIVEN tickets etc and with no cost to you don't understand the inconvenience you create to others., These machines cost money to purchase and more money to install and then service them.</p> <p>Have you tried remembering the number plate of the car... and you might not be driving same car each time... and then needing to find some spectacles from the bottom of your handbag to read the numbers and letters to press on this machine, and find these numbers as they are often difficult to find.... and then return across the car park to unlock your car again and put the ticket inside.</p> <p>And then you have to employ another person to sweep up the tickets that we all COULD throw down in disgust - just so that the Council can add up number of cars in the carpark!!</p> <p>Let us ALL be sensible... Take a leaf out of Witney and start making it a thriving centre and SAVE money</p> <p>Didn't you know that some of your Faringdon Councillors and others do not park or shop in Faringdon because of this dreadful system you have. Many will drive to Witney, Standford in the Vale, Highworth or Lechlade to shop for the small items where they can park outside the shops, INSTEAD of experiencing the HASSEL you are</p>	<p>The council considers that to a point the users of the car park should fund the cost of running them. If the car parks were free all day, 100 per cent of the cost would fall on the council tax payer, which is considered unfair. The council did consider different lengths of free parking and considered that offering two hours was a happy medium, as one hour is too short and three or four hours would put an unsustainable financial burden on the council.</p> <p>The monitoring of the car parks is done from a central location In Abingdon. Although modern technology allows for some information to be passed electronically, the processing of the excess charges still requires information to be downloaded onto computers in Abingdon. Also, from experience we know that using a local resource can mean that the person may patrol impartially and can become complacent, which leads to less efficient issuing of fines. As an aside, the council does employ a local person via its contractors to clean the toilets in Faringdon.</p> <p>The council considers that having to put in your registration is a small inconvenience that helps the council with the enforcement of the car park. It means that if someone forgets to display their ticket for whatever reason, or if the ticket falls off, if they subsequently produce the ticket with the correct vehicle registration, we can consider cancelling the excess charge and save that person a fine of up to £80.</p>

<p>creating.</p> <p>Start thinking of the people who live there instead of the large quantity of paper you think you need and the people you think you must employ to add up the sums.</p>	
<p>7. Dear Sir / Ms,</p> <p>I have read in the in the Oxford Times, with some surprise, the proposals to make parking free for two hours in Abingdon car parks.</p> <p>I would like to raise to the attention of the consultation on this policy, which I understand will be carried out on this decision the following matters.</p> <p>On a personal basis: As a resident, with a car parking permit, the value after this will be reduced because if the aim of the scheme succeeds at the cost of £1/4 Millions in lost revenue then obtaining a space is likely to be less easy. Market days and times of events affect the ability to obtain a space and this is likely to be made worse by the proposals if they work.</p> <p>http://www.oxfordtimes.co.uk/news/yourtown/abingdon/9135434.Free_parking_in_Abingdon_and_Wantage_approved/</p> <p>The benefits are not assured: Retailers often believe that people who arrive by car are likely to spend more in a town, this is not the case as research has shown that people who arrive by public transport spend more time and money on a shopping excursion than people in cars who have invested less effort in arriving they are therefore more likely to depart sooner.</p> <p>Supermarket in town: Additionally, the proposals referred to in the discourse below the main article, cited above, refer to other changes in Abingdon, which are likely to have an effect on the vitality of the centre in all likelihood to their detriment. I would suggest that a coherent strategy for the economic and aesthetic renewal of Abingdon would be a more constructive approach than encouraging people to arrive by car and affecting the already poor air quality at times.</p> <p>Strategy: Abingdon needs a spruce of the urban realm with less generic shopping to attract people by sustainable modes this can only be achieved through active involvement with businesses and not car parking fee gimmicks.</p> <p>A lot would seem to be possible to learn from the environment provided in Wallingford, which has a sense of place, attractive and far fewer charity shops / pound shops and no shut down shops.</p> <p>Abingdon should be a premier market town and would more gladly be inconvenienced by visitor parking if more</p>	<p>The council has agreed to monitor the impact of the free parking and this includes the usage of the car parks. The council can use the pricing policy to try and affect where people park for short or long periods and we will use this if our monitoring of car parks shows that car parks are becoming full and shoppers cannot find spaces.</p> <p>The monitoring will also measure the impact on businesses and measure how many people come into the town centres.</p> <p>In a rural location like the Vale of White Horse, it is not always practical to use public transport and not everyone lives within cycling or walking distance of the town centres. A lot of people rely on the motor car as their main mode of transport.</p> <p>The council considers that offering free parking for towns is just a part of building a strong local economy through the delivery of the council's market town strategy and associated annual market town action plans. The council is also looking at additional measures to improve the viability and attractiveness of the Vale's market towns, such as the introduction of free public Wi-Fi hotspots.</p>

<p>constructive proposals were on the table than a supermarket in town and an unenforceable parking regime of two hours free.</p>	
<p>8. Brief observations:</p> <p>Why do you have to display a ticket if it is free. This takes away much of the convenience of attracting shopper to go into town for a short stay if they have to spend time messing about with tickets. Are the wardens not there to monitor parking or are they to be made redundant?</p> <p>If it is free to park from 16.00 now, why is there a need to display a ticket (see above) if it will also be free from 14.00 to 16.00 when the existing free period starts?</p> <p>It seems as if the idea of free parking isn't such a simple or convenient idea after all.</p>	<p>Officers consider that having to obtain a free ticket for the free parking is the most cost effective way of managing the car park. Experience from neighbouring authorities is that if you do not have to display a ticket for the free period, then this leads to widespread abuse and a loss of income.</p> <p>It is proposed to extend the charging period to 6pm so that, in essence, with the free two hours, you can park for free from 4pm, which is the same as the current arrangement. However, you will have to display a free ticket.</p>
<p>9. Dear Madam/Sir,</p> <p>Anything for free is welcome. But is it financially viable?</p> <p>The funding has to come from somewhere. Is it cuts in other areas? Or putting up prices with permits and longer parking? Becoming too expensive will put people off using the facilities, resulting in less income for the council.</p> <p>Suggestions:</p> <p>-- 20 pence for the two hours would give income and is not off-putting. This might ease putting other prices up.</p> <p>-- to display a ticket is such a hassle for having to walk back to the car. More so when the weather is poor or due to any bodily impairments. Recently I have used the P&R in Redbridge. One has to enter the car registration into the machine, pay and that is it. No display required. So practical. Would a similar scheme be possible?</p> <p>Yours sincerely,</p>	<p>Regarding your concerns about the cost of the scheme, no, there are no specific plans to cut other services to fund the free parking. Officers consider that for the next couple of years, this can be funded from the central government grant for building new homes (the new homes bonus as detailed in the report to cabinet on 8 July 2011). It is proposed, however, to increase all other fees by 30p and increase the cost of permits by six per cent.</p> <p>Officers consider that having to obtain a free ticket for the free parking is the most cost effective way of managing the car park. Experience from neighbouring authorities is that if you do not have to display a ticket for the free period, then this leads to widespread abuse and a loss of income.</p> <p>I will investigate the new scheme at Redbridge P+R to see if it is something that can be considered for the council car parks.</p>
<p>10. Dear Vale of White Horse District Council,</p> <p>It is very difficult to respond to this consultation since the proposed Car Park Order is not written in Plain English, and so is not at all transparent. The Plain English summary of the changes on your website is very brief.</p> <p>My interest in this is that I currently hold a Resident's Permit for Abingdon Town Centre, which is issued by Oxford County Council and administered by Abingdon Town Council. I pay £100 a year for this Permit. I live in Thames St which has on-street residents' parking spaces, and also some pay parking spaces which I think are held</p>	<p>The car park order is written in a way so that the council can use it to enforce the car park if it is necessary to consider the representations in a court of law. The plain English summary was brief on the website in order to get the main points quickly and easily across to the public.</p> <p>We consider that the two hours free parking will encourage more people into the council's car parks. This would free up some of the on-street parking and hopefully reduce the numbers of people that are</p>

by Oxfordshire County Council.

I am concerned about the effect of the proposed changes to arrangements for Vale off-street car parks in Abingdon on non-Vale parking, including on-street and residents' parking. I would like reassurance that any such effects have been considered, and that the Vale has worked with the other local councils (i.e. Oxfordshire County Council and Abingdon Town Council) with an interest in Abingdon car parks in development of your proposals. Residents don't care who owns which car park, the rules for each should be clear and consistent. Your consultation web page etc doesn't even make it clear which car parks these proposals apply to. Many will assume this is all car parks & on street parking in the Vale.

The residents' spaces in Thames St, Abingdon are already under pressure, and it is often impossible to park in one of these spaces, despite having paid for the privilege. This means I often have to park elsewhere, for example in the Rye Farm car park. Since this is not on your schedule I assume it is also owned by OCC.

I understand the free parking for 2 hours was an election pledge by the Conservatives presumably intended at revitalising town centres with more shoppers. But this encouragement of cars into Abingdon Town Centre will make current problems with traffic and car parking for residents more difficult. The multiple owners and administrators of Abingdon's car parks make the situation complicated, and I do not want visitors to have the impression that they can park anywhere free for 2 hours. They should never park in a resident's space (we already have issues with people doing this in Thames St). Resident's parking permit charges, and longer term parking (of the type most likely used by those who work in Abingdon town centre) should not be increased to subsidise these temporary visitors. It is local residents and employees who most contribute to our town's economy, and we should have precedence for car parking.

Any changes to car parking arrangements will need to be accompanied by more stringent enforcement of the rules, and I hope this will include enforcement of those without residents' permits in resident's spaces. I would also like to make you aware, if you weren't already, that the weekly 'Sunday' and 'Friday' jazz evenings at the Broad Face on Thames St in Abingdon are causing twice weekly parking violations with 3 -4 cars each evening parked on the double yellow lines, and in fact halfway onto the pavement. This is not only illegal, and inconvenient for pedestrians, but makes it difficult to use the resident's spaces on the opposite side of the road, and also makes the street look very untidy / unattractive. With this allowed to go on I'm not confident that your revised arrangements will be enforced. I'm glad that the pub is busy at these times, but Rye Farm car park is just a few hundred yards over the bridge, and is free in the evenings. Parking on double yellow lines is unacceptable and the law should be enforced.

I'm copying this to my Town, Vale and County councillors,

abusing the residents parking. As part of the monitoring of the impact of the free parking, we will be working with Abingdon Town Council to monitor the effect on income from on-street parking.

We will make it clear from signs that we plan to put up in the council's car parks, which car parks the free two hours applies to. We have talked to the Abingdon Town Council about the proposals and also as part of the formal consultation process, we have obtained the formal consent from the county council. To confirm, the free two hours parking only refers to the Vale Council's off-street pay and display car parks.

The Rye Farm and Hales Meadow car parks are owned and enforced by the Vale of White Horse District Council but the consultation didn't include these two car parks as they are actually in the district of South Oxfordshire. Rye Farm and Hales Meadow car parks will form part of a separate agreement, although we hope to include two hours free parking there also.

The council is working on a publicity and promotional campaign to get the message across about parking in the Vale off-street car parks. The on-street and residents parking is enforced by the Abingdon Town Council on behalf of the county council and as part of the monitoring we will measure the impact of the free two hours, in partnership with the Abingdon Town Council.

I will pass your feedback about the parking on Thames Street to the Police who deal with infringements on double yellow lines.

<p>as the issues here affect all councils. I hope you can work together on car parking in the interests of everyone who parks in Abingdon, and not only people popping to the shops from outside town.</p>	
<p>11. Hi</p> <p>This email is in response to the council seeking comments on the 'Car parking off street parking order 2011' regulations. I understand the aim of this change is to encourage shoppers into Abingdon.</p> <p>My concern is that the success, or otherwise of this change will be measured by any changes in use of car parking, and also any changes in the level of traffic in Abingdon.</p> <p>I'd like to suggest that a reliable way to assess the impact is to do foot fall counts of shoppers before and after the change and also surveys to see how shoppers arrived in town.</p> <p>In this email is a link to a study which concludes that that shop keepers hugely overestimated the important of the car in terms of a means of getting customers to their shop. In the survey most shoppers arrived at the shops by waking, with 34% of people using the car.</p> <p>http://www.sustrans.org.uk/assets/files/liveable%20neighbourhoods/Shoppers%20info%20sheet%20-%20LN02.pdf</p> <p>I'd be very interested if any similar surveys have been carried out in Abingdon? Additionally before this regulation is introduced I trust the following items have been discussed and accommodated for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the provision of free parking actually increase the number of people shopping in the centre? • What assessment has been done to see if any increased traffic as a result of this change deters pedestrians / bus users and cyclists coming into the town? • If the majority of shoppers use other forms of transport to shop in Abingdon over cars would the opportunity cost in providing the free parking be put to better use elsewhere? <p>Thanks for listening to my concerns.</p>	<p>Yes, the council's scrutiny committee has considered proposals to monitor the impact of the free two hours car parking scheme.</p> <p>This report can be viewed on the council's website, see:</p> <p>http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/local-democracy/councillors-and-committees</p> <p>As well as carrying out surveys to look at any change in usage of the car parks, we will be monitoring the change in the number of people coming into the town centres (including footfall surveys) and the views of businesses about the impact on their trade.</p> <p>The survey that you provided the link to is interesting, although I note that they were both carried out in large cities and I question if the same would apply to rural market towns such as Wantage, Faringdon and Abingdon. Unfortunately no similar surveys have been carried out in Abingdon.</p> <p>The council is keen to find out the impact of the free two hours parking so that it can look at how this affects the vitality of the towns. The council considers that the provision of free parking will increase the number of people shopping in the town centre but will look to survey results to support this opinion.</p>
<p>12. Dear Sir or Madam</p> <p>I cannot find within the Reasons for these proposed changes the analysis of the context in which the access roads, parking, walking and cycling alternatives cycle and public transport services are set out? Without this information it is impossible to make an assessment of the effects of the free parking and small increase of</p>	<p>In a rural location like the Vale of White Horse, it is not always practical to use public transport and not everyone lives within cycling or walking distance of the town centres. A lot of people rely on the motor</p>

charging. having said that the making of free parking available is very likely to be a retrograde step at a time when all efforts should be made to increase the use of cycling and buses - as well as walking into the town. Increased pedestrian (and bicycle) movement on all roads coming into the town centre would be a good thing. As would much greater use of the subsidised town bus service. What is the Council's estimate of the effect on these environmentally preferable modes? What is the Council's estimate of the impact on the air quality?

If this proposal is calculated to also lose revenue for the Council and cause environmental harm I cannot see that the possible benefit to trade (which would be unsustainable if not built on sound environmental principles) can be supported.

Yours sincerely

car as their main mode of transport.

The council's scrutiny committee has considered proposals to monitor the impact of the free two hours car parking scheme, which includes measuring air quality. Officers will be reporting back to cabinet and scrutiny committee the results of the surveys showing the affects of the free parking on the towns.

This report can be viewed on the council's website, see:

<http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/local-democracy/councillors-and-committees>

Appendix 2 Replies received in support of the proposals

Comment	<u>Response</u>
<p>To whom it may concern</p> <p>I am responding to your article in the Wantage and Grove review Issue 401 3rd October 2011 – Possible free car parking for the area?</p> <p>As the owner of a Complementary health centre, 'The Wantage Clinic of Osteopathy' In Portway . And also someone who has shopped in the town for many years (My Mantra being ;if Wantage doesn't have it I can probably live without it). I feel your proposal to allow up to two hours free parking in the town is very forward thinking, and would greatly benefit the town on many levels.</p> <p>I have listen to patients conversations and concerns over the years, about where they will park for their appointment, how much will it cost, and, "sorry I'm late, I couldn't remember my car registration and had to go back to the car". Appointments after 4pm are often sought, so that people can relax and not worry about rushing around paying for parking.</p> <p>Our average appointment is around 40 minutes long, this means people pay for one hour, they then want to pop into the square to grab a paper, sandwich, supper, before going home or back to work they fret that twenty minutes won't be long enough and end up driving off, who knows were to instead.</p> <p>I am confident it would make a big difference to us and our customers and would ultimately result in our patients relaxing after their visit and using the shops in the town more.</p> <p>Wantage has come a long way since that awful article in the Daily Mail spring 2008 :<i>Credit crunch central</i> - about the boarded up shops in the town (I notice they haven't returned to report that Woolworths has been replaced by Cargo and that Costa has arrived in town (whether you like it or not) giving a bit of a buzz to the square. Or that we have a fantastic new Delicatessen in Newbury street, and a newly enlarged and refurbished Waitrose about to launch.</p> <p>It appears to me that Wantage is heading firmly in the right direction, and your proposal would be right on cue to help to ensure it continues to do so.</p> <p>I await news of your decision with hope and optimism.</p> <p>Yours Faithfully</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments and your general support of the proposals.</p>
<p>I think it is a good idea to have free 2 hour parking, displaying a ticket. I think it should last until 4pm and be ticket free after that time. I think this should apply in the market place in faringdon</p> <p>Yours sincerely</p> <p>We would like to support the car parking proposal - the 2 hours free parking especially Possibly this comes 20 odd years too late to help Faringdon - Witney has had free parking for many years and during this time many people from this area have visited Witney rather than Faringdon & other Vale towns and will probably continue to do so If adopted, the new proposals need to be widely advertised</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments and your general support of the proposals. Yes, the council will be promoting the changes widely in the press and across the towns.</p>
<p>Dear Officers & Members</p> <p>I am sure anything that helps local business attract more people shopping will be a help. The Vale must decide if it can afford that loss of income as the Govt have just said that the no increase in Council Tax will continue into succeeding years.</p> <p>As a North Hinksey resident the web information is a bit confusing. I checked with Cllr</p>	<p>Yes, there are no proposals to change any of the arrangements at the car parks in Botley/North Hinksey and no proposals to introduce car parking meters here.</p>

<p>Debby Hallett whether there was an intention to include the current at all times free parking at the Vale owned precinct car parks in Botley/North Hinksey. She informed me that this will continue and introducing parking meters is not on the agenda.</p> <p>If this is correct perhaps it would be better if the web information could say it was for the market towns etc? However, I guess that would raise the disgruntled voices to want the same in other places!</p> <p>Yours sincerely</p>	
<p>Dear Mr Backley</p> <p>I would welcome the proposed change in car parking charges in the Vale. I use the 2 hour 'free' parking at 4 o'clock but this would make the whole thing more flexible and encourage me to visit Wantage during the day instead of just the last hour when shops are shutting.</p> <p>Best wishes</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments and your general support of the proposals</p>
<p>Dear Sir</p> <p>The free window sounds an extremely positive idea. As a means of encouraging local business this is excellent, and we have often wondered why this was not done. Witney does!</p> <p>I do not think that penalising longer stays with more expensive charging is useful however. Why would you wish to encourage potential custom to leave after two hours? There are several excellent coffee houses/ restaurants in Faringdon which are wonderful in which to enjoy a sociable - and more leisurely- coffee/ lunch with a friend around a shopping trip. Two hours is just a little short of time for shopping - especially a browsing Christmas shop- and a light sociable lunch. Returning to the car to top up for an extra hour is a nuisance and I would suggest that many may choose to not bother, and leave town instead.</p> <p>I would like to see two things:</p> <p>(1) extension of the free period to three hours</p> <p>(2) keeping the current competitively low later rate</p> <p>Witney, already appealing as it offers much more extensive shopping than Faringdon, after all, will offer up to 5 hours free parking.</p> <p>Yours faithfully</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments and your general support of the proposals. The council considers that one hour is insufficient time to spend in the town centres and three hours would prove too costly. Two hours is a happy medium. The council considers that an increase of the other fees is reasonable to make up for some of the income by offering the free two hours.</p>
<p>Whilst your proposals to extend the active period of parking control and an increase in fees would be very unwelcome, the proposal to offer free parking for two hours may just help to save the death of town centre shops, especially in Wantage, Faringdon and Abingdon, where it is difficult to persuade people that it is cost effective to shop there.</p> <p>You state that your two hours proposal is generous in comparison to other councils. Maybe, but it does not equate with most out of town shopping parks and/or supermarkets, where, if there are restrictions, it is normally three hours free. You may need to consider extending your free period to give a level playing field.</p> <p>Regards</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments and your general support of the proposals.</p> <p>The two hours free parking is generous compared to others who offer town centre parking rather than out of town parking where large supermarkets or retail estates normally offer longer stays for free.</p>
<p>Dear Sir / Madam</p> <p>In favour of introducing a Free 2hr period of parking and increase of charges above this time limit.</p> <p>As a resident on the very extremity of Wantage, the necessity of car parking within the town centre and other towns within the council's remit is vital to my family. Although we</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments and your general support of the proposals.</p>

<p>are within walking distance (if time permits) the requirement to pop in to town to use the bank, post office and various shops requires us to park up for a short time, do our business and then nip home again. I and my husband both work from home some of the time and need to use the town centre facilities.</p> <p>I believe that introducing a free 2hr parking period will encourage us to pop in and use the local shops far more readily, rather than driving further to find an out of town store with free parking. Anything that encourages residents and visitors to park up, have a look around and therefore spend money in local businesses can only be good for the town as a whole and subsequently the council. If I know that I have only bought a ticket for 1 hr then I will be out immediately after doing the necessities, whereas if I know I have a free 2hrs I am far more inclined to have a browse and maybe buy or use services on impulse that I would not have envisaged previously.</p> <p>As a number of the local council run car parks are situated very near or even adjacent to store car parks I can't see that introducing this benefit will detract much from having those spaces empty in any case because drivers opt for the free car parks nearby if space is available.</p> <p>However, re the parking in the centre of Wantage Market Square, I do believe that this should remain limited to 30 minutes as the turnover allows for the urgent visits to bank and post office. I had heard rumours that this parking area might be disposed of completely and the traffic system altered into a pedestrian and one way system, with the loss of the parking. This would be disastrous for the town centre as it would drive all the 'service' businesses to move out of the centre to get nearer to their parking. As a rural community we must have accessible and free parking to save our towns.</p> <p>Many thanks for the opportunity to comment. Yours faithfully</p>	
<p>To whom it may concern</p> <p>I think the idea of two hours free parking is a great idea as this may encourage people to use the car parks rather than the roads and encourage people to shop in our local towns thus stimulating and encouraging more business to these area.</p> <p>Well thought of Mathew</p> <p>Regards</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments and your general support of the proposals.</p>
<p>I am generally in favour of the proposals; in particular the need to display a ticket for free parking, and the extension of free time to two hours. I note that the increased free time will be offset by increased costs for pay time. Is the overall outcome expected to be cost neutral? What I wouldn't want is for the proposal to cost us money.</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to comment.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments and your general support of the proposals.</p> <p>No, this is not cost neutral and there is an overall cost to the council estimated at £200,000. The council aims to pay for this from central government grants for building new homes (the new homes bonus). The council is not planning to pass on any additional costs of the free parking to the general tax payer.</p>
<p>Dear Sir</p> <p>I think this is an excellent idea and would maybe attract more people into Abingdon</p> <p>Certainly I think carefully about whether or not to go into Abingdon at the moment as I have to pay parking</p> <p>Best wishes</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments and your general support of the proposals.</p>
<p>Dear Sir The Appleton with Eaton PC is in favour of your proposal to provide free car parking in</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments and your general support of the</p>

<p>the centre of Abingdon, for the first 2 hours. This would encourage shoppers to use Abingdon town centre rather than go somewhere else. Yours faithfully</p>	<p>proposals.</p>
<p>The view from Charney Bassett PC is that 2 hour free car parking in the Vale is most welcome. We are not sure how much this will accomplish, given that motorists can park at Sainsbury's and Waitrose for 2 hours for nothing. You need to offer something that they don't! Also, West Oxfordshire DC have free car parks, with different parts of the same car park allowing different durations. This may be what you need.</p> <p>Regards,</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments and your general support of the proposals.</p>
<p>I would just like to register my support for this proposal.</p> <p>I would like to see some clarity on how the success of the change will be measured eg increase in footfall.</p> <p>Kind regards</p> <p>Cllr Iain Littlejohn</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments and your general support of the proposals.</p>
<p>Dear Sir</p> <p>I very much welcome the changes to the car parking charges, in particular the first two hours free. This has been LONG OVEDUE as businesses struggle through these difficult times.</p> <p>On one hand the VOWH seems to want to encourage visitors to the town and yet I personally feel penalised for supporting shops and trades each time I have to pay.</p> <p>Just for once the VOWH might actually be in the 'real world', having listened to tax payers and actually done something positive for the town.</p> <p>If so, it will be a first.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments and your general support of the proposals.</p>
<p>FAO John Backley</p> <p>Response to VWHDC car parking consultation;</p> <p>Dear Mr Backley,</p> <p>Please note that Sparsholt Parish Council supports the proposals set out in the consultation, and views the 2-hour free parking period as a very positive step.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments and your general support of the proposals.</p>
<p>I am rather confused by some of the statements in the proposal</p> <p>At present the free parking is after 16:00. No staff to issue tickets/clamp. There are no tickets printed (registration number not recorded in machines).</p> <p>So I can park in the evening and spend time at a Restaurant or the few shops that are open.....</p> <p>Exactly which two hours will be free?...</p> <p>I would prefer working together with the shops in Abingdon to arrange late night shopping and have those two hours as truly 'Free.... It could be offered 1-3 times a week (Monday Wednesday and Friday).</p> <p>The proposal is for everyone to record their registration number and display a ticket. park during that period, and no returns thereafter....so extra admin required to fill the machines/empty the cash.</p>	<p>Yes, two hours will be offered free at any time during the charging period (ie from 8am to 6pm) at other times - for example, the car parks are free in the evening.</p> <p>There are no proposals within this consultation for everyone to have to input their car registration. This only applies to certain car parks. What will be required is for everyone parking for the free two hours, is to obtain a free ticket from the machines and display it.</p>

<p>Will the signage be improved, at the moment it is a mess with red stickers which display Free parking after 4:00pm....</p>	
<p>It seems like a reasonable set of proposals.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Abingdon town centre is dying on its feet, it looks shabby and there are lots of empty units. 2) You need to attract more people to come and do their shopping there. Particularly from the prosperous outlying villages. 3) You need to attract more businesses to fill the empty units, preferably high quality ones. 2/3a) People who are forced to use their car due to poor public transport and distance will vote with their wallets. 4) Would the revenue lost by making parking free at all times (maybe limited to 2 or 3 hours at a time) be replaced by extra council tax raised from more businesses? Not if the council tax is set so high as to scare them off. 5) Look at how successful Witney is with totally free parking in the town centre and very few empty units. 6) It's more than just parking, there has been poor planning as well. All the major shops (Tesco, Waitrose {to some extent} , the Fairacres group) are on the periphery and have free parking. There is little incentive for me to go to the centre if I have to pay and there are few quality shops when I get there. A lot of money was wasted on converting Stratton Way from one-way to two-way to no great improvement on the traffic flow that I can see, but it diverts people away from the shops - a lose - lose idea (lose money, lose custom). 7) Convert the commercial parking areas behind the pedestrian area (Bury Street) into a 1 hour only and/or disabled parking except for commercial permit holders. Maybe encourage commercial vehicles not in constant use to park for free on the top floor(s) of the multi-story car park instead. <p>Regards,</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments and your general support of the proposals.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1), 2) and 3) yes, the free parking is part of an overall vision to build a stronger local economy. 4) The council is not planning to pass on any additional costs of the free parking to the general tax payer. 5) We will be monitoring the effect of the free parking to see the impact on the businesses in the town. 6) The free parking aims to get more people to come into the centre of the towns 7) The council is looking at the development of the Charter area including the multi-storey car park and the commercial parking areas.