



Kirklees
METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

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Ad Hoc Scrutiny Review into the

Rationale Behind Car Parking Charges in Kirklees

December 2002

Kirklees Metropolitan Council

Date: 10th December 2002
Panel: Cllr Paul Kane (Chair)
Cllr Andrew Palfreeman
Cllr Robert Iredale

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Ad Hoc Scrutiny Review into the Rationale Behind Car Parking Charges in Kirklees

1. Context and Purpose of the Review

1.1 The Dewsbury Area Committee first raised concerns about **the rationale behind** car parking charges at its meeting in December 2001. The committee carried out an initial inquiry into the issue but as a result of this they felt that it required further examination

1.2 The Committee, therefore, made the decision to refer this issue to Overview and Scrutiny with the request that an ad hoc scrutiny review was established to look more closely at the rationale behind car parking charges in Kirklees.

1.3. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee approved the request from the Dewsbury Area Committee and an ad hoc panel was established.

1.4 The Panel was made up of three Elected Members: - Cllr Paul Kane (Chair), Cllr Andrew Palfreeman and Cllr Robert Iredale.

1.5. The terms of reference for the review were agreed as follows: -

- To determine the rationale behind car parking charges in Kirklees
- Based on the information and evidence provided, develop an appropriate position on the matter
- Based on the information and evidence provided, make appropriate recommendations.

It is important to emphasise that this review was not concerned with the amount that was charged for parking but the reasons why and how parking charges were applied in Kirklees.

1.6. In order to determine the rationale behind car parking charges in Kirklees the Panel has gathered evidence and information from highways and transportation on why and how car parking charges are applied; analysed and questioned that information in order to formulate the conclusions and recommendations contained within this report.

1.7. The Panel would like to thank Highways Officers for their co-operation and assistance throughout the review.

2. Background

2.1 Kirklees Metropolitan Council (KMC) provides and operates off street car parks and on street car parking spaces under the 'Road Traffic Act 1984'. It is this Act which also gives local authorities the power to charge for parking. Car parking charges were first introduced in Kirklees in 1984 and have gradually been extended throughout the district.

2.2 The Council currently manages 8237 on street and off street car parking spaces in Kirklees.

2.3 There are 96 car parks, many of which are in small villages and towns and service the needs of the local community. Parking in these car parks is either free, regulated by time or by charges.

2.4 At present car parking charges are in place in 36 of these car parks, a total of 5431 spaces. In the remaining 60 car parks, a total of 1636 parking spaces, parking is either free of charge or regulated by time limits,

2.5 There are also 1170 on street parking spaces, all of which are controlled, by parking charges.

2.6 It has been ten years (1992) since a full review was undertaken to look at how car parking in each of these car parks/on street spaces should be regulated.

3. Findings

3.1 The investigations of the Panel concentrated on establishing the rationale behind car parking charges in Kirklees and how they are applied.

3.2 From the research and information provided by Highways and Transportation, it became apparent that there are number of reasons why car parking charges are applied in Kirklees. They are as follows: -

3.3 To control the demand for car parking spaces.

This is probably the most important reason why car parking charges are applied both in Kirklees and throughout the country.

In town centres there is a high demand for car parking spaces and car parking charges are imposed in order to control this demand. If charges were not imposed then other mechanisms, such as time limits, would have to be put in place.

Time limits are used in some areas to control demand. It would not, however, be feasible to control all parking through this mechanism.

There is a cost associated with enforcing time limits i.e. patrols and traffic wardens. To use this as the only mechanism for controlling demand would mean that revenue would be reduced (as no revenue would be generated by charges) yet costs for enforcing parking controls and maintaining car parks would remain.

Additionally, controlling car parking by time alone would be more difficult to enforce. This would impact on both the provider, as more resources would be required in order to enforce parking effectively, and the user, as there would be a reduction in the turnover of spaces.

3.4 There is a need to encourage long stay car parking on the outskirts of towns and shoppers provisions near to town centres.

There is a need to ensure that town centre parking is available for shoppers and visitors to businesses and not occupied all day by commuters/workers. This is reflected in the Councils current 'Parking Policy on Tariffs', which was approved by Cabinet in January 2002. It states that in town centres preference should be given to shoppers and visitors over commuters. The Council has a responsibility to balance the needs of all those who use town centre facilities e.g. businesses, shoppers, workers, residents and peoples with disabilities.

This balance is achieved through a hierarchy of car parking charges:-

On street parking:	short stay and higher cost
Town centres parking:	short/medium stay and medium cost
Out of town parking:	Long stay and lower cost

Car parking charges are used to control both on street and off street car parking. They help to ensure that there is a turn over of car parking spaces throughout the day in those areas where there is a demand and a need. In turn this ensures that there are parking spaces available outside the town centres for commuters.

3.5 There is a need to cover costs (e.g. maintenance and improvement of car parks, parking patrols) and the expectation of generating surplus income.

There is a genuine need for car parks/on street parking spaces to generate income in order for them to cover costs such as maintenance, improvement and provision of parking patrols etc.

The expectation to generate surplus income from car parks comes from both external and internal sources - The Road Traffic Act 1984 and the Council's budget making process. The surplus income is used to support the Council's Highways Budget and the General Revenue Budget.

Additionally, Local Authorities have received criticism from the Audit Commission for not maximising the potential income from car parking. This would suggest that there is a further expectation for car parks to generate surplus income.

3.6 There is an expectation from the DETR that, as part of transport policy to discourage the use of the car, charges are reviewed regularly.

This expectation set out by the DETR is documented in the following publications:-

- The West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan 'Demand Management Strategy'
- Government White Paper 'A New Deal for Transport'
- Government Guidance on the Full Local Transport Plan

Kirklees Transport Policy does not set out the intention to discourage the use of cars across the district but the intention to encourage the use of alternative forms of transport.

There is an environmental and social impact associated with using cars and therefore it is important to recognise the benefits that could be gained from encouraging the use of other forms of transportation. Car parking charges are a means discouraging people from using cars and encouraging them to use alternative forms of transport.

3.7 As a result of benchmarking and comparisons with other towns in West Yorkshire

Benchmarking exercises are carried out with other authorities to help determine the most appropriate and effective methods of parking control and the most appropriate level of charging.

Kirklees carries out benchmarking with the four neighbouring authorities in West Yorkshire – Wakefield, Leeds, Bradford and Calderdale.

It also takes part in the Yorkshire and Humberside Parking Forum. The forum is made up of 22 authorities from Yorkshire and Humberside and its main purpose is to share information on best practice.

Finally, a further benchmarking peer group has been established between seven local authorities – Kirklees, Wakefield, Calderdale, Rotherham, Lincoln, NE Lincs and Dover.

3.8 Collectively, the five reasons set out above, explain why car parking charges are in place in Kirklees and form the basis for the rationale. However, whilst carrying out the review it was revealed that this rationale is not applied consistently throughout Kirklees.

3.9 Charges are only used to control parking in 80% of car park spaces in Kirklees (this includes 77% of off street car park spaces and all on street spaces managed by the Council). Parking in 20% of spaces is either free of charge or controlled by time (this includes 23%. There are many on street car parking spaces, which are controlled by time or are free, but these are managed by police traffic wardens and not by the Council).

3.10 It is appreciated that it would not be economical to apply parking charges in some car parks, as the cost would exceed the amount of revenue that the car park would generate. Initial work, however, shows that there are car parks within Kirklees where car parking charges could be applied but are not.

3.11 The Panel questioned why the rationale was not applied consistently throughout Kirklees and were informed that it was a result of decisions that had been taken over a period of time.

3.12 As mentioned earlier, there has not been a full review of car parking charges in Kirklees for ten years. There is a reluctance to undertake this work if there is no support to implement changes,

3.13 A number of benefits could be derived from applying the rationale more consistently throughout Kirklees:-

- Increase revenue, which would enable Highways and Transportation to provide and maintain safe, secure car parking throughout Kirklees.
- Potential to develop additional car parks
- Free car parks are more prone to vandalism, dumping waste, abandoned vehicles, and unauthorised trading and overnight lorry parking. Charging would eradicate some of these problems.

4. Conclusions

4.1 From the information and evidence provided it has been possible to determine the rationale behind car parking charges in Kirklees. Car parking charges are applied: -

- To control the demand for car parking spaces.
- Because of the need to encourage long stay car parking on the outskirts of towns and shoppers provision near to town centres.
- Because of the need to cover costs and the expectation of generating surplus income
- Because the DETR expect, that as part of transport policy to discourage the use of the car, charges are reviewed regularly.
- As a result of benchmarking and comparisons with other towns in West Yorkshire.

4.2 Based on this, the Panel is satisfied that the rationale is founded on sound reasoning, however, there are questions and concerns about how it is applied.

4.3 The information and evidence provided showed that although 80% of car parking spaces are controlled by charges, there remains 20%, which are either free of charge or controlled by time limits. It also revealed that it has been ten years since a full review of car parking charges was undertaken.

4.4 In addition, members of the Panel have highlighted concerns that there are areas in Kirklees where off street car parks and on street car parking spaces are regularly full or used by commuters/ workers, which would benefit from car parking charges. Initial work also showed that there are some off street car parks in Kirklees where car parking charges could be applied but currently are not.

4.5 As a result of these findings, the Panel is concerned that despite the sound reasoning behind the rationale, it is not applied consistently or fairly throughout Kirklees.

4.6 The Panel, therefore, proposes that the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Highways and Transportation be encouraged to look at the feasibility of applying the rationale more consistently and fairly throughout Kirklees. It should be recognised that in doing so, this could lead to an extension of car parking charges.

4.7 The research highlighted that there were a number of potential benefits from applying the rationale more consistently throughout Kirklees:-

- Increase revenue, which would enable Highways and Transportation to provide and maintain safe, secure car parking throughout Kirklees.
- Potential to develop additional car parks and parking spaces.
- Free car parks are more prone to vandalism, dumping waste, abandoned vehicles, and unauthorised trading and overnight lorry parking. Charging would eradicate some of these problems.

Should this ever happen, the Panel would like to propose that any surplus revenue that is generated is ring fenced in order to ensure that these benefits are realised.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Based on its research and the conclusions that it has reached, the Panel recommends that:

1. The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Environment and Transportation look into the feasibility of rolling out car parking charges more widely across Kirklees, taking into consideration local circumstances and economic viability.
2. Should car parking charges be extended more widely throughout Kirklees, any additional surplus revenue that is generated should be ring fenced and used to improve car parking facilities in Kirklees e.g. the security and condition of the facilities.

6. Response to Recommendations

**Councillor David R Payne
Cabinet Member for Environment &
Transport
Liberal Democrat Councillor for
LINDLEY WARD**

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Our Reference: DP022/jm

CLr Andrew Palfreeman
Chair of Overview and Scrutiny
Overview and Scrutiny Office
Town Hall
Ramsden Street
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Dear Andrew

DRAFT REPORT: RATIONALE BEHIND CAR PARKING CHARGES

I welcome the production of this report which has been long awaited.

I accept recommendation 1 to look into the feasibility of rolling out car parking charges more widely across Kirklees, taking into consideration local circumstances and economic viability. In doing so, however, I cannot commit to a timescale to complete this work as it will involve considerable consultation and information gathering. To implement any extension of the parking charges regime would of course entail up-front and continuing costs [purchase and installation of equipment, implementation of TROs in a zone around the controlled area and increased monitoring and enforcement] for which there is no current budgetary provision.

It would be helpful to kick-start that examination if your office could supply me with a set of the minutes of the meetings of the panel and the accompanying background papers.

I cannot accept recommendation 2, although I have sympathy with its intent, as it seeks to bind the Council's Annual Budget process in a way which I do not believe I have the power to do.

Yours sincerely

**Councillor David Payne
Cabinet Member, Environment and Transportation**