

TOWN HALL / HOPE LODGE CAR PARKS

Head of Service:	Rod Brown, Head of Housing & Community
Wards affected:	Town Ward;
Urgent Decision?(yes/no)	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	N/A
Appendices (attached):	Extract from Jan 2021 Revenue Report

Summary

The report requests the authorisation of the Committee to propose a change to the Off Street Parking Traffic Order in relation to the removal of car park barriers in the rear of Town Hall and Hope Lodge car parks.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- 1 Authorise the Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration to publish such notice and/or make such order as is considered necessary to propose the amendment of the Off Street Parking Places Traffic Order in respect of the car parks at the rear of Town Hall and Hope Lodge to include the following:
 - 1.1 The removal of the barrier controlled car parking system.
 - 1.2 The re-introduction of pay and display parking in conjunction with cashless parking options.

1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 The cost of maintaining a barrier controlled system in the Town Hall and Hope Lodge is high and the removal of such a system has been identified as part of cost saving measures brought to this Committee in January 2021.
- 1.2 In addition to this cost saving other benefits include:
 - 1.2.1 The ability for the car park user to pay for their chosen length of stay in advance, and if necessary extend it using our cashless parking provider

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- 1.2.2 Moving away from the chip coin token system which can cause inconvenience and annoyance when lost and post-Covid 19 have required sanitising between use.
- 1.2.3 Removal of problems such as queues at the exit barrier when a token has not been paid or collected from the machine.
- 1.2.4 Removal of the risk of loss of tokens if an exit barrier is dislodged by the wind or by anti-social behaviour. The tokens are expensive to replace.
- 1.2.5 Removal of the need for tokens to be regularly recycled from exit to entry and the delays caused if the tokens run out.
- 1.2.6 Full utilisation of the available bays within the car park (the counting system cannot differentiate between whether available spaces are blue badge or not).
- 1.2.7 The loss of the ability to remain in the car park for long periods of time and trying to leave by unauthorised methods such as tailgating.
- 1.2.8 Removal of a safety risk caused by barriers going up and down near pedestrians.
- 1.2.9 Removal of the need for maintenance and repair of the barrier system.
- 1.2.10 Reduction of single points of failure causing the car park to close. i.e. a fault with the entry barrier.
- 1.3 In its place the Council will seek to install pay and display parking machines offering both cash and card options for payment, in conjunction with a cashless parking option (addressed elsewhere in the agenda), meaning that visitors can both pay for and extend their stay without visiting the pay machines.
- 1.4 In order to change the car parking system it is a requirement to advertise the change to the Traffic Order and invite representations in this regard. The representations will be brought back to a future meeting of this Committee.

2 Background

- 2.1 In October 2013 the Environment Committee approved the change of use of Town Hall (rear) and Hope Lodge to barrier controlled car parks. This was implemented in December 2015.

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- 2.2 The two main reasons for this change cited at the time were that 1) pay on foot machines would give change and 2) car park users would not have to estimate their duration of stay in advance, meaning that they may have to hurry back to their car if they underestimated the time required.
- 2.3 The barrier controlled system is however expensive to maintain, with Parts and maintenance contracts, and CCTV on the barriers costing in excess of £28k per year.
- 2.4 The 'token' system, which was initially a plus point due to the reusable nature of the tokens, is less desirable since Covid-19 as people are wary of repeated use and therefore the tokens have had to be sanitised between uses. This has its own risks and inconveniences and has caused damage to a proportion of the tokens.
- 2.5 The token system has been shown that tokens are regularly lost causing anxiety and distress and the Council is then levied a replacement charge.
- 2.6 The Council's pay and display machines are now equipped with card and contactless facilities, which are increasingly used by the public, meaning that the expectation or requirement for change from a machine is becoming rare.
- 2.7 The Council's pay and display car parks now offer the facility to pay for parking, or indeed extend a parking session, by use of a cashless provider. This will negate the fear of not returning to the car park in time as users can extend their stay remotely via an app or mobile phone.
- 2.8 The expected saving in enforcement time has not been realised as officers are still required to patrol areas in and around the car parks and regularly attend to refill tokens and are required to perform maintenance to the barriers or car park machines.
- 2.9 In January 2021 as part of potential cost saving measures a paper was brought to this Committee recommending the removal of the barrier controlled system.

3 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

3.1 Impact Assessment

- 3.1.1 There are no likely equality impacts due to the change of system. Blue badge holders would be unable to use their parking cards but would be able to pay by cashless methods.

3.2 Crime & Disorder

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3.2.1 The removal of barriers will stop the occasional removal of them by force and the practice of tailgating out of the car park to evade payment.

3.3 Safeguarding

3.3.1 N/A

3.4 Dependencies

3.4.1 N/A

3.5 Other

3.5.1 There is a greater risk that people will use the car park to wait to collect or drop off a passenger. Increased signage and the use of enforcement will be used to keep this to a minimum.

3.5.2 If the car park is full there will be nothing to stop more cars entering, however the exit route in both is fairly simple and vehicles will not be charged until they have parked.

4 Financial Implications

4.1 The cost saving implications of removing the maintenance fees and equipment connected with the barrier controlled car parks are the primary reason for this change.

There is likely to be a reduction in car park income as some people may risk not paying to park, however this will be balanced by increased income from enforcement.

4.2 Expected costs and savings can be seen in the table below:

	Costs	Savings
Cost of 3 new pay machines	£15,000 in year 1	
Changes to signage	£2,000 in year 1	
Ongoing machine maintenance	£500 per year	
Saving in annual maintenance		£26,500 per year
Saving in CCTV cost		£1,400 per year
Total over 5 years	£19,500	£139,500
Net saving over 5 years		£120,000 (£24,000pa)

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- 4.3 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** A £24,000 saving was agreed by this Committee in January 2021, to be achieved by increased income in Town Hall and Hope Lodge car parks as a result of this initiative. Should this income not be achieved the saving would need to be found from another area within the Committee to prevent the Council's budget deficit increasing.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 Off street parking is regulated by Orders made under Part IV of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. There is a statutory process to be followed if an order is to be made or amended.
- 5.2 In summary the process is as follows:
- 5.2.1 Prior to making an order there is a requirement to consult with certain organisations, to publish a notice of proposals in a local newspaper, and to display/deliver notices in places affected by the proposals.
- 5.2.2 If any objections are made to the proposals, the Council must consider these and may make modifications to the proposals. If the modifications are significant and may affect certain persons, they should be given further opportunity to make representations about the modifications.
- 5.2.3 The Council may then make the order.
- 5.3 The Council must then publish and where relevant give notice that it has made the order, setting out details such as a brief statement of the general nature of the order and description of the key provisions.
- 5.4 After this has all been done the order can come into effect.
- 5.5 Where an order makes provision as to the charges to be paid in connection with the use of an off-street parking place, and there is a proposal only to vary the charges to be paid, it is not necessary to make a full new order; a shorter process is available under section 35C of the 1984 Act.
- 5.6 A notice of variation of parking charges must be published in a local newspaper at least 21 days before the new charges are to come into force. Notice must also be displayed in the parking place. There is no provision for representations to be made or considered.
- 5.7 The consultation will run in tandem with the proposed changes in Kingston Road car park (Stoneleigh Parade) should the Committee agree to that proposal also.

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5.8 **Legal Officer's comments:** none arising from the content of this report.

6 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

6.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged:

Manage our resources

6.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

6.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:**

There is a risk that people may use the Town Hall car park in particular to drop off or collect passengers. The anti-idling measures recently agreed by this Committee will enable officers to request that engines are switched off and payment for parking is made.

6.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** N/A

6.5 **Partnerships:** N/A

7 Background papers

7.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

Previous reports:

- Revenue budget report Jan 21

<http://th-modgov-01/documents/s18781/Revenue%20Budget%20202122.pdf>

Other papers:

- None