

## CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

**AGENDA ITEM**

**REPORT TO CABINET**

**8 DECEMBER 2011**

**REPORT OF CORPORATE  
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

### **CABINET DECISION**

**Regeneration & Transport – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Mike Smith**

#### **BOROUGH WIDE CAR PARKING STRATEGY**

1. Summary

This report presents a strategy outlining proposed parking management strategies including flexible charging tariffs where appropriate across the Borough to support the planned and on-going economic growth of the Borough's town centres.

Members will recall the Environment Select Committee report to Cabinet in December 2010 that applied the EIT (Efficiency Improvement Transformation) process to car parking. Cabinet accepted the principle of charging for car parking on Yarm High Street but stated that it should be introduced as part of a wider review of car parking charges across the Borough. This Borough Wide review and suggested action plan was subsequently agreed as a basis for consultation by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport in August 2011.

Cabinet also asked that further work be undertaken in order to consider the structure of car parking charges in Stockton Town Centre, which would also include the impact on Blue Badge holders.

This report seeks to update Cabinet on progress made in the latest 12 months demonstrating how the EIT process can be practically applied to car parking and highlights how the proposals would also compliment the regeneration of Stockton and Billingham and could assist in supporting local businesses to maintain or improve the economic positions of Yarm and Norton. The regeneration of Thornaby town centre was completed in June 2009 which has improved the ability of Thornaby to compete with other town centres in the Borough and has hopefully secured it's longer term economic viability. Parking is privately owned and managed in Thornaby although a strategy must still include Thornaby town centre to prepare for the consequences that would be incurred by local residents should the private owner introduce parking charges.

Members will be aware of the report specifically detailing the regeneration plans for Stockton town centre also for presentation at this particular meeting and are asked to note the results of independent market research, recently completed, to gain an understanding of how better management of car parking demand in both Yarm and Stockton town centres can contribute to improved business performance.

## 2. Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet approve the contents of the Borough Wide Car Parking Strategy, which in summary is:

1. The introduction of parking controls in Council managed, off-street car parks in Billingham Town Centre are supported but should only be introduced in support of economic regeneration initiatives led by Stockland.
2. The Council continues to seek a solution to long stay car parking problems in Thornaby town centre in support of local businesses.
3. The Council commission a survey to assess issues and car parking provision in Norton.
4. Cabinet support a strategy of flexible parking tariffs and car parking promotions to support the economic development and regeneration aspirations for Stockton Town Centre. The detailed arrangements be delegated to the Corporate Director of Development and Neighbourhood Services and Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Transport.
5. Cabinet agree that the Council will continue to prioritise the provision of additional long stay car parking in Yarm.
6. Cabinet note the results of the independent market research in Yarm, which suggest that the economic performance of Yarm is being restricted by long stay parking by commuters.
7. Cabinet approve this research to be utilised to design car parking solutions for Yarm which will include 'Pay and Display' on the High Street and increase the provision of short stay parking spaces to improve the availability of spaces.
8. Cabinet accept the principle of charging Blue Badge holders for off-street parking in Council managed car parks and that further engagement will take place with the key interest groups as the scheme progresses.

## 3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

The development of a comprehensive parking strategy is necessary for the future provision, management and maintenance of parking facilities within the Borough at a time when the economic performance and regeneration of its town centres are at a crucial stage. Members should also be aware that although Norton is not one of the Borough's four town centres, it was essential to include it within the context of this report since it was specifically identified as an area for early assessment by the Environment Select Committee.

important market research intelligence for Yarm and Stockton town centres has recently been provided and needs to be utilised to drive forward new car parking management strategies to underpin improved economic performance of these two centres.

## 4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (**paragraph 8**) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (**paragraphs 10 and 11 of the code of conduct**).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting considering the business is being held -

- in a case where the Member is attending a meeting (including a meeting of a select committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under statutory right or otherwise, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence as the case may be;
- in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at the meeting;

and must not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (**paragraph 12 of the Code**).

**Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc; whether or not they are a Member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting (unless the interest arises solely from the Member's membership of, or position of control or management on any other body to which the Member was appointed or nominated by the Council, or on any other body exercising functions of a public nature, when the interest only needs to be declared if and when the Member speaks on the matter), and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room, subject to and in accordance with the provisions referred to above.**

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**RECOMMENDATIONS**

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8. Cabinet accept the principle of charging Blue Badge holders for off-street parking in Council managed car parks and that further engagement will take place with the key interest groups as the scheme progresses.

## **DETAIL**

1. This report outlines the current parking regime in each of the Borough's 4 town centres and Norton in order to then highlight how effective parking management could compliment economic growth and secure the long term economic viability of the commercial centres in the Borough. The Borough Wide Car Parking Strategy document which was circulated to all ward councillors and Town/Parish Councils in September 2011, discussed each of the four main town centres and recommended an action plan for each. It also covered Norton High Street, although it does not have town centre status. The report arose from the recommendation of the Environment Select Committee to Cabinet in December 2010. The original report findings have subsequently been built upon by further market research and consultation and the culmination of this work can be summarised below.

### **Billingham Town Centre**

2. The current town centre owner, Stockland, with support from the Council, is continuing to work on finalising details of the improvements and bring forward proposals to regenerate Billingham town centre to attract new businesses and shoppers. The Council's £18.5 million refurbishment of Billingham Forum leisure complex has already provided a major economic boost, with in excess of 250,000 people visiting the centre since it reopened.
3. £1.75 million funding from the Council plus possible private developer contributions has been released for some initial quick wins to improve the public realm. New public toilets, new and improved paving, better lighting, seating, enhancements to CCTV and general improvements to buildings, stairways and Kingsway car park are amongst the proposals currently under consideration that are anticipated to commence on site spring 2012.
4. Negotiations between Stockland and major food store operators were unable to attract a supermarket into West Precinct although negotiations are subsequently on-going with a number of non-food retailers interested in occupying the vacant ground floor units in West Precinct. However, in recent months, B&M Bargains and Bright House have opened new stores and work is on-going to refurbish a newly extended retail unit on Queensway for Poundland, due to open in 2012.
5. There are eight off street car parks in Billingham town centre all of which are free to park with unlimited duration of stay. Five of the eight off street car parks were sold and still remain within private control as part of the sale of Billingham town centre in 2007. The three off street car parks remaining under ownership and management of the Council are; The Forum, Art Gallery and Community Centre. All on-street spaces and an element of off-street parking on Rothbury Street are also under the Council's ownership, Rothbury Street is popular with shoppers and visitors due to it's convenient location adjacent to the main shopping square and close proximity to ASDA supermarket.
6. It is possible that new car park management, imposed by Stockland upon completion of the town centre redevelopment, may see the introduction of a short stay charging tariff for the closest town centre car parks to maximise convenience for shoppers and encourage a regular turnover of parking spaces. This initiative would clearly have implications for long stay commuters who may be displaced to nearby residential streets resulting in the need and demand for a residents permit parking scheme to protect local residents. It may also result in full occupancy of the Council managed car parks by commuters, including Billingham based Council staff, if a charging regime is not responsively put in place in the Council car parks.

7. If car parking charges are introduced, Stockland have indicated they would ensure that there would be a choice of long and short stay charging options. An appropriate charging regime in the Council owned and managed car parks would need to support the over arching town centre economic growth strategy of Stockland in due course. Data relating to turn over of spaces provided by parking surveys indicate that long stay tariffs would be appropriate for The Forum and Community Centre, while short stay charges would be more appropriate for Rothbury Street and the Art Gallery.

### **Thornaby Town Centre**

8. The £30 million successful regeneration scheme, completed in June 2009, had the principle aim of attracting and retaining a variety and quality of retailers, improving the ability of Thornaby to compete with other town centres in the Borough and secure its long term economic viability.
9. Parking in Thornaby Town Centre is wholly privately managed, currently by BAE Systems Pension Funds Trustees Limited. Parking in both the Pavillion Shopping Centre and Grace House became limited to a maximum stay of 3 hours, no return within 2 hours upon completion of the 2009 re-development. The initiative to implement this maximum period of stay was introduced by previous owners Thornfield Properties plc to ensure a regular turn over of spaces so that shoppers would find it easier to park and avoid potentially abandoned visits. The introduction of parking charges was initially suggested to be imminent by Thornfield at 30p per hour although no charges for parking were actually introduced when the limited waiting was implemented and parking still remains free of charge. At this time there are no indications that BAE Systems Pension Funds Trustees Limited intend to introduce parking charges.
10. ASDA supermarket also has a private car park which is popular with shoppers in Thornaby, again to protect spaces for it's customers and encourage regular turn over ASDA have limited stay to a maximum of 2 hours. The net result of these private management strategies is to support the economic position of Thornaby by ensuring spaces are available for spending customers but the result is also such that no long stay parking opportunity is available in the town centre for commuters. This has led to issues for residents in the surrounding streets and subsequently local businesses were seeking a positive solution to alleviate these issues by providing a private off street long stay facility for employees.
11. One anticipated solution for long stay, off-street parking was the development of the former Tri-Star Neasham site which could have potentially provided 150 spaces on a temporary basis for lease to businesses in Thornaby town centre. However, despite works to demolish the former showrooms being completed earlier this year and obtaining planning permission for the temporary car park the land owner's preference was to secure commercial investment of the site and subsequently the car park did not become operational.
12. Commuter parking issues reported to the Council by local residents have subsided somewhat in recent months. In order to establish if successful workplace travel planning by the larger employers has resulted in less commuter parking on street, a parking survey is recommended to ascertain if and where problems still remain. If issues are still evident the Council could consider residents permit parking schemes or possibly approach private land owners with a view of pursuing a temporary car park, although this is unlikely to be successful without also offering some financial input.
13. Although the Council is not responsible for the management of town centre parking in Thornaby, it would need to react to any consequences following the introduction of car parking charges, such as displaced parking, by shoppers/visitors/commuters, by investigating the implementation of a residents permit parking scheme for the surrounding streets to protect local residents. A parking survey is needed in order to establish if problems for local

residents still remain in the absence of car parking charges or whether successful work place travel planning has resulted in less commuter parking on street.

### **Norton High Street**

14. Members will be aware that Norton High Street was specifically identified by Select Committee as an area for the early assessment of implementing car parking charges more widely across the Borough.
15. Parking in Norton is largely on-street with the exception of the privately owned supermarket car park. There are three areas of limited waiting comprising approximately 38 spaces in the High Street vicinity; adjacent to No.23-59 High Street (12 spaces), on the northern side of Leven Road (15 spaces) and around Norton Green (11 spaces). The operational times and duration of the restrictions are not consistent despite the very close proximity of the three areas. The High Street bays are limited to 2 hours Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm and Leven Road is limited to 45 minutes Monday to Sunday between 9am and 5pm. A further 14 spaces are available in the vicinity of Nos. 4-10 High Street which provide unlimited parking and although it resembles an off street car park, this area is actually classed as on street since it is adopted highway.
16. There are service roads running parallel either side of the High Street that are used for parking but this practice can be obstructive due to the limited width of those service roads and has resulted in the need for 'Keep Clear' markings to be laid.
17. To raise concerns and actively work towards solutions to a variety of issues within the High Street area Norton Village Association have been established and have subsequently formed a working party. Commuter parking, obstructive parking issues and being unable to park near to their businesses or home have already been identified as key problems for residents and traders through this process.
18. Selective on-street charging could be in Norton High Street at the two locations where there are existing limited waiting restrictions and also in the unlimited stay parking area adjacent to No.4-10 High Street that is currently used for long stay parking by commuters. On street charges may assist retailers in providing regular turn over of conveniently located spaces near their businesses for customers and visitors and provide clarity and consistency for motorists with regard to times of operation and duration for stay.
19. Further market research to investigate these issues is considered necessary to inform a wider solution to parking problems in Norton.

### **Stockton Town Centre**

20. The regeneration of Stockton town centre is essential to improving it's own economic performance and that of the Borough in general which is firmly embedded in regional, sub-regional and local regeneration policies.
21. It is recognised and accepted by the Council that the success of any regeneration plans for the town centre will need a parking management strategy underpinning the plans and that car parking does indeed have a role in supporting the regeneration of Stockton town centre. The major regeneration scheme is now in the detailed design stage which includes the re-introduction of short stay car parking to the north and south of the High Street.
22. The aim of the regeneration project is for Stockton to be a focal point for cultural activity with year round festivals and top class leisure facilities. The conservation and enhancement of historic buildings and closer physical and visual links to the natural asset of the River Tees is anticipated to put the building blocks in place to provide a high quality setting for new investments and encourage growth of an independent retail and business sector.

Furthermore to encourage growth of the evening/entertainment economy, works to redevelop The Globe Theatre at 154-157 High Street are on-going and are anticipated to be completed late 2012 with the re-opening expected in 2013. Members will be aware that a 'Town Centre Prospectus' has been approved for Stockton as a means of promoting the town centre as a site for investment opportunity. A progress update regarding the detailed design and business investments associated with the town centre redevelopment project will be provided as part of a separate report to Members at this same meeting.

23. There are currently two residents permit parking schemes in the vicinity of Stockton town centre; in Victoria Estate to the north of the town and West Stockton which covers the area bounded by Dovecot Street/Bishopton Lane/Leeds Street. An additional scheme in the Parliament Street area, south of the town centre, is also approved and Statutory consultations are expected to be conducted early in 2012. It is worthy of note that such schemes do remove otherwise free, long stay on-street parking opportunity for commuters and visitors to the town and therefore implementing such schemes must be managed to ensure the effects of displaced parking are monitored and catered for.
24. A study concerned with parking activities in the Teesdale area of Thornaby to the east of Stockton town centre was allocated funding by Eastern Area Transport Strategy Stakeholders in 2011/12. Early indications of the study are that some displaced commuter parking associated with the town centre does occur in this area. Recommendations arising from the study will be reported to the Head of Technical Services and Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Transport for consideration in due course.
25. There are two major privately owned and managed car parks in the town centre; Wellington Square (approximately 800 spaces) and Castlegate (approximately 800 spaces). The charging tariff in Wellington Square encourages short stay parking with rates lower than those of Council operated car parks, although long stay parking is an option at Wellington Square, it is significantly higher than other long stay rates in the town centre. Long and short stay tariffs in Castlegate are both competitively priced when compared with the Council's off street car park charges. There are also a number of smaller temporary private car parks to the west of the High Street. Therefore, commuters and visitors to Stockton have a choice of car parks and tariffs available to them and may not necessarily choose the Council's car parks as their preferred option based on price comparisons.
26. The planned economic growth initiatives and major highway projects (Tees Valley Bus Network Improvement schemes such as St John's Crossing and Maxwells Corner) for Stockton are likely to cause unavoidable disruption and congestion over the coming 5 year period. In acknowledgement of this disruption to both trade and traffic and to reward customer/visitor loyalty it is perhaps appropriate to consider reducing the car parking charges or introducing an element of free parking in Stockton during this period and beyond to complement the re-development and also to bring the Council car park tariffs into a more competitive position. A reduction in charges would support the importance placed upon the success of the re-development by the Council since parking charges only typically see an increase (note charges have not increased since 2005). It is not practicable to abolish all off-street parking charges because this would lead to onerous enforcement of Control of Use contraventions in the car parks such as over stay and it is predicted that it would result in long stay, all day parking rather than encourage the regular turn over of parking spaces necessary for economic growth, a key aspiration for Stockton. It is recommended that flexible parking tariffs and car parking promotions to support regeneration aspirations be delegated to the Corporate Director of Development & Neighbourhood Services and Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Transport as part of this report.

### **Yarm Town Centre**

27. Yarm High Street is a principal road, the A67 and is thereby of high importance for traffic movement. Parking is available on both sides of the High Street on the cobbled area



controlled as a Disc Zone where parking is currently free but limited to a maximum stay of 2 hours. The cobbles are public highway providing 206 free, on street, short stay spaces within the Disc Zone and a further 127 un-restricted on street spaces either side of the Disc Zone. In addition, there are 2 Council owned, off-street car parks in Yarm town centre area; Castle Dyke Wynd and The Old Market providing 39 spaces that appear to be largely used for all day parking by commuters and some students.

28. The Council has acknowledged that there are parking problems in the centre of Yarm and it remains very much a priority to work with the Town Council, residents and businesses to find positive solutions that make parking availability for both short and long stay more accessible. A study into the problems and an associated extensive public consultation exercise was completed in the Summer of 2009. The consultation covered suggestions for potential locations of a long stay parking facility, the introduction of short stay car parking charges on street, a residents permit parking scheme and an extended period of maximum stay within the current Disc Zone. The results of this consultation were used to develop an action plan as a way forwards with regard to the future of parking in Yarm. The early actions were the introduction of 'Pay and Display' in Castle Dyke Wynd and The Old Market off street car parks to provide some dedicated medium stay parking and additional waiting restrictions on roads where severe obstructive parking was occurring.
29. Potential sites for a long stay off-street parking facility were identified at that time (2009) to be; land to the rear of Yarm Health Centre (known as Brickyard Allotments), Worsall Road Allotments and Land East of Yarm Cemetery Access Road (partly Brickyard Allotments). However, at a public meeting in January 2010, in the face of strong opposition from allotment holders, the Council conceded it would not pursue these aforementioned allotments sites for parking.
30. The proposed off-street parking charges and on-street waiting restrictions progressed as outlined in the action plan received strong objection from local residents, traders and Yarm Town Council. Subsequently the matter was referred to Appeals & Complaints Committee in March 2011. The Committee agreed that, in view of the assertions and concerns voiced about the proposals, it would recommend their decision be deferred for 6 months. During those 6 months the Committee expected that discussions between Council Officers and interested parties, such as Yarm Town Council and Yarm retailers, would take place to identify privately owned, but available sites for long stay parking. The Council continues to work with private land owners to develop under used land around Yarm High Street as small pockets of long stay parking which could operate on a business permit basis, privately managed by the respective land owners of each site. However, no suitable areas have been agreed to date although Yarm Backlands is very much under active consideration as a suitable site. The Council is working very closely with Network Rail to consider how access issues may be overcome.
31. The Council, in partnership with Yarm Town Council, commissioned independent local company, NEMS Market Research, to carry out research to assist with understanding reasons why people visit Yarm and to establish the parking needs in the High Street. The research conducted by NEMS during September/October 2011 found that more than 50% of all potentially available parking spaces were being occupied by staff working in the businesses on the High Street. This practice was found, through analysis using a real time simulation model, to be severely restricting the availability of spaces for visitors and customers, and also limiting their choice predominantly to spaces with a 2 hour stay restriction. The result is a direct loss of spend from abandoned visits.
32. NEMS research demonstrates that in order to satisfy parking demand and accommodate the full attractiveness of Yarm as a visitor destination, it will be necessary to free up the equivalent of around 80-100 short stay spaces. Given the current occupation of bays by commuters, the impact of sustainable travel schemes such as car sharing have potential for immediate exploration that could have an immediate beneficial impact and financial return for

Yarm. Other options, such as out-of-centre staff parking in areas such as Yarm Backlands also need to be borne in mind for the longer term.

33. The Council's "Annual Car Parking Report - 2009" highlighted the most frequently occurring parking contraventions occurred in the Disc Zone of Yarm for parking without a disc or for over stay in a disc bay. The contravention figures suggest that enforcement of the Disc Zone in Yarm is onerous for the Council and that the Disc Zone restriction is perhaps not clearly understood by motorists, resulting in almost three times as many offences than in 'Pay and Display' car parks in Stockton town centre. NEMS research also indicated that 24% of visitors to Yarm arrive without a disc and that 13% of all visitors have received a parking ticket.
34. The Department for Transport has an expectation, expressed in their document "Operational Guidance to Local Authorities: Parking Policy and Enforcement", that in circumstances such as these, where parking contraventions are so high, that the Local Authority should consider alternative methods of control that are better understood by motorists. A clearer, less onerous and simpler form of parking control, in this instance, would be the introduction of on street 'Pay and Display' parking on the cobbles of Yarm High Street.
35. It is practicable and more efficient in terms of enforcement to introduce 'Pay and Display' on the cobbles of Yarm. 'Pay and Display' would also provide the opportunity for medium stay parking which is not available at present due to the 2 hours limited waiting with no return within 1 hour. NEMS Market Research found that only 6% of visitors stayed longer than 2 hours and the average length of stay in Yarm was 102 minutes. This is significantly less than predicted by traders in the 2009 consultation. Furthermore almost two-thirds of visits do not exceed one hour. The impact of the two hours time restriction in the Disc Zone therefore appears to be sufficient to meet the majority of visitors needs in terms of desirable times of stay. Additional time would also be available though 'Pay and Display' to satisfy the needs of all of Yarm's visitors. The tariff for Yarm could broadly follow that of Stockton Town Centre on street charging which is 20p for 30 minutes, £1 for 1 hour and 50p for each half hour thereafter. Further work is required to finalise the application of tariffs and will be delegated to the Corporate Director of Development and Neighbourhood Services and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport. Every opportunity will be made to ensure that the pay and display system will utilise the latest technology not only to inform of trends but also to make it as easy as possible for motorists to understand the parking regulations.
36. There are three key issues addressed as part of the car parking strategy presented to select Committee and for re-affirmation as part of this report. These issues are; the continued investigation into provision of a long stay parking facility, the introduction of short stay car parking charges on street including accommodating residents of the High Street within those proposals and an extension of the current short stay spaces (Disc Zone). On street charging on the cobbles of the High Street would alleviate the enforcement burden within the Controlled Zone and also offer the opportunity to park for longer than the current maximum of two hours if required (only indicated to be a requirement for the minority of visitors questioned as part of the NEMS market research) albeit at a charge. Extending the extent of short stay parking bays would encourage the regular turn over of visitors again as confirmed by the results of independent research conducted by NEMS. This would also reduce the number of long stay bays on the High Street for commuters although NEMS research highlights that for every space saved by work place travel plan initiatives such as car sharing it would contribute an estimated additional £20,000 p.a. into the economy of Yarm and is thereby justified to protect its long term economic position.
37. In order to free up the 80-100 spaces as recommended by the NEMS study it is likely that the short stay parking area would need to cover the entire length of the cobbled area of the High Street including the existing un-restricted long stay parking bays to the north of Silver Street and to the south of Mill Wynd. This would have implications for the residents in these areas of the High Street who would effectively have to pay charges to park near to their property

during the hours of operation including Saturday. In this instance, to assist local residents, it may be feasible to implement a number of dedicated bays for residents only. Charges for residents' permits would be significantly less than those incurred for paying to park all day at short stay charging rates. It is not proposed to implement a wider residents' permit parking scheme for the streets surrounding the High Street because it is not currently practicable in the absence of a long stay parking facility to meet demand. Investigations concerning a long stay site are on-going.

38. It is recommended that these key strategies for Yarm are endorsed by Members and that details regarding further consultation, charging tariffs and the practicalities of extending the Disc Zone are delegated to the Corporate Director of Development and Neighbourhood Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Transport. Income generated by car parking charging in Yarm would contribute towards the provision, maintenance and security of car parking facilities and other public transport measures.

### **Blue Badge Holder Parking**

39. The recommendation to charge Blue Badge holders for off-street parking in Council's owned and managed car parks was recommended by the Environment Select Committee report. There are now approximately 12,000 registered Blue Badge holders in the Borough. Blue Badge holders are able to park for free and with unlimited duration of stay in the Council's car parks, where parking charges are applicable on-street and also for up to 3 hours on single or double yellow lines (except where there is also a ban on loading/unloading activity).
40. Importantly, the Blue Badge scheme only applies to on-street parking (kerbside parking on adopted highway). It is not lawful to implement parking charges on-street for disabled badge holders but it is not unusual to charge them for off-street parking, indeed parking charges are already applicable in the two privately managed car parks in Stockton town centre. Therefore, it is likely that Blue Badge holders' preference is to park in the Council's car parks rather than incur the charges in Wellington Square and Castlegate. This has the consequence that once dedicated Blue Badge holder only bays are fully occupied within the Council's car parks, general bays are then used by Blue Badge holders that are also free of charge. Blue Badge parking combined with the previously discussed matter of more competitively priced parking in Stockton through private operators highlights how potentially under used the Council's off-street car parks are by paying customers. Therefore by taking general bays out of the potential use by motorists that would otherwise have paid the parking charge clearly results in a loss of revenue, but it also means that those parking bays are not subject to a time limitation and this reduces the turn over of bays required for economic growth.
41. A consequence of introducing parking charges for Blue Badge holders in off-street car parks is their potential displacement to on-street locations, including on single or double yellow lines for up to 3 hours. A review of the existing waiting restrictions around the town centres, particularly Stockton where parking charges currently only apply, is recommended to determine if parking on those restrictions would cause obstruction to traffic movements or cause adverse impacts upon road safety. It may be necessary to introduce loading restrictions to counteract this particular consequence.
42. The re-introduction of parking on Stockton High Street is included within the economic growth proposals. This will be classed as on-street parking and although it is permissible to introduce parking charges to encourage turn over of spaces it would not be permissible to charge Blue Badge holders to park in those on-street bays. Occupation of these proposed bays is therefore anticipated by the project team, it is unavoidable unless an Order to 'Stop-up' the highway is made which would effectively extinguish all highway rights and make those areas formally classified as off-street parking. However, to do this would revert all responsibilities to the sub-soil owner and in this case the land ownership responsibility is still to be determined. It emerged from NEMS market research that with more than 2,500 car

parking spaces in Stockton town centre there was actually little demand for more conveniently located car parking. 29% of visitors surveyed did not think more car parking was required. However, Members will be aware that the high street proposals are looking to provide a different offer including supporting redevelopment of The Globe and Cultural Quarter with associated hospitality uses that require more convenient car parking.

43. It is recommended that Members accept the principle of charging Blue Badge holders for off-street parking in Council managed car parks subject to further engagement with key stakeholders.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Capital costs of introducing car parking charges in Yarm would be met through the Medium Term Financial Plan.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

Associated Traffic Regulation Orders and car parking Control of Use Orders associated with the Borough wide Car Parking Strategy will be processed in consultation with Legal Services. Statutory consultation would be conducted in accordance with the "Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England & Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 1993". Any unresolved formal objections will be considered by the Council's Appeals & Complaints Committee, to which objectors are invited to attend in person. The Committee's recommendations are referred to the Head of Technical Services and Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Transport as part of the decision making process.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

The recommendations contained within this report and the Borough Wide Car Parking Strategy are categorised as medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

## **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS**

The implementation of the Borough Wide Car Parking Strategy will assist in achieving key ambitions to improving the economic performance of the Borough in general which is firmly embedded in regional, sub-regional and local regeneration policies.

The Borough Wide Car Parking Strategy will contribute towards the ambitions outlined in the Sustainable Communities Strategy under the following core theme for 2008-2021:

### **Economic Regeneration and Transport**

Flexible charging tariffs and parking management across the Borough will positively support the planned and on-going regeneration projects in the Borough's town centres. The recommendations outlined in the Borough Wide Car Parking Strategy will provide a consistent approach to car parking across the whole Borough whilst reflecting the local issues in each of the individual town centres to underpin the ambition to create vibrant and successful town centres.

The Strategy further supports this theme by improving access into town centres.

### **Stronger Communities**

Improving urban competitiveness and liveability will secure the long term economic viability of the Borough.

### **Arts Leisure and Culture**

The ambition to make the Borough more attractive physically but also in terms of attracting new people, business and cultural opportunities to the Borough would be assisted by flexible charging tariffs and parking management.

## **EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

This report has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment because the proposed changes to charging for blue badge holders, introduction of additional short stay car parking on Stockton High Street and introduction of or amendment to pay and display tariffs. The assessment overall indicates that a neutral to positive score has been identified as a result.

## **CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS**

The consultation on the draft "Borough Wide Car Parking Strategy" was conducted electronically, by E-mail sent on 9 September 2011, to all elected Ward Members and Town/Parish Councils with the date for responses to be returned set at 30 September 2011. Town/Parish Councils were advised to request an alternative date if the 30 September was not practicable to fit into the Town/Parish Council's meeting schedule.

In the absence of a Town/Parish Council in Norton, the document was also sent by E-mail on 13 September 2011 to Norton Village Association (NVA) for comments.

A copy of the consultation draft document was and still is available to download on the Council's website [www.stockton.gov.uk](http://www.stockton.gov.uk) as from 16 August 2011 although explanatory preamble on the web page was not added until 9 September 2011. Opportunity to comment via the website was not provided. Comments returned from Ward Members and Town/Parish Councils as part of that consultation were considered in revising the draft document and the production of this report. A copy of the full amended document is available in the Members Library.

## **Independent Market Research**

The Council, in partnership with Yarm Town Council, commissioned independent local company, NEMS Market Research, to carry out the research to assist with understanding reasons why people visit Yarm and Stockton and to establish the parking needs in these town centres. The scope of the study was agreed with the Town Council at their meeting on 30 August 2011 and the results were presented to Ward Councillors and Cabinet Member on 11 October 2011 and then the Town Council on 25 November 2011 (originally scheduled for 17 October 2011). Reports issued by NEMS Market Research have been received and are available as background papers to this report.

### **Yarm**

In Yarm, the research company carried out 650 telephone interviews within a catchment area covering a population of 265,000 people. They also undertook 296 face-to-face interviews with people who had travelled to Yarm by car. 15 interviews were carried out with businesses along Yarm High Street, covering a range of locations and business types, as well as five interviews with taxi operators.

NEMS Market Research key findings for Yarm included:

- Yarm has in the region of 4,000 visits every day, with the peak between 10am and 2pm, most visitors only stay for one and a half hours, the average spend is £78.
- With just more than 600 car parking spaces, more than half are occupied by staff from shops and businesses. The estimated cost of each space used by a staff member is £20,000 to £40,000 of consumer spend each year
- 73% of visitors, when asked about the length of time they needed to park in Yarm, said it was either 'good' or 'very good'
- When asked what prevented people from visiting Yarm more often, 29% said 'availability of spaces' while 5% cited 'the length of time able to park'

- When asked the reasons for choosing to visit Yarm, the proximity to home and range of shops and services were the highest
- The estimated potential for growth is 15% in visitor numbers, the analysis suggests that to meet this potential, the equivalent of 80-100 short stay car parking spaces need to be freed up.

The availability of spaces is therefore clearly an issue for visitors travelling to Yarm but not necessarily the length of time they are able to stay for.

## **Stockton**

NEMS Market Research key findings for Stockton included:

- Stockton has 10,000 visits every day, 4000 of which are by private car, with the peak between 10am and 2pm, the average duration of stay is 78 minutes and the average spend is £38.
- With more than 2500 car parking spaces in the town centre it is perhaps unsurprising that the research found little demand for more conveniently located car parking. 29% of visitors surveyed did not think more car parking was required.
- The research supported the proposals outlined in the Town Centre Prospectus and Town centre Strategy, that a better quality and range of shops, more independent retailers and attractiveness of the town are key elements to increase visitor numbers and investors.

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### Education Related?

No

### Background Papers

Report to Cabinet 16 December 2010 (Min. 115 refers) - Environment Select Committee Report  
 Borough Wide Car Parking Strategy  
 Report to Cabinet 8 December 2011 – Stockton Town Centre Regeneration  
 Annual Car Parking Report 2009/10 & 2010/11  
 NEMS Market Research – Stockton Town Centre Study October 2011  
 NEMS Market Research – Yarm Town Centre Car Parking Study September 2011  
 Stockton Town Centre Prospectus

### Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

All

### Property

N/A