
Meeting: EXECUTIVE
Portfolio Areas: Environment & Regeneration
Economy Enterprise & Transport
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Agenda Item:

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TOWN CENTRE ELECTRIC CAR CLUB & ON STREET PARKING PROPOSALS

KEY DECISION

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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To consider the introduction of an electric car club and the relocation and provision of taxi ranks, loading bays and additional pay & display parking facilities in Stevenage town centre.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Council funds a 12 month pilot scheme with a car club to provide three electric cars in the town centre for the use of SBC staff for work related travel and public use at all times, a fourth car to be provided, at no cost to the Council, for public use only.
- 2.2 That the existing loading bays on Swingate (southern spur) by the ramp to the Leisure Centre be removed and replaced with two electric car club only bays and a charging point installed.
- 2.3 That a wasted concrete area of car park J be used to create a layby for two electric car club only bays and a charging point installed.
- 2.4 That the existing taxi rank on Swingate be removed and replaced with 15 pay and display spaces to help fund the scheme and offset potential loss of town centre parking associated with the future town centre regeneration.
- 2.5 That the existing taxi rank on Danestrete next to the Plaza be removed and replaced with 5 pay and display spaces to help fund the scheme and offset potential loss of town centre parking associated with the future town centre regeneration.
- 2.6 That new taxi ranks be set up on Danestrete in front of Swingate House and on Westgate behind Lloyds Bank in place of the existing loading bays.

- 2.7 That a new loading facility be provided in Westgate to the rear of McDonalds to replace the lost loading facilities and accommodate deliveries to the retail units from 1 Town Square (Paddy Power) to 56 Queensway (H Samuel).
- 2.8 That 7 new pay and display parking spaces be provided in Westgate to the rear of McDonalds to help fund the scheme and offset potential loss of town centre parking associated with the future town centre regeneration.
- 2.9 That a capital allocation of £51,780 in 2016/17 to implement the scheme be approved.
- 2.10 That an increase of £11,500 and £6,360 to the Green Travel Plan revenue budget for 2016/17 and 2017/18 respectively, to cover the pilot costs of an electric car club be approved.
- 2.11 That subject to a satisfactory first year pilot, a growth bid will be requested to continue the scheme.
- 2.12 That an increase in the income budget of £13,280 and £32,030 for 2016/17 and 2017/18 respectively for the new pay and display parking be approved.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Brickdale House on Danesgate / Swingate is currently being converted to residential use with 200 flats with a mixture of 2 bed, one bed and studio units. The development is likely to be occupied by approximately 350 residents but only 56 parking spaces are provided on the site and no parking is available on street nearby.
- 3.2 There is a taxi rank on Swingate alongside Brickdale House which is underutilised. The taxi drivers have been complaining for some time that there is not enough demand in Swingate due to low footfall for them to operate viable businesses from this rank. They have been increasing pressure in recent months on the taxi licensing officers in Environmental Health requesting a rank in alternative locations in Danestrete and Westgate. They argue that there is much higher demand from the public for a taxi service in these areas due to the higher footfall from the Westgate Shopping Centre and the Bus Station.
- 3.3 To accommodate a taxi rank in Danesgate (in front of Swingate House) and in Westgate (behind Lloyds Bank) the Council would need to remove loading bays in these areas. Whilst Swingate House has alternative loading provision at the back, it would be necessary to re-provide a loading facility for Westgate. This would most logically be provided in the service area to the rear of McDonalds. The same area also has capacity to provide 7 pay and display bays for the convenience of Westgate shoppers and has the potential to bring approximately £8,000 income per annum
- 3.4 Removing the taxi rank from Swingate would allow this area to be converted to 15 pay and display parking spaces and a loading bay. Charged at similar rates to the town centre car parks these 15 spaces would have the potential to bring approximately £18,000 income per annum and their provision would help to offset any future loss of car park capacity associated with the regeneration of the town centre. It would also provide more convenient short stay parking for visitors to the Brickdale House flats and provide free disabled parking for blue badge holders, many of whom make use of the Age Concern facility in Swingate House. A new loading bay

would allow residents of the Brickdale flats to receive deliveries and to drop off passengers as close to the building as possible.

- 3.5 There is also potential to remove the underutilised taxi rank on Danestrete next to the Plaza and provide instead pay and display parking for five cars with the potential to bring approximately £6000 income per annum.
- 3.6 A substantial increase in the number of dwellings being made in the town centre with limited or zero parking provision will bring a new type of resident to Stevenage. It is anticipated that a substantial number of Londoners to move to the town and many of these people will work in London and commute by train from Stevenage. This is an environmentally sustainable model but the Council would want to discourage these residents from purchasing cars for evening and weekend use and leaving them on street in Stevenage during the day. In London car clubs are very popular and allow many residents to share in the use of a limited number of cars for which free on street parking is provided. This is an ideal opportunity now to pioneer the first car club for Stevenage.
- 3.7 There are two loading bays at the southern end of the Swingate spur road next to the ramp to the Leisure Centre. These serve no purpose as there is no building at this location that requires servicing. They are also sub-standard in length such that a commercial vehicle using the bays is liable to partially obstruct the exit of car park J. There is also an area of concrete between Swingate spur road and car park J which is currently wasted. These areas can be used to provide 4 car club parking spaces. This location is already served by electricity with a disused feeder pillar in the corner of the car park. Two charging points can thus be conveniently and cost effectively provided here for the charging of electric vehicles.
- 3.8 It is proposed to provide three Nissan Leaf/Renault Zoe cars at the Council's expense and an additional one at no cost to us. The three cars would be available for the use of SBC staff during the day for site visits reducing staff dependency on polluting vehicles in line with the Council's Green Travel Plan objectives and reducing the Council's expenditure on mileage allowance claims. All four cars would also be available to the residents of Brickdale House and other town centre dwellings for whom ownership and parking of a car may not be feasible. Members of the public joining the car club would pay an affordable time based charge (like a short term rental) for each use of a car to the Car Club. Public use of the three "SBC cars" would result in the Council receiving a proportionate rebate partially offsetting our annual charge. There would be no additional costs for SBC staff members use of the cars.
- 3.9 Cars will be available on a first booked first served basis. The car club would make the fourth car (which is not funded by SBC) the priority booking for members of the public. If this car is out already then an SBC funded car would be available to the public as long as a member of SBC staff hadn't already booked it. SBC would then be rebated proportionally for the public usage of its three funded cars.
- 3.10 The cars will not be owned by SBC. The car club will be responsible for insurance, cleaning and maintenance of the vehicles and this is included in the £18,720 annual fee. Cars are booked through the car club and this administration is included in the pilot cost.

4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

- 4.1 The Future Town Future Council (FTFC) identifies the strategic aim 'To create a vibrant town centre where people want to live, work and play'. This innovative transport solution would provide new and future town centre residents with alternatives to car ownership, while improving the image of the Council and the town centre.
- 4.2 The introduction of an electric car club in the town centre will confirm the Council's commitment to forward thinking environmentally friendly transport options in line with the objectives of the adopted Green Travel Plan. It will provide staff with a sustainable alternative to conventional car use for business related journeys building on the principal already established by the introduction of the pool bicycles.
- 4.3 The opportunity for SBC branding on the vehicles will link the Council to a potentially popular new service and reinforce the Council's progressive reputation.
- 4.4 The proactive introduction of measures to assist the new town centre dwellers with their personal transport needs helps to reinforce the Council's Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document which allows for parking provision in town centre locations to be reduced to 25% of the normal standard and helps to accommodate permitted developments which are beyond planning controls.
- 4.5 New taxi rank provision is being proposed in response to requests from the taxi trade many of whom are increasingly frustrated with the existing facilities. The new location should provide a more useful service to the public by being located in the areas of greatest need, better servicing the Westgate Shopping Centre and providing a transport interchange at the Bus Station.
- 4.6 New loading facilities in Westgate will help to rationalise a large unregulated area of highway and provide improved servicing to the Council's retail units and other private retail units in the town centre.
- 4.7 Additional pay & display parking in Swingate, Westgate and Danestrete will help to recoup capital expenditure and provide useful additional short stay parking for visitors to the town centre's residential and retail units as well as giving potential extra longer stay capacity. It is proposed to align charges with rates charged in car parks and bring existing P&D in the town centre to the same rates and time periods for consistency.
- 4.8 Any of the facilities provided by this scheme are moveable in the event that regeneration of the town centre causes road layouts to be changed and the cost of doing so will be insignificant relative to the associated regeneration costs.

5. TIMESCALES

- 5.1 I would anticipate a project timeframe of 6-9 months from the point when capital is made available to delivery of the project as follows:

Funding approval	July 2016
Design, Consultation, TRO drafting	August 2016
TRO statutory process	September 2016
Works orders	October 2016

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 As this scheme provides a return on investment it would qualify for borrowing of capital. However as the Council has sufficient balances in its capital reserve it is recommended that this be used to fund the implementation costs.

6.2 Capital implementation costs should be accounted for and spent within 2016/17 Revenue income and expenditure budgets for 2016/17 would need to be 5/12th of the ongoing full year revenue budgets to account for the 5 months from November 2016 to March 2017. These are detailed below:

6.3 Capital Expenditure – Implementation Costs 2016/17

Provide / install 2 electric charging points	£8,000
Removal of kerb islands & shelter in Swingate	£4,500
Construction of E-Car Club bays	£5,500
Construction of island in Westgate	£8,500
Signage & road markings	£5,800
Traffic regulation orders	£5,000
Pay and Display machines x 4	£14,480
Total	£51,780

6.4 Revenue Expenditure

	Annual (full yr)	2016/17
E-Car Club	£16,850	£10,770
Electricity costs (80000 miles @ 2p/mile)	£1,600	£670
Maintenance contract for charging points	£650	£650
Cash collection costs for P&D	£1440	£600
<i>E-Car rebate for public use of the scheme*</i>	<i>-£2860 (est.)</i>	<i>£1190</i>
Total	£17,680 (est.)	£11,500

* *If it is assumed that 2 of the 3 "SBC cars" are used by a member of the public for just one hour each per weekday then the Council would get a rebate of (£5.50x2x5x52=£2860)*

6.5 Revenue Income (based on likely 35% occupancy)

It is proposed to align on-street with off-street charges so that the two are not in competition but complement each other. This should avoid displacement of cars from car parks to on-street pay and display. Appendix 3 shows the current car parks charges and the similar proposed P&D tariffs and gives an average hourly rate of £1.13. With hours of operation from 8am to 6pm (10 hours) Monday to Saturday (6 days) for 50 weeks of the year (to allow for bank holidays etc.) at 100% occupancy rate, each bay has potential income of £1.13x10x6x50=£3390

6.6 For estimating purposes an occupancy rate of 35% has been taken which is slightly higher than the 25% of existing pay and display bays in the Quadrant and Marshgate which are currently constrained by a half hour maximum stay.

	Annual (full yr)	2016/17
6.7 Pay & Display (@ £1.13 p/h) **		
7 bays in Westgate	£ 8,300 (est.)	£3400
15 bays in Swingate	£17,800 (est.)	£7410
5 bays in Danestrete	£ 5,930 (est.)	£2470
Total	£32,030 (est.)	£13,280

6.8 On this basis the proposal gives a net annual surplus in the region of £14,350 which would pay back the upfront capital costs in less than 4 years.

Potential Financial Savings through Reduced Mileage Claims

6.9 There is potential for significant additional savings to be made in reduced mileage claims if the scheme is adequately adopted by staff.

6.10 In 2015/16 242 members of staff submitted mileage claims totalling £156,604 with the top 60 claimants (who are based in the town centre) claiming a total of £64,551. While use of the scheme would not be mandatory for staff if these staff used the electric car club for 29% of their journeys it is estimated this would cover the full annual cost of the scheme.

7. RISKS IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The success of the car club will depend on the scheme being promoted by management at all levels to the appropriate members of staff at Daneshill House.

7.2 Initially the car club will be limited to 60 staff and although additional memberships can be negotiated with the car club it is unlikely that a greater number will be able to benefit unless the scheme is expanded with additional vehicles.

7.3 The implementation of the scheme will require further consultation with the taxi trade through Environmental Health and the making of the various traffic regulation orders required will be subject to informal and statutory consultation with stakeholders.

7.4 The Pay and Display Income may fall short of the estimates if occupancy of bays is below expectations or if a very substantial number of disabled drivers take advantage of the opportunity to park in the P&D bays free of charge. However occupancy should improve year on year as demand rises and supply within car parks decreases.

8. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 This project does not in general discriminate for or against any particular sector of the community with protected characteristics under the Equalities Act. An improved range of facilities should be to the benefit of residents, taxi trade, retail businesses, shoppers and highway users. The pay and display bays will provide additional free of charge parking in the town centre for blue badge holders.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Borough Solicitor is comfortable that there are no legal implications on the understanding that the E-Car club vehicles are not owned by the Council and that no

surplus can be made by the Council in the event of heavy use by paying members of the public.

- 9.2 Although this report is based on an initial proposal by E-Car Club, quotations will be sought from other similar suppliers in line with procurement requirements to ensure best value for the Council.

10. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Having convenient access to car club vehicles so close to Daneshill House should enable more efficient use of staff time overall. The administration of the club will be carried out for us externally by the Car Club.
- 10.2 However, some management time will be required in promoting the club to staff and determining which members of staff should be offered membership.
- 10.3 HR will be able to add the scheme to its list of staff benefits but will also need to ensure that membership of the scheme is considered and included on standard forms for new starters and leavers.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Plan of proposed layout
Appendix 2 – Car Parking Charges