



**Report to: Environment Committee, 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2021**

**Report of: Corporate Director, Operations, Homes and Communities**

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**Subject: CONSOLIDATION OF WORCESTER CITY COUNCIL OFF-STREET CAR PARKING ORDERS**

**1. Recommendation**

**That Committee:**

- 1.1 Notes the contents of the report and in particular the proposal to introduce parking arrangements for the designated electric/hybrid vehicle bays at St Martins Gate car park.**
- 1.2 Approves the undertaking of a 21-day public consultation exercise in respect of the Draft Worcester City Council (Off-Street Parking Places) Order 2021 at Appendix 1.**
- 1.3 Delegates authority to the Corporate Director, Operations, Homes and Communities in consultation with Chair and Vice-Chair of Environment Committee to implement the Order subject to any changes required following consultation feedback received.**

**2. Background**

- 2.1 Currently the Council has in place four Off-Street Car Parking Orders all of which have been introduced over a period of twelve years. These include –
  - The Worcester City Council (Off-Street Parking Places) Order 2009
  - Worcester City General Car Parks Order 2011
  - Worcester City Council (Croft Road Car Park) Order 2011
  - The Worcester City Council (Off-Street Parking Places) Order 2014
- 2.2 Consolidating all existing Orders into one single Order would provide clarity for both the Council in managing the service but also to members of the public and other key stakeholders who wish to engage the Council in respect of parking services.
- 2.3 In addition, all existing off-street orders do not reflect the most current payment methods and arrangements now in place following the introduction of new payment machines at each council Car Park in 2019. Again, it would seem prudent to consolidate this updating into 1 Order rather than making changes to several documents.
- 2.4 It should be pointed out that this report is not recommending any change to the pricing structure across Council car parks, so there is no increase or decrease in car park charges being proposed.

- 2.5 Finally, the Council's approved Environmental Sustainability Action plan includes an action to install charge points for electric vehicles in the Council's St Martin's Gate car park.
- 2.6 In October 2021 work was completed to install 6 new rapid electric vehicle charge points and 3 fast electric vehicle charge points at St Martin Gate Car Park utilising £400,000 of Accelerated Townsfund awarded to the Council by Government.
- 2.7 These charge points are actively being used with the Council charging a market rate for electric but currently providing the parking element for free to incentivise its use and it is this element that requires formalisation through inclusion within a car parking order.
- 2.8 The two different types of charge points installed are:
- i. Rapid charge points which charge at a rate of 50kW, meaning a vehicle with a 50kWh battery would take approx. one hour to receive a full charge (rate normally slows post 80% capacity).
  - ii. Fast charge points which will each charge two vehicles simultaneously at either 7kW or 22kW, depending on the capability of the vehicle being charged. This means vehicles may take between 2 and 7 hours to charge.
- 2.9 The rapid charge points are more likely to be used by local businesses and visitors to the city. It is anticipated that these user groups are most likely to require a rapid charge in order to continue their journey. The dual fast charge points are more likely to be used by those who are intending to stay longer in the city, such as local residents without their own charging facilities at home or those commuting into the city for work or leisure.
- 2.10 It is proposed to provide 1-hour's free parking to incentivise the active use of the rapid electric vehicle (EV) bays with a maximum 1 hour stay. No limit is intended to be placed on the number of times a vehicle can return to a rapid charging bay as long as the vehicle is actively being charged.
- 2.11 It is proposed to apply the standard current St Martins Gate parking charge for those actively using the fast EV bays with a maximum 4 hour stay after which a vehicle must be moved to another standard bay within the car park. Vehicles utilising a fast- charging bay will not be permitted to return to that same bay within that current day.
- 2.12 It is thought that the free parking option will encourage the use of the rapid charge bays where it is considered that they be utilised as a convenience feature but also allows the user to use spend some dwell time in Worcester.
- 2.13 In respect of the fast charge bays there does not seem to be a simplistic method of providing incentivisation and these bays are far more likely to be used by people who regularly spend time in Worcester for work etc.
- 2.14 From 7 am to midnight all users must adhere to the maximum stay rules of either 1-hour in the rapid charge point bays or 4-hours in the fast charge bays. Disabled badge holders will be able to utilise either of the types of bays free of charge if charging their vehicle and the maximum stay rules will apply.

- 2.15 In order to formalise use of these charge point bays, an existing Car Parking Order would need to be amended or a new one created, and again having regard to the previous paragraphs it would make good sense to incorporate these required changes into one consolidated Order that could then be updated as and when required.
- 2.16 The supplier of the EV charge points have implemented 'Electric Vehicle Charging Etiquette'. It instructs users to not stay in a bay once a vehicle is charged to allow other users to take advantage. In the introduction of the scheme, this is unlikely to be an issue, however over time when there are more EV users this may become an issue.

### **3. Preferred Option**

- 3.1 This report recommends that a public consolidation exercise is undertaken in respect of a single consolidated off street car parking order that covers Worcester City Council's Car Parks.
- 3.2 This will have the impact of bringing together a number of existing car parking orders spanning back 12 years into one document for the benefit of officers managing the service but equally as important customer's and stakeholders who need to engage with parking services.
- 3.3 Furthermore, having one order will provide an opportunity to efficiently update the order to bring it into line with the current parking payment options and to formalise arrangements for using the new EV charging bays at St Martins Gate Car Park.

### **4. Alternative Options Considered**

- 4.1 **Keep standard tariffs for EV bays with no incentivisation** - this option would not incentivise the use of the charge point bays and risk undermining their use and the impact the council play in moving towards a carbon neutral position.
- 4.2 **Subsidised parking for a longer stay than required to reach full charge** - the introduction of charging points is designed to encourage and support the transition to electric vehicles therefore encouraging 'overstaying' has the potential to reduce turnaround on EV charging bays and actually disincentivise electric vehicle owners.

### **5. Implications**

#### **5.1 Financial and Budgetary Implications**

The software update to support the proposals in respect of electric charging points will result in a one-off cost of £1,000 which will be funded from within the existing service revenue budget.

For some time, the EV charging bays have been sets aside for this project and have therefore been generating no income. This combined with the fact that overall demand for car parking has reduced due to more people working from home for longer periods linked to COVID-19, means it is unlikely that incentivising 1 hours free parking per charging session will present a significant opportunity cost.

Although it is clear that there are an ever- increasing number of electric vehicles in use on our roads, it is not expected that the charge points will be utilised to capacity right from the outset and therefore incentivisation is important.

This situation will be monitored closely however as the number of electric vehicles increases with the assurance offered by the availability and reliability of charging options in Worcester and beyond, should this position change.

## 5.2 Legal and Governance Implications

The introduction of parking payment arrangements to support the implementation of electric vehicle charging points at St Martins Gate Car Park would in itself require inclusion in a new Car Parking Order or as an amendment to an existing one in line with the Section 32, 35 and Part IV of Schedule 9 to the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

This report recommends undertaking a public consultation for 21 days on a proposal to have a single consolidated off-street car parking order for Worcester City. In addition, as a Council we will formally consult with both Worcestershire County Council and West Mercia Police on the proposed changes.

## 5.3 Risk Implications

One of the key proposals presented as part of this report is incentivising use of electric vehicle charging bays by the provision of a free hours parking. This may lead to complaints from other customers who would not benefit from such an incentive. There is a clear rationale for this proposal however, which is to encourage and support the transition to electric vehicles in line with the council's commitment around the sustainability agenda and in particular the pledge to make the City carbon neutral by 2030.

### Corporate/Policy Implications

The Draft Car Parking Order includes elements relating to incentivising the use EV charging points at St Martins Gate Car Park. This links with the current Worcester City Plan ambition of being a Healthy and Active City and in particular improving Transportation, reducing congestion and improving air quality.

Furthermore, Council has declared a Climate Emergency and pledged to be carbon neutral by 2030 and so incentivising EV charging points contributes to this pledge and those commitments within the Council's Environmental Sustainability Strategy and supporting Action Plan.

## 5.4 Equality Implications

Subject to this report a public consultation exercise will be carried out which will assist officers in considering whether any unintended equality implications exist. At this stage however none have been identified and it should be noted that the intention is for blue badge holders to park for free whilst charging their vehicle.

## 5.5 Human Resources Implications

No human resource implications have been identified in respect of this report.

## 5.6 Health and Safety Implications

No health & safety implications have been identified in respect of this report.

## 5.7 Social, Environmental and Economic Implications

Paragraph 5.3 sets out the positive environmental implications associated with this report. It is likely that incentivising use of electric vehicle charge points will have economic implications albeit difficult to quantify. These will include people spending some dwell time in Worcester if not already parking at SMG. In addition, if more people are encouraged to purchase an electric vehicle, then this will have longer term economic benefits from reduced fuel payments etc.

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**Background Papers:** N/A