

**Decision Front Sheet**

**Regeneration Services**

**Officer Decision**

<b>OFFICER:</b> Dave Carter	<b>SERVICE AREA FUNCTION:</b> Transport and Infrastructure	<b>DATE:</b> 30 <sup>th</sup> May 2017	
<b>DECISION NO:</b>	<b>DELEGATION POWER</b> Exec Member Development; Sensitive non key decision, portfolio specific	<b>CHECKS &amp; BALANCES:</b> Authority to approve changes under the value of £150K	
<b>DETAILS OF DECISION:</b> Removal of 2 hour free parking offer from Buxton Street & MIMA short stay car parks		<b>IS IT A KEY DECISION?</b> No	
<b>REASONS FOR DECISION:</b>  Review the 2 hour free parking offer within Buxton Street & MIMA short stay car parks due to misuse of the offer. The reintroduction of charges for the first two hours will achieve a higher turnover of vehicles thereby returning the short stay facility that the car parks were originally intended to provide prior to the introduction of the 2 hour free parking offer.  As detailed in attached report			
<b>REPORT/BACKGROUND PAPERS:</b> See attached report – Parking Charges – Review of 2 hours free parking for short stay car parks.			
<b>ANY FURTHER ACTION REQUIRED:</b> None.			
<b>EXECUTIVE MEMBER(S) CONSULTED:</b>			
<b>FINANCE MANAGER CONSULTED (for acceptance of contracts only):-</b> Paul Shout			
<b>SIGNATURE:</b> ..... Head of Transport & Infrastructure	<b>DATE:</b> .....	<b>SIGNATURE:</b> ..... Assistant Director of Economic Development & Regeneration	<b>DATE:</b> .....
<b>SIGNATURE:</b> ..... OFFICER	<b>DATE:</b> .....	<b>SIGNATURE:</b> ..... Executive Member for Regeneration	<b>DATE:</b> .....

<b>SINGLE MEMBER</b>
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**REPORT TITLE:** Parking Charges – Review of 2 hour free parking for short stay car parks

**Executive Member for Regeneration – Councillor Charles Rooney**

**Executive Director of Economic Development and Communities – Kevin Parkes**

**TBC**

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### PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. The purpose of the report is to review the 2 hour free parking offer within Buxton Street & MIMA short stay car parks due to misuse of the offer. The reintroduction of charges for the first two hours will achieve a higher turnover of vehicles thereby returning the short stay facility that the car parks were originally intended to provide prior to the introduction of the 2 hour free parking offer.

### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The recommendation is to remove the 2 hour free parking offer from Buxton Street and MIMA short stay car parks and reintroduce an hourly charge in line with the current short stay hourly rate of £1.10 per hour.

### IF THIS IS A KEY DECISION WHICH KEY DECISION TEST APPLIES?

3. It is over the financial threshold (£150,000)   
It has a significant impact on 2 or more wards   
Non Key

### DECISION IMPLEMENTATION DEADLINE

4. For the purposes of the scrutiny call in procedure this report is

Non-urgent   
Urgent report

If urgent please give full reasons

### BACKGROUND AND EXTERNAL CONSULTATION

5. The 2 hour free parking offer was initially introduced as part of a package of Christmas parking offers across all of the Council operated car parks in November

2012. In early 2013 a decision was made to extend the offers on a six month trial basis.

In June 2013 the offers were scaled back, resulting in the 2 hour free parking offer being removed from some long stay car parks but retained at Buxton Street, MIMA, Captain Cook Square, Zetland and Station Street car parks. Later the offer was also introduced at the Transporter Bridge car park and the new Amber Street car parks.

The aim of the 2 hour free parking offer was to encourage shoppers and visitors to the town centre. The number of vehicles using/ free tickets issued within Council operated car parks has increased and this increase is above the reduced number of vehicles using the privately operated short stay car parks. However it's difficult to quantify how many of these vehicles are increased visitors to the town centre or how many are as a result of the multiple free tickets obtained by motorists that are known to be abusing the offer.

Feedback from the shopping centres was that the 2 hour free parking offer has had a significant negative impact on the number of vehicles using their car parks and on the level of footfall within the shopping centres. However the feedback received from town centre retailers has been very positive.

Abuse of the 2 hour free parking sessions was reported by the Council's Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) soon after the offer was introduced, additional signage was installed to remind customers that only one free ticket is permitted each day and misuse would result in a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) being issued, however the abuse continued and seems to be increasing.

Similar complaints were received from customers waiting for a space within the short stay car parks, who observed town centre office staff returning to their vehicle to obtain additional parking sessions to allow them to park all day. Both CEOs and customers have reported office staff returning to the car park with a number of sets of keys to obtain additional parking sessions for their own and colleague's vehicles. At peak times on weekdays, vehicles can be regularly observed waiting in the thoroughfare for a parking space to become available.

A mayoral complaint was received from a customer, in January 2016, about the misuse of the free 2 hour offer by office staff and the abuse of the parking offer at Buxton Street car park, by Council employees has been highlighted to Transport & Infrastructure. In response, targeted monitoring and enforcement was arranged in February 2016 at Buxton Street & MIMA car parks and showed a relatively high number (between 40- 50% of the total spaces) of vehicles were found to be abusing these car parks to park all day.

Subsequently, in June 2016 the tariff structure was amended in an attempt to encourage motorists wishing to park for more than 2 hours to use the long stay car parks by removing the three hour tariff, making it more expensive for motorists to purchase parking sessions alongside a free 2 hour ticket, to park for up to eight hours. The change to the tariff structure showed an initial improvement but has not had the desired effect and the abuse of the offer has continued once the targeted enforcement stopped.

Motorists using the 2 hour free parking offer are required to obtain a free ticket from the ticket machine and display it in their vehicle. Only one free 2 hour ticket is

permitted per vehicle per day. However the enforcement of 2 hour free parking sessions is very laborious and time consuming as it requires a CEO to record the ticket and vehicle details of each vehicle (i.e. the ticket issue number, time of issue, expiry time, amount paid [where applicable] and vehicle registration). This results in an unrealistic level of enforcement being required that impacts on other areas due to the limited resources available.

As motorists tend to either move their vehicle and obtain additional free tickets on their return or purchase a ticket after the initial free ticket expires and then obtain an additional free ticket again later the same day. All of the vehicles in the car park need to be checked and details recorded at least three times a day (with any new vehicles/ ticket details recorded each time). The recorded information is required to prove that more than one free ticket has been displayed in the same vehicle on the same day. Where this is the case a PCN can then be issued.

This process takes much longer compared with the ease of enforcement within the car parks without the free 2 hour offer. In those cases the CEO would check each vehicle has a valid pay & display ticket/ parking session, if not the vehicle details are entered in to the handheld computer, photographs taken and a PCN is issued once the 10 minute grace period has elapsed, usually other vehicles/ tickets are checked whilst the Officer is observing the grace period.

Further concerns have recently been raised by the Director of MIMA regarding the level of abuse of the 2 hour free parking offer within MIMA car park. This is severely limiting the turnover of visitors to MIMA that utilise this car park. This request to address the free parking abuse issues has prompted the review of the offer within both Buxton Street & MIMA short stay car parks.

## **IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IA)**

6. Impact assessment not required – Free parking for blue badge holders will be retained and the 2 hour free parking offer will be available at Captain Cook Square, Zetland, Station Street, Transporter Bridge and Amber Street car parks.

## **OPTION APPRAISAL/ RISK ASSESSMENT**

### **Option 1: Do Nothing**

Due to the level of abuse of the 2 hours free car parking offer that appears to be increasing and having a detrimental effect on these Town centre short stay car parks a do nothing option would is not considered appropriate.

### **Option 2: Approval of the recommendation detailed in this report**

Changes to the tariff structure have been implemented within Buxton Street & MIMA car parks previously in an attempt to discourage/ reduce the level of abuse of the 2 hour free parking offer. Unfortunately this didn't work and as a result of the difficulties in enforcement compounded by the reduction in the number of Enforcement Officers, reintroduction of charges is the only option to ensure the turnover of spaces and accessible short stay parking.

Risks include negative publicity as a result of removing the free parking offer. However the offers were introduced as a temporary initiative that would be regularly reviewed. The 2 hour free parking offer will be available in other car parks.

In light of the latest concerns raised and the level of misuse of the offer within the short stay car parks, it is felt it is an appropriate time to consider removing the offer from Buxton Street & MIMA car parks and return these car parks back to the short stay facility intended for the benefit of nearby businesses and services.

## **CONSULTATION AND IMPLEMENTATION**

7. As part of the required consultation to make changes to the tariff within the off street car parks, the notice to vary the charges will be advertised both on-site and in the local press to make motorists aware of the intended changes to the tariff before the changes are made.

### **Financial**

8. Minimal costs will be incurred for the required legal notices, changes to signage and ticket machines, to allow the change to the tariff. I would estimate the costs to be £1500 in total. The aim of the proposed changes to the tariff at Buxton Street & MIMA car parks is not to raise income but to encourage turnover of vehicles. An increase in income is a likely result of the removal of the 2 hour free parking offer but would be difficult to quantify at this point due to uncertainty over the level of use of the car parks and how driver behaviour may alter following changes to the tariff. However this would be monitored against the level of use from previous years.

### **Ward Implications**

9. Both Buxton Street and MIMA car parks are located within the Central ward, however the changes will not directly affect residents within the ward but are more likely to impact on motorists who work or visit the Town Centre and use these car parks.

### **Legal Implications**

10. A variation of charge notice is required to make changes to the tariff stated within the off street parking places order for Council operated public car parks. The notice will be advertised both on site and in the local press.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

11. The Executive Member for Regeneration is recommended to approve Option 2;

Removal of the 2 hour free parking offer and reintroduction of an hourly charge at Buxton Street and MIMA car parks.

## **REASONS**

12. The recommended change in tariff will encourage turnover of spaces and provide the intended short stay parking facility for nearby businesses & services. The level of abuse has been reported numerous times through various methods and alternative solutions have been attempted previously. This recommendation is known to work as it worked well in the past prior to the introduction of the free parking offer.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

23. No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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**APPROVED/NOT APPROVED** (Delete as appropriate)

Signature .....	Signature .....
Executive Member for Regeneration	Head of Transport and Infrastructure
Date .....	Date .....