



Committee	Full Council
Month	December 2023 / Agenda 14
Report Title	UDC Parking Review and Catons Lane Car Park
Report Author	Lisa Courtney, Town Clerk
Attachments	None

Summary

UDC has recently concluded a review of its car parking facilities across the district, naturally including Saffron Walden car parks in the review process.

The review, conducted by a 3rd party, considered the current parking regimes across Uttlesford, identifying opportunities and challenges of parking for residents and visitors.

The UDC report concludes with a series of recommendations for consideration by UDC, one of these recommendations being to review the existing car park tariffs. In progressing this matter, UDC Officers will present a report to UDC Cabinet on 18.12.23, with proposed tariff charges for the public car parks, along with a recommended community consultation process.

The car park review identified that Catons Lane car park (owned freehold by SWTC), sits outside of any existing parking regime or charging mechanism. This means there are no current parking restrictions at this car park and no income.

This report and agenda item is not seeking a response from Council on the parking review per se (that is a matter for consideration at a future Planning & Transport Committee), but is seeking a response regarding any potential proposals for the inclusion of Catons Lane car park in the charging and enforcement regime.

Situation

There is an opportunity to include Catons Lane car park within the UDC car parking regime and tariff which would be further included in the imminent public consultation scheduled for December 2023 – January 2024. The matter is therefore time sensitive as UDC need to publish details of their proposals (to the aforementioned UDC Cabinet meeting in December) within the next few days.

Whilst premature to pre-empt the proposed tariffs in the Cabinet report, it is noted any proposed charges for Catons Lane would be comparable to the existing long-term parking charges at Swan Meadow.

Whilst no firm projected income figures can be provided at this juncture, it is estimated the income from Catons Lane (assume charges as per Swan Meadow), would be approximately £70,000 (net of rates and utilities) but excluding

enforcement and repair costs. If these costs are estimated at £20,000 per annum, this leaves £50,000 income which would be split equally between UDC and SWTC. Should SWTC be minded to include Catons Lane in the proposed charging tariff and enforcement regime, it must commit to this process now, enabling UDC's consultation to be fair, transparent and accurate. Whilst commitment would not be completely binding until a service level agreement was reached, it would be highly inappropriate for SWTC to commit at this stage and to then later withdraw from further conversations. UDC's parking consultation and own 2024/25 budget, would be predicated on Caton's Lane being an integral part of the car park process and income generation, should SWTC wish to include Catons Lane in the parking consultation.

Presently, SWTC derives no financial gain or benefit from the Catons Lane car park. The car park is not covered by any charging regulations and is not subject to any parking restrictions meaning there can be no enforcement of fly-parking, overstay or any other parking contravention. This often results in cars being left at Catons Lane for some considerable time.

UDC currently maintains the car park on behalf of SWTC and has advised that from 2024/25, charges for this service would apply. These charges are expected to be in the region of £20,000 per annum, this sum is not currently included in the Town Council's 2024/25 draft budget.

It is possible that SWTC could enter into its own agreement with a car park operator/enforcement organisation meaning SWTC would self-manage the car park. SWTC would need to oversee the enforcement contract, be responsible for all charges and directly manage the car park. Historically SWTC has not been able to secure any interest from an enforcement company due to the limited size of the contract. Including the Catons Lane car park with the UDC contract recognises economies of scale both in enforcement contracts and future maintenance programmes (retarmac, lighting, lining etc).

Options

1. No Action – retain as free, unenforced car park

Leave the car park as a free car park, with no parking tariff and no parking enforcement. The cost of this could be variable depending on the model adopted, models include:

(a) Car park completely managed by SWTC:

Attracting rates of circa £6,000 per annum plus annual management and maintenance charges, estimated at an additional £10,000 per annum. SWTC officers would oversee the asset (not costed): Total £16,000 per annum.

(b) Car park managed by UDC on SWTC's behalf:

Note this option has not been costed with UDC and is a 'best guess'. Attracting rates of circa £6,000 plus a management cost from UDC of circa £14,000 per annum: Total £20,000

2. Introduce a parking tariff and partner with UDC

Under this option the car park would be incorporated within UDC's imminent parking consultation, subsequently leading to inclusion in UDC's overall parking regime.

The car park would be chargeable (comparable to Swan Meadow charges) and an income would be derived from parking charges. As noted previously, this would recognise an income of approximately £70,000 per annum (net of rates and utilities). Enforcement charges and long-term repair costs would need to be subtracted from this sum. If these are estimated at £20,000 per annum, this leaves £50,000 net income which would be split equally between UDC and SWTC.

A service level agreement (SLA) would be required, clearly stating each partner's role and responsibility. It is known a similar SLA currently exists between UDC and Stansted Parish Council and any agreement with SWTC would be similar to this (a copy of this SLA is awaited).

The car park remains SWTC's asset, it is not leased or loaned to UDC but is simply included in the operating management and structure of their car parks.

3. SWTC introduces a charging tariff and enters into its own enforcement contract with an operator

It has not been possible to secure any quotations for enforcement given the time constraints in receiving details of the car park review and presentation of this report. It is recognised that historically SWTC has attempted to negotiate a contract with a parking enforcement operator who would not consider the business as the contract was too small. Based on this historical information, it is unlikely that SWTC would be able to enter into any direct enforcement arrangements with a 3rd party operator.

Officer Recommendation

- (a) To include Catons Lane car park in the imminent car parking tariff consultation being conducted by UDC;
- (b) To adopt a charging and enforcement regime for the Catons Lane car park, in accordance with that already established by UDC in management of their own car parks;
- (c) That the charging regime is based on UDC's car park review and associated recommendations from the consultant and the consultation process (note these details are not currently in the public domain but anticipated will be comparable to the Swan Meadow charges);
- (d) To enter into a service level agreement with UDC regarding future management and maintenance of the car park.