

BRECKLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORT JULY 2024
CLLR ROBIN HUNTER-CLARKE (HERMITAGE WARD)

CONSULTATION ON CAR PARKING CHARGES – ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PROPERTY, PROJECTS AND PROCUREMENT – CLLR PAUL HEWETT

In light of significant budgetary pressures and following recommendations from an independent feasibility study, Cabinet will be considering a proposal to introduce paid parking tariffs across our 30 car parks within the district. This initiative is crucial to ensure the financial sustainability of our car parking services and to align with practices already common in other Norfolk market towns.

Currently, the Council incurs approximately £450,000 annually in maintaining and operating our car parks. These costs are presently covered by our overall council budget, which affects all residents regardless of whether they use the car parks or not. Given the financial constraints that we, like many councils, face, it has become necessary to reassess how we fund our services.

The proposal would see charges similar to, or more affordable than, comparable market towns. Each market town will have one car park offering the first hour's parking for free, with tariffs between 50p and £1 for the first chargeable hour across the district. The aim is to shift the financial burden from the general budget to those who directly use the car parking services. The independent report highlights that our current model is not financially sustainable and that introducing parking charges will better align costs with those who use the service. Moreover, encouraging a higher turnover of parking spaces could increase their availability, potentially boosting footfall on our high streets and bolstering local businesses.

Should the Cabinet approve the proposal, we will move forward in due course with a public consultation period. This will provide residents with the opportunity to give feedback on the proposed tariffs and raise any concerns they may have about these changes.

The expected benefits of this proposal are significant. By ensuring the long-term viability of our public car parking facilities, we can relieve the financial burden on non-users, promoting a more equitable funding model. Additionally, increasing turnover in parking spaces could lead to increased business for local traders, thereby supporting the local economy. Importantly, this shift will also guarantee the sustainability of our budget for our essential services, particularly to our more vulnerable residents.

I acknowledge the financial challenges that residents face, that many will see this as another cost in already difficult financial times, but this is an unavoidable change to ensure the sustainability of our car parks and our other council services.

Should you wish to find out more about the proposal, if you would like more information to answer resident questions or want to direct residents to further information on the proposal, please visit - www.breckland.gov.uk/car-parks/policychange.