



COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET - 4 JANUARY 2021
Report Number	AGENDA ITEM 9
Subject	REVIEW OF PAYMENT OPTIONS IN CAR PARKS
Wards affected	ALL
Accountable member	Cllr Mike Every - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance Email: mike.every@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Maria Wheatley - Parking Manager Email: maria.wheatley@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To enable the Cabinet to review options for payment methods in its car parks.
Annexes	None
Recommendation/s	That Cabinet approves: <i>a) The proposal to remove the option to pay by cash in all car parks.</i> <i>b) A phased approach to the removal of cash payments</i>
Corporate priorities	Respond to the challenges presented by the climate change emergency Ensure that all services delivered by the council are delivered to the highest standard
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Savings from a move to cashless car parking were included in the Council budget proposals for 2020/21. Consultation on the budget proposals was carried out in December 2019 and the outcomes from the consultation were reported to Council in February 2020.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The Council's budget for 2020/21 included an assumed saving of £35,000 resulting from the removal of the option to pay by cash at Council owned car parks. This was included in the Corporate Plan passed by the Council in September 2020 with a proposed completion date of April 2021.
- 1.2. Customers can currently choose between three methods to pay car park charges; cash, card at machine or via mobile phone. The mobile phone option can be accessed via calling or logging into an App.
- 1.3. The removal of the cash option would decrease the Council's carbon footprint by decreasing the number of trips by the Council's cash collectors. Trips that cover the whole district to collect from all machines total approximately 20,000 miles per annum. This figure does not include the additional daily travelling to the secure depot to count and bank.
- 1.4. A small number of pay and display machines are vandalised each year, resulting in down time and repair costs. In recent years machines have been pulled from the ground and stolen. The only reason for a thief to do this would be to access the cash.
- 1.5. The option to pay at the machine by card will remain.
- 1.6. The Council is encouraging its customers to use technology to pay for parking by calling or using an App on their mobile phone. Payment can be carried out while sitting inside the vehicle.
- 1.7. The cash collection contract is a call off contract priced per visit to each pay and display machine. The contractor visits are scheduled, however these are increased or decreased depending on events and circumstances. The current contract ends on 31 March 2022.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1. The Council is responsible for maintaining a balance between the service provided to the public and protecting the assets, reducing costs and considering the impact on the environment. Very little cash is left in the machines at any one time, and therefore there is little financial reward for the thieves. However, there have been nine incidents of theft or vandalism of machines in Council car parks in the last four years with a total cost of nearly £40,000. They have occurred across the District and cause inconvenience for drivers as well as the Council. The estimated loss of parking revenue as a result of just two incidents at Bourton-on-the-Water and the Beeches in Cirencester is £65,000.
- 2.2. Cllr Evemy, the Portfolio Holder, agreed in response to a question from Cllr Ind at the Council meeting on 18 November to extend the final deadline for the removal of cash payments to January 2022 and requested this report outlining a phased approach to the change. The subsequent sections of the report propose how this can be done.

- 2.3. There will be a phased approach to enable the Council and its service provider, PayByPhone, to promote the service and assist users. Additional signs and promotions will take place in 2021, and announcements will be made both onsite and elsewhere at least one month in advance of any change. It is proposed that there will be four phases starting with those car parks where there is a history of theft and vandalism.
- 2.4. Phase (a) In March 2021, remove the cash option at car parks that have repeatedly experienced theft and vandalism; Rissington Road, Bourton-on-the-Water, Mangersbury Road, Stow-on-the-Wold and Beeches Car Park Cirencester.
- 2.5. Phase (b) In June 2021, remove the cash option in those car parks that have a higher percentage of non cash payments; Abbey, Old Station and Leisure Centre Cirencester.
- 2.6. Phase (c) In August 2021, half of the remaining car parks; Forum, Sheep Street and Waterloo Cirencester and West Street, Tetbury and Old Market Way, Moreton in Marsh.
- 2.7. Phase (d) In October 2021, the remaining car parks; Brewery, Cirencester, Church Street and The Chipping, Tetbury and Chipping Campden.
- 2.8. The above phases will have some flexibility to enable the Council and its contractor to assist customers, where necessary, that have no experience of paying cashless and to learn from experiences in earlier phases. Communications, instructions and assistance remains the key to a successful transition with the final end date for completing all phases on 31 January 2022.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. The cost to adapt all 31 pay and display machines to take card payments only is £10,292. The total cost for cash collections in 2019/20 was £57,000. If all cash collections are stopped, the net annual saving in the first year will be around £47,000 with the full annual savings of £57,000 delivered in each subsequent financial year.
- 3.2. The Council will incur additional costs for payments made by debit card of 9 pence per transaction and 8 pence for pay by phone transactions. This is expected to increase costs by £66,000, (based on the number of cash transactions 2019/20). These costs will be offset by savings in parking machine repairs and replacements and in income which will no longer be lost when machines are out of order.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. None

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1. None.

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 6.1. All vehicles displaying a disability blue badge may park free in all Cotswold District Council car parks, therefore payment methods will not affect this group. By phasing in the proposed change will give those not familiar with the technology time to adjust. The Council recognises that not all drivers will have a smartphone with the ability to access the App. However, payments can also be made with a phone call using a mobile phone and through paying by card at the machine.

7. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. Proposal will save on the Council's carbon footprint by reducing the number of vehicle journeys around the district.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 8.1. Members may decide not to approve this proposal and retain the cash payment option.

(END)