

REPORT TO: Cabinet Member for Sustainable Transport

DATE: 19th December 2014

SERVICE AREA: Safer Communities

REPORTING OFFICER: PARKING SERVICES MANAGER
(Mrs Susan McGarry)

SUBJECT: **REVIEW OF SAFER COMMUNITIES
SHOPMOBILITY AND VEHICLE RELEASE FEES
2015/16**

WARD/S AFFECTED: ALL

FORWARD PLAN REF: Key Decision No.N/A

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report deals with the Safer Communities Parking Services charges 2015/16 relating to the Shopmobility service and the car park vehicle release function, which falls under the Terms of Reference of the Cabinet Member Sustainable Transport. The Cabinet, in its medium term financial strategy, agreed that services should increase fees and charges by a minimum of 2.5% subject to service considerations and market forces. This equates to £74,000 for Parking Services including car park tariffs which are being dealt with in a separate report on the same agenda.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to explain the recent increases and usage of these two functions and request that the Cabinet Member recommends to Cabinet to not increase these charges for budget setting purposes for 2015/16.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That no increases to the Shopmobility and car park vehicle release fees for 2015/16 are recommended to Cabinet to be implemented for the reasons given in section 5 of this report.

3.0 RECOMMENDED REASONS FOR DECISION

- 3.1 The usage of the Shopmobility has declined in recent years and prices are currently comparable with other Shopmobility schemes in other areas.

3.2 Vehicle release fees (prior to midnight) increased from £35.00 to £60.00 in 2013/14. It is believed that a further increase will increase the risk of non-payment, complaints and be seen to be significantly higher than the costs to actual release a vehicle after car park closing times.

4.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTION/S CONSIDERED AND RECOMMENDED FOR REJECTION

4.1 The following alternatives have been considered.

1) To increase charges.

It is not believed that it is appropriate to increase charges at this time.

5.0 THE REPORT

5.1 The Shopmobility service is operated by Parking Services and charges increased in 13/14 by 50 pence per visit and on the annual membership fee, see Appendix A. Since the service was set up, the costs of mobility scooters has reduced considerably and usage of the Service has declined in the last 10 years (from 220 members to 38 members).

5.2 Since the fees are small for this service, an increase of 2.5% equates to 9p for each members hire and 16p for visitors hire. If rounded up to 10p and 20p respectively, the potential annual increase in income based on visits made in 13/14 is just £120.00.

5.3 If the annual members fee was increased by 30p (from £12.50 to £12.80 which is 2.5%) this would result in an increased annual income of £11.40.

5.4 Due to the small additional income (total of £131.40), it is felt that no increase should be applied in 15/16 but a larger increase of at least 5% is considered in 16/17.

5.5 Car park vehicle release fees are payable if a customer leaves their car in a car park after the car park is locked and need their vehicle to be released out of hours. It applies to our multi storey car parks in Harrogate i.e. Jubilee, Victoria and West Park. The fee is £60 and this increased significantly in 13/14, see Appendix A. Prior to midnight we are usually able to use shift working staff to release vehicles and in 13/14 we were called out 68 times for this service.

5.6 We encourage customers to pay by cash to reduce invoicing requirements (we do not have the facility to take debit/credit cards). In 13/14, approximately 62% (39 customers) have paid by cash.

5.7 A 2.5% increase is £1.50 per vehicle release and will introduce the requirement for staff to carry change. Based on releases in 13/14, this equates to a potential increased income of £100.00 per annum and it is likely that invoicing will become the preferred method of payment again. This increases administration as well as potential bad debts and it is felt

that the additional workload is not worth it for such a small increase in income.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The recommendation to not increase the car park vehicle release and Shopmobility fees has been discussed with Finance and no increase in these charges has been factored into the Council's budget setting process for 2015/16.

7.0 REQUIRED ASSESSMENTS AND IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The following were considered: Financial Implications; Human Resources Implications; Legal Implications; ICT Implications; Strategic Property/Asset Management Considerations; Risk Assessment; Equality and Diversity (the Public Sector Equality Duty and impact upon people with protected characteristics). If applicable, the outcomes of any consultations, assessments, considerations and implications considered necessary during preparation of this report are detailed below.

7.2 *Finance comments – Comments are incorporated into the report.*

7.3 *Legal comments – Not required.*

7.4 *Audit comments – Not required.*

7.5 *Procurement comments – Not required.*

7.6 *ICT comments – Not required.*

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

8.1 The small increase in potential income compared to the likely increase in administration and risk of increased bad debt does not merit the increase of these charges in 15/16.

Background Papers – None

OFFICER CONTACT: Please contact Susan McGarry if you require any further information on the contents of this report. The Officer can be contacted by telephone on 01423 556971 or e-mail at susan.mcgarry@harrogate.gov.uk