

Committee(s): Epping Forest and Commons Committee Digital Services Sub (Finance) Committee	Date(s): 13 th January 2020 20 th March 2020
Subject: Infrastructure – car park charges at Farthing Downs, Riddlesdown and Burnham Beeches	Public
Report of: Director of Open Spaces	For Information
Report author: Andy Barnard – Superintendent of the Commons	
Summary A project to provide infrastructure to enable the introduction of charges for the parking of cars at Riddlesdown and Farthing Downs and to improve the existing infrastructure at Burnham Beeches, was approved by Project Sub Committee (Gateway 2) in March 2019. Funding of £130,000 having been previously secured via the central ‘Priorities Investment Pot’ in May 2018. Since that approval, a data collection exercise has been completed to inform future income expectations. A soft market test exercise was also undertaken to identify options, clarify technical challenges such as connectivity, software and hardware, explore administration and enforcement options and to provide indicative capital and revenue costs. Recommendation Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Note the progress made leading to the current competitive tender process and the steps that will be taken to ensure delivery by late summer 2020.	

Main Report

Background

- Charges for car parking are a common method of generating income across the City Corporation's Open Spaces. Continuing pressure on budgets led to a review (2018) of car park provision and an examination of the potential to expand charges across The Commons Division. The review concluded that an increase in car parking related income was possible at Burnham Beeches and new income streams could be created at Riddlesdown and Farthing Downs.

Current Position

- Voluntary car park charges were introduced at Burnham Beeches in 2007. Payments became mandatory in 2011. The solar powered payment terminals are now 13 years old and are in urgent need of replacement.

3. Farthing Downs and Riddlesdown provide car-parking facilities to a high presentational standard but do not charge for their use, nor do they have the necessary infrastructure to do so.
4. Funding to provide new car park infrastructure at Burnham Beeches, Riddlesdown and Farthing Downs was approved under the central 'Priorities Investment Pot' (PIP) Scheme in 2018.
5. A more detailed report was submitted as a Gateway 2 report and approved by Project sub Committee in March 2019.
6. Since that time a 6-month data collection period has been completed (at a cost of £5000) that has informed our knowledge of car park usage and will help to set the eventual charging regime.
7. The Gateway process for this project is 'Light' and requires final sign off by the Director of Open Spaces following a competitive tender to design and deliver the necessary works.
8. A soft market test was conducted in November 2019 to minimise risk and ensure appropriate understanding of the technical issues. This exercise has informed the approach taken by the competitive tender exercise.

The Tender Approach – Design, Build, Administer

9. The soft market testing exercise identified several companies that can provide a complete design and build solution tailored to the specific needs of the three geographic locations at a fixed capital cost. Each company can also provide back office administration, enforcement options and associated revenue costs. As follows:
 - a. Ground works as necessary
 - b. ANPR equipment, payment terminals and connectivity
 - c. Web/Cloud based software working independently of the of the City's IS infrastructure whilst remaining compliant with COL policy and procedure
 - d. Back office administration solutions for the management of payments up to and including if necessary automated enforcement of Parking Charge Notices.
10. **From the Soft Market Testing Exercise Members are informed that the competitive tender includes:**
 - e. **ANPR.** Automatic Number Plate Recognition Cameras will be used where technically possible and as far as the PIP budget allows, at Burnham Beeches (Lord Mayors Drive), and Farthing Downs and Riddlesdown car parks. Two very small car parks at Burnham Beeches (The Dell and The Stag) are not suitable for ANPR cameras so, as a minimum, may be reliant on alternative options described in paragraph 10.f. & 10.g below.
 - f. **Connectivity.** 4G connectivity and/or remote ADSL connections between hardware and software at ANPR enabled sites

- g. **Cashless Payments.** The opportunity will be taken to avoid cash payments. Physical handling and reconciliation of cash is costly and can be readily avoided by other payment options. Avoidance of cash payments will future proof the system as cash handling agents such as G4S continue to withdraw their services from the market. This 'cashless' approach also matches that taken by the City in the Square Mile. Each site will offer payment solutions from the following suite of options as best suits that location:
- i. **Account payment.** Whereby the user has set up an account with the chosen service provider and ANPR automatically records and bills parking activity to that account
 - ii. **App payment.** Whereby the user pays the fee from an app loaded onto their phone or tablet
 - iii. **Pay by Phone.** Whereby the user calls the service provider to pay the fee using their phone
 - iv. **Payment Terminals.** Whereby the user pays at a terminal using their debit/credit card. Solar powered terminals will be evaluated to reduce ground works/connection costs
 - v. **Delayed Payment.** Whereby those that do not have mobile phones, credit cards etc. have an agreed period to pay by other means, generally within 24 hours.
- h. **Software/hardware.** All software, hardware and back office functions will be Web/Cloud based and independent of the City's IS system. Payment Apps are widely used across the UK and can be downloaded from Apple and Android App Stores. As the City's Current Pay by Phone contract 'RINGO' has been specified although other providers might be considered.
- i. **Back Office processes and costs.** To reduce the impact of introducing car park charges on the small local teams at Riddlesdown and Farthing Downs and to modernise the practice currently used at Burnham Beeches, Back Office administration of car park payment monitoring and enforcement will form part of the tender process as an external service. Back Office activities will accrue annual costs that will be met from the income generated by the parking fees.
- j. **Enforcement options.** To ensure that the cashless approach does not cause problems for visitors who arrive without the means to pay a 'use now pay within 24 hours' system will be trialled. In those instances, Parking Charge Notices will only be sent out after the 24-hour payment window has passed.

The tried and tested enforcement protocol used at Burnham Beeches since 2011 will be adopted across all sites to ensure consistency.

ANPR can automate the enforcement process and reduce the amount of staff time required. However, it is likely that there will be areas

where ANPR is not a viable/affordable option and physical checks will be required, albeit this need not be onerous, including:

- i. **Burnham Beeches. The Dell and Stag Car Parks.** Occasional patrols, passing to carry out other duties will continue to be conducted by Rangers. Non-payment will be entered directly onto the back office set up.
- ii. **All sites. Parking on City Corporation owned roadside verges passing through the open spaces.** Roadside verge parking will be closely monitored across all project sites, as is currently the case at Burnham Beeches. Additional measures will be considered should displacement prove to be a long-term issue.
- iii. **Misuse of disabled parking bays etc.** Rangers will conduct occasional patrols whilst passing to carry out other duties. Bay misuse will be directly entered onto the back office set up.
- k. **Whitelisting, annual passes etc.** Vehicles that require parking access to the site without payment such as deliveries, contractors, staff, volunteers, annual pass and blue badge holders will be 'whitelisted' so that charges do not apply.
- l. **Cost of parking.** Local protocols have yet to be set but will be consistent across the Open Spaces as far as local benchmarking/consultation and income generation requirements allow.

Proposals

11. The outcome of the competitive tender exercise is expected in February 2020. The submission will be assessed, and a recommendation made to the Director of Open Spaces prior to March 31st, 2020 seeking authority to proceed to the delivery stage.
12. Project delivery is anticipated for completion across all three sites by September 2020.

Corporate & Strategic Implications.

13. The project supports the following elements of the Corporate Business Plan

Shape outstanding environments

- We are digitally and physically well connected and responsive.
- We inspire enterprise, excellence, creativity and collaboration.
- We have clean air, land and water and a thriving and sustainable natural environment.
- Our spaces are secure, resilient and well-maintained

In addition, the open Spaces Business plan as follows:

- Open spaces and historic sites are thriving and accessible.
- Business practices are responsible and sustainable

Implications

14. **Finance.** The soft market testing exercise gives confidence that costs should not exceed the remaining £125,000 delivery budget.
15. **Hardware and software** implications are currently being assessed by the IT Architecture team. The project and this draft report have also been communicated to the Director of Transportation and Public Realm.
16. **The Soft Market Testing and Competitive tender process**, including the soft market testing exercise, is being coordinated by the City's Procurement team.
17. **The City Solicitor** advises that Section 9 of the City of London (Various Powers) Act 1977 allows the City Corporation to provide parking places and to make reasonable charges.
18. **Other consultations.** The Human Resources Dept. and City Surveyor have been consulted as part of the drafting of this report.
19. **Equalities statement.** Will be carried out following assessment of the tender process outcome
20. **Partnership implications.** The London Borough of Croydon who manage adjacent car parks are aware of this project and are themselves considering the introduction of car park charges. It is anticipated that this will be discussed as part of the benchmarking process of car park fees.

Conclusion

21. Car park payments and associated infrastructure will be introduced at Farthing Downs and Riddlesdown and updated at Burnham Beeches
22. A competitive tender exercise is underway for the provision of appropriate hardware, and software including installation and annual administration and enforcement costs
23. Funding of £130,000 has been secured from the PIP fund of which £125,000 remains for delivery. Soft market testing suggests that this sum is enough. However, each geographic site is likely to require a different variant of the available options shown in paragraph 10 and the available budget will be an influence.
24. As a 'light' project, sign off at Gateway 5 (authority to proceed) can be provided by the Director of Open Spaces and will be sought prior to 31st March 2020.

25. It is anticipated that the project will be delivered and operational by September 2020.

Appendices

None

Background Papers.

- Gateway 2 Project report to Project Sub Committee – March 2019
- Project Priorities bid. March 2018.

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