

# ***Information/Discussion Paper***

## **Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

**11 May 2011**

### **Proposal to upgrade car park software and payment systems**

This note contains the information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Committee, but where no decisions from Members are needed

#### **1. Why has this come to scrutiny?**

##### **Background**

During 2010/11 the Head of Integrated Transport & Sustainability initiated an audit review of Parking Services. This review found that over a number of years, little investment had been made in the parking management and operating systems at CBC.

This paper sets out the rationale for proposed investment in improved car parking technology and offers members the opportunity to comment on, or endorse the proposals, prior to a decision regarding implementation.

#### **2. Summary of the Issue**

The review concluded that CBC should consider investment across the parking facilities portfolio. This would help to ensure that we are 'future-proofing' the infrastructure that supports Cheltenham's move towards becoming a "Smarter Travel Town". In addition it would enable the Council to deliver cashable savings, improved customer satisfaction and better overall performance.

The first stage of the investment is directed at the existing management and operating systems at Regent Arcade and Grosvenor Terrace car parks, which are now considered to be at the end of their expected life cycle.

#### **3. Summary of evidence/information**

As part of the review and evaluation process, CBC undertook a 'soft market test' by inviting a number of leading suppliers of parking management and operating equipment to present their systems. Part of the exercise was to explore the extent to which new operating systems can meet customer needs and expectations more fully than the systems we already have.

It is clear from the review that the demand from customers for smarter choices is a key driver in the market place. It is therefore essential that CBC positions itself to meet that demand and ensure it is able to grow with the market as it evolves. Parking today is not just about the use and management of space. It is about enabling customers to have a pleasant and rewarding experience. In summary, visiting Cheltenham needs to be simple, seamless and hassle free.

In addition, we need to consider how we can support the “Cheltenham Experience”, by offering options such as incentivised parking and add-on services through which you can combine your day out in Cheltenham with a range of leisure and retail experiences.

The key conclusions of our review are that our parking service needs to be customer led and that the customer experience can be significantly improved by advances in technology. For example Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) supports services like virtual permits, less manual engagement in the operation and the ability for the customer to self-manage their parking choices. There is also a demand for systems that can enable the use of smart cards, smart and android phone applications and cashless payment options.

#### **4. Next Steps - possible next steps for the committee to consider**

The right choice for CBC is clear: to move Cheltenham towards becoming a “Smarter Travel Town” by investing in management and operating systems that will address medium to long term customer needs,. This will have the benefit of reducing the current staffing need and facilitate a reduction in related revenue expenditure.

#### **Objectives**

The objectives of this investment programme would be as follows:

1. To reduce the on-going cost of operating Regent Arcade car park, by installing a lower maintenance and more automated parking solution. This would provide a benchmark against which we could consider extending the same solution to the rest of the parking network;

By not investing now we will continue to incur repair costs which are unpredictable, reactive and disruptive and are effectively propping up a worn out system.

If the Regent Arcade upgrade is successful, similar arrangements would then be implemented in Grosvenor Terrace and subject to business case priority, could also form part of a wider upgrade of systems across CBC car parks from 2012-13 onwards.

2. To protect existing parking revenue streams and reduce reactive maintenance expenditure , by providing the customer with a reliable, accessible, easy to use and flexible parking solution;
3. To ensure that our parking payment systems remain secure and compliant with industry standards;
4. To provide a technology platform that supports CBC's ‘Smarter Travel Town’ approach over the course of the next five to ten years;
5. To meet the requirements set out in the bridging the gap programme for reducing staffing costs associated with operating Regent Arcade car park.

It is important that members are involved in this process as part of the on-going development of Cheltenham’s Parking Strategy, therefore Councillor John Rawson, Cabinet Member for Built Environment has asked for the wider strategic issues to be further considered by the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee at its next meeting.

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| <b>Background Papers</b> | None.   |
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| <b>Accountability</b>    | Councillor John Rawson  |
| <b>Scrutiny Function</b> | Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee   |