

## 24. EXTENSION OF THE FIRST HOUR'S FREE PARKING – MANCHESTER STREET CAR PARK

**Officer responsible**  
Parking Operations Manager

**Author**  
Maurice Smith, DDI 371-1738

The purpose of this report is to bring a submission from businesses located in the vicinity of the Manchester Street Parking Building before the Committee. The submission as it stands requests that the "first hour free" parking trial currently underway at the Lichfield St, Farmers and Crossing car parks be extended to include the Manchester Street car park.

### BACKGROUND

A letter dated 15 November 2001 has been received from Mr Gregg Brimmicombe of A Verkerk Ltd presenting a submission from approximately 60 businesses within the vicinity of the Manchester Street Car Park requesting that the "first hour free" parking trial be extended to include this car park.

Subsequently a further letter dated 20 November 2001 was received from Mr Brimmicombe raising a number of additional issues pertaining to the Manchester Street car park. For the purpose of this report, only one of the additional issues has been included for discussion that being the opening of the car park on Saturdays, particularly during the lead-up to Christmas this year.

Staff have since discussed this matter with Mr Brimmicombe and advised that a report encompassing the submission will go before the February meeting of the Sustainable Transport and Utilities Committee. Mr Brimmicombe then proposed as an interim option that the free parking trial be extended to the Manchester Street car park for the three weeks of December leading up to Christmas, and that the car park also be opened on Saturday 8, 15 and 22 December.

Copies of both letters plus the associated submission have been separately circulated.

### DISCUSSION

#### First Hour Free Parking Trial

During the development of the current Annual Plan the Council resolved to implement an 11 month trial in which people parking at the Lichfield Street, Farmers and Crossing car parks would receive the first hour's parking free of charge. This initiative was ring-fenced to these car parks primarily on the basis that the Lichfield Street and Farmers car parks are the main shoppers car parks. It was necessary to include the Crossing car park within the scope of the initiative due to the fact charges at this facility are contractually tied to both the Lichfield Street and Farmers car parks. The other primary consideration was the additional cost of extending the initiative to other car parks. As such no funding was allocated to extend the free parking initiative to Manchester Street or other car parks.

However, should the Council be of a mind to favourably consider the interim option proposed by Mr Brimmicombe, ie, to extend the free parking trial to the Manchester Street car park for the three weeks leading up to Christmas, starting 10 December, then based upon the current status quo the cost of this in forgone revenue is estimated to be in the range of \$12,000 to \$15,000. (Say \$13,500)

#### Saturday Opening of Manchester St Car Park

In March 1999 the Manchester Street car park ceased being opened on Saturdays, except in conjunction with specific events such as the Santa Parade. The decision to cease opening as a matter of course on Saturdays was driven by two factors. Firstly the lack of demand, with on average around 20-25 vehicles parked each Saturday most of which belonged to staff working in the area; and secondly the opening of the Farmers car park which exacerbated the very poor Saturday utilisation of Manchester Street.

In terms of the submission as it relates to Saturday opening there is no budget provision to open Manchester Street on every Saturday during the course of a year, nor based on past experience is the demand likely to make opening economically viable.

However, opening for the final three Saturdays leading up to Christmas is considered a more viable option, particularly as the car park is already scheduled to be open on Saturday 22 December, leaving just two unbudgeted days to fund at a marginal cost of approximately \$1,600. On the proviso patronage is sufficient staff are confident this cost would be off-set by the revenue generated and as such opening on Saturday 8 and 15 December should at worst be cost neutral.

## **Promotion**

Again no funding has been provided for promotion of the extension of free parking to the Manchester Street car park, nor for that matter to advertise additional Saturday openings.

Moreover promotional material and advertising have already been put in place that relates to the current three participating facilities only, and at this late stage it is unlikely changes to include Manchester Street can be made given the lead times for such changes at this time of the year.

Therefore should the Council elect to take up the options proposed by Mr Brimmicombe it is suggested it would be a logical and reasonable arrangement for businesses in the area concerned to include relevant promotion in their own advertising, at their cost.

## **CONCLUSION**

The estimated cost (based upon the current status quo in so far as utilisation and revenues are concerned) of extending the first hour free parking trial to the Manchester Street car park during the three weeks prior to Christmas, beginning 10 December, is \$13,500. No funding for this cost has been provided.

Opening the car park on Saturday 8 and 15 December is assessed as being achievable on a cost neutral basis.

Therefore implementing the interim option proposed by Mr Brimmicombe will carry an unbudgeted cost in the order of \$13,500.

**Recommendation:** For discussion.

**Chair's  
Recommendation:** Not seen by Chair.