

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: ENVIRONMENT AND PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

21st February 2012

Date of Meeting:

Report of:

Subject/Title:

Portfolio Holder:

Parking Services Manager

Cheshire East Parking Management : tariff structure options; and general update

Cllr Rod Menlove

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 The report offers options for a Cheshire East car park tariff structure and provides an update on Parking Reviews, as well as developments proposed for future control of parking.
- 1.2 The current car park tariff structures vary between different locations in the Borough. They are a mixture of inherited tariffs from pre-LGR authorities, new Cheshire East tariffs and some pre-LGR tariffs partly adjusted in 2011 to achieve a fairer structure for some individual towns. This report suggests some alternative options for the creation of a new Cheshire East Council Tariff Structure, which
 - conforms to the Borough Parking Strategy and
 - takes account of the classification of towns and villages as assessed by the Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.3 The proposal includes an extension of the 'zonal' approach to parking tariffs in larger towns, reflecting different demands in central business centres and the needs of shoppers.

2.0 Recommendation: The Committee is requested:

- 2.1 to review the options presented in this report and to express a preference or to suggest other approaches for officers to consider.
- 2.2 to comment on the proposed developments set out in section 5. below

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The Cheshire East Parking Strategy sets out the principles for the application of tariffs to car parks as follows:

Off Street Parking Management

It is expected that an appropriate charging level combined with the enforcement will help the authority to make the best use of the car park assets which in turn is likely to make parking easier and more attractive to the short term customers upon whom our towns rely heavily. Longer stay parking in the most convenient central car parks puts undue pressure on visitor and short term parking.

Long stay parking should continue to be priced more cheaply per hour than short stay and usually limited to less central car parks. (Where the capacity of central car parks can cope, long stay is allowed but controlled with higher fees).

The pricing mechanism adopted is appropriate for the following purposes:

- Managing demand, required to promote the use of town centre short stay spaces for shoppers and visitors.
- Ensuring that direct users pay for the service wherever practical.
- Providing finance to implement other strategic transport aims

Key Principles

The key principles that flow from the Parking Strategy are:

1. Parking should be managed in a way that assists the vitality/viability of town centres and villages through local parking policies and standards which take into account the needs of local residents, disabled drivers, shops, businesses, employment and education.
2. Local parking policies and standards to be consistent with regional and national guidance.
3. Parking management will seek to assist with environmental improvement in town centres.
4. Parking charges should be set at levels which
 - reflect the role and economic strength of centres,
 - effectively manage demand, and
 - respond to integrated transport and sustainability

Objectives

The objectives of the Strategy are linked to the wider Local Transport Plan “Areas for Action”:

Primary Local Transport Plan Area for Action (secondary areas)	Parking Strategy Objective
<i>Create conditions for business growth</i> <i>(Unlock the potential of our towns)</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Control and manage parking so as to sustain the economic vitality of Cheshire East town centres and villages2. Provide excellent parking facilities, at an appropriate cost, to users and Council tax payers.

The Strategy also sets out how these objectives are to be achieved:

Provide excellent parking facilities, at an appropriate charge, to customers and Council tax payers

- Review charges annually, in accordance with the Council’s Fees and Charges policy, at least recovering the cost of the car park service. The annual review should consider the charges applied at comparator Councils and similarities in demand profile of each of the town centres and villages.

- The scale of charges should conform to a consistent pattern across the stay periods in all towns, to improve choice and optimise management of parking supply. The steps in charge level from one time period to the next should be broadly consistent throughout all locations.

4.0 Factors affecting tariff setting:

4.1 Town Rankings: The Committee previously studied the town centres of the Borough from a parking perspective and has devised a scheme of classification or ranking for these towns. This reflects the type of town in terms of services provided, as well as attractions and type or character. The results of the study were summarized in the table attached to the Committee's October 2010 Report (Appendix 2).

4.2 **Members are invited to consider whether such a classification of towns should be used in allocating parking tariffs, or if some other means should be used. For example, recent studies of economic well being might also be utilised.**

4.3 **Portas Review** : In considering town centres, the recent Portas report has highlighted the availability and cost of parking as one factor in the economic health of towns. Members may wish to consider whether allowance should be made for this, and in which towns, in setting tariff grades. Concessions will affect parking income but may be worthwhile if a wider economic benefit to specific towns can be identified. This should also influence Members' views as to whether new tariff allocations should take place in more than one step, or indeed at all in the short term. However it should be acknowledged that a decision to reduce short stay parking tariffs implemented during the 2012/13 Financial Year must result in a budget shortfall. 50% average of parking income comes from up to 2 hours' stay purchased.

4.4 **Tariff Steps**: at present there is inconsistency in the way the tariffs step up across time purchased. The tariff steps should ideally follow a logical pattern which is transparent to customers and at the same time reflects the needs to control long and short stay parking. The current position is shown at Appendix 1 in graph form, with a graph of the following proposal (table 1) also for comparison.

Table 1 Proposed Tariff Step ratios									
Uses	Tariff	1/2 hr	up to 1 hr	up to 2 hrs	up to 3 hrs	up to 4 hrs	Up to 5 Hrs	up to 6 hrs	up to 10hrs
town centre shoppers/visitors	A1	0.6	1	2	3	4	6	7	8
Less central	B1		1	2	3	4	6	7	8
small towns/edge of centre	C1		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
suburbs/villages	D1		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
rural/leisure/new	E1		1	2	3	4	5	6	7

- 4.5 In table 1, the ratios of the charge for each time period to that for 1 hour, are shown. This is to make clear how the steps in tariffs have been calculated. (ie the price for 2 hours is 2 x the price for 1 hour, etc).
- 4.6 There is a deliberate larger step at over 4 hours in central town car parks to reflect the need to discourage longer stay there. This is in line with the policy stated above. However it has been amended from the current position where the step, in Macclesfield, occurs at 3 hours. Consultation has indicated that this is felt to be discouraging to business in the town centre and so this 'step' has been moved to a 5 hour stay.
- 4.7 Charges are calculated from the starting point of the 1 hour charge. This ensures that given the need to keep the minimum stay charge at a level not to discourage shoppers, all other charges are then in proportion. (The charts below (Appendix 1) are a representation of the steps to illustrate the improved position in the proposed structure).
- 4.8 The new structure would have the advantage of a clear, logical background rooted in both the agreed Parking Strategy and the work of the committee. In some towns these tariff structures already apply.
- 4.9 **The Committee may wish to suggest other methods of devising tariff steps.** In principle any ratio could be used, though rounding to acceptable coin differences and price points need to be considered. (Also, the increase over time should not be too "shallow" a graph curve as there need to be clear decision points for each customer as to what time period to purchase). The important element is that a consistent calculation of the steps can be demonstrated and explained. Should the structure, or something like it, be agreed upon for the Borough as a whole, further consideration will be needed as to
- how and where the structure should replace the existing one, and
 - whether this should take place in one or more phases.

5. Developments in Charging and Control

5.1 Pay By Phone: In November 2011 Parking Services began a trial of this service. Customers may use their mobile phone to buy parking time and may also top up if time is running out. This benefits them by removing the need for change in moderate to large time purchases, and also avoids the risk of penalty. The trial seeks to determine whether, after paying the provider its management fee, the Council gains or loses income. In the two months so far there has been a strong take up and an apparent net gain in income (little if any loss in pay and display income overall) though penalty income may be reduced in the longer term. The latter should be seen as a benefit given reduced contravention leading to better use of the car parks and reduced penalty administration and complaints to the Council. Should this continue for a maximum of 15 months the trial will be converted to a contract via the procurement process.

5.2 Pay by card: two card accepting pay machines will be installed during February in two car parks. Should take up and income be sufficient, again roll

out across more sites in the Borough will be pursued subject to approval of the necessary capital bid.

- 5.3 Pay on Exit:** two sites in Macclesfield lend themselves to a further trial of this method of parking control. Customers park without fear of penalty due to being timed out as in a pay and display car park. The system is very expensive to install and maintain and also slows vehicle throughput considerably, which makes it only appropriate for very few sites such as the Grosvenor Centre and Town Hall car parks in Macclesfield. A more detailed assessment of this control method as against others, is available separately. For both this and card payments trials extension, capital bids have been made for the forthcoming financial year.
- 5.4 Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR):** cameras linked to a parking control system detect vehicle registrations and match these with either a permit list or with data from a pay and display machine which requires customers to enter their registration number upon payment. Discrepancies may be issued with a Penalty Charge Notice by default, in the post, (although human screening normally takes place before these are triggered).
- 5.5** At present this system cannot be used on public car parks operated by Local Authorities who must prove first that control by conventional methods on the specific sites is “difficult or sensitive” (Traffic Management Act 2004) . This is rarely, if ever the case on surface car parks or even multistoreys in most towns or villages. A further difficulty is that disabled drivers would show up as non payers and might attract a PCN. The alternative is to charge disabled drivers for parking on ANPR controlled car parks. Again the systems are very expensive although 100% compliance is offered and would also reduce patrol costs to some extent.
- 5.6 ANPR cameras and systems in a vehicle** may be used for on street enforcement where the TMA rules are complied with: typically these are for bus lanes and school crossings. Subject to capital bid approval such a mobile system may be purchased in the new Financial year and this should enhance mobile patrol effectiveness although this will not reach levels of penalty issue experienced in other authorities who unlike Cheshire East, have extensive bus lane contraventions. Authorities investing in such solutions usually have significant traffic control issues to deal with (typically in cities) which make the business case robust. In the case of Cheshire East, at present that case is marginal but has been submitted for capital support this coming year, as the need is likely to grow.
- 5.7 Retailer linked parking promotions:** we continue to offer opportunities for town centre retailers to link purchases to parking discounts. Two such schemes operate now, in Knutsford, and Wilmslow, whereby customers purchase a splittable ticket, redeeming one portion in the store while displaying the other in the vehicle as evidence of payment. The higher cost of the split ticket stationery is borne by the Council, while participating stores bear the cost of the refund to the customer. It can be an effective method of driving increased footfall or dwell time in stores leading to improved turnover and good will for the relatively small cost of a parking refund. This scheme was also operated in Congleton at the start of charging there but was discontinued by the retailers themselves. There should be scope to offer this type of scheme elsewhere in the Borough should retail and business groups consider it beneficial.
- 5.8 Other means of cost recovery:** The Committee may wish to consider other means of parking control and cost recovery, which could include such ideas as:

- a “buy two hours, get a third hour free” promotion in limited locations- designed to improve dwell times in shopping centres
- an extension of the dual ticket schemes referred to above
- improving or adding to pay by phone options to encourage return visits or longer dwell times
- create other charging options through extending current periods

5.9 Town Centre Parking Reviews: the programme of reviews continues with those for Alderley Edge and Crewe recently completed. A review of Handforth is now in progress. The reviews produce recommendations for improvements to on and off street parking management in the central business districts of our towns and in the smaller centres. Many of these improvements involve requirements to change or introduce new Traffic Regulation Orders or Car Park Orders and so these necessarily take longer to deliver due to the statutory processes involved. For this reason there is a time lag after completion of the Reviews to the delivery of the changes. The list of reviews completed to date is as follows:

- Macclesfield) : before 1/4/2009 by Macc BC/Cheshire CC
- Wilmslow) :
- Congleton
- Knutsford
- Nantwich
- Crewe
- Alderley Edge

It is anticipated that the remaining centres will be completed by the end of this calendar year. These include:

- Poynton
- Bollington
- Prestbury
- Middlewich
- Sandbach (planned for June / July 2012)
- Holmes Chapel
- Audlem

5.10 Car Park Improvements: there is a programme of continuous inspection of car parks to identify maintenance and development needs. These are collated and form part of the capital programme, demonstrating a commitment to reinvest some of the income surplus earned in the car park assets. Since the establishment of the Ringway Jacobs Highway contract, work required on Off street car parks is now forwarded to Cheshire East Highways managers for integration in their work programmes, hopefully to deliver economies of scale through the contract.

5.11 Residents Parking Schemes : these continue to be implemented where there is clear demand for a majority of affected residents in specific zones (groups of streets) and where such schemes are practical on the ground. Those recently completed or nearing completion are:

- Congleton (3 schemes)
- Alderley Edge (2 schemes) (subject to final consultation on TROs)
- Gladstone St Crewe

At other earlier stages of consultation are:

- Ladyfield St/Bollin Walk Wilmslow
- Central Macclesfield (to replace old off street schemes)
- Hungerford Road Crewe
- Meredith Street and area, Crewe

Many of these schemes originate from the Town Centre Parking Reviews and demonstrate the value of the consultative element of these reviews.

6. **Wards Affected** : All

7. **Local Ward Members** : All

8. **Policy Implications including**

8.1 **Carbon reduction:** Effective parking management should assist with reducing carbon emissions through reduced congestion and unnecessary vehicle movements in town centres.

8.2 **Health:** N/A.

9. **Financial Implications (Authorised by the Director of Finance and Business Services)** N/A

10. **Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)** N/A

11. **Risk Management** N/A

12. **Options**

12.1 To propose a different tariff structure, or to recommend no changes be made to the existing structure.

13. **Access to Information** : Contact

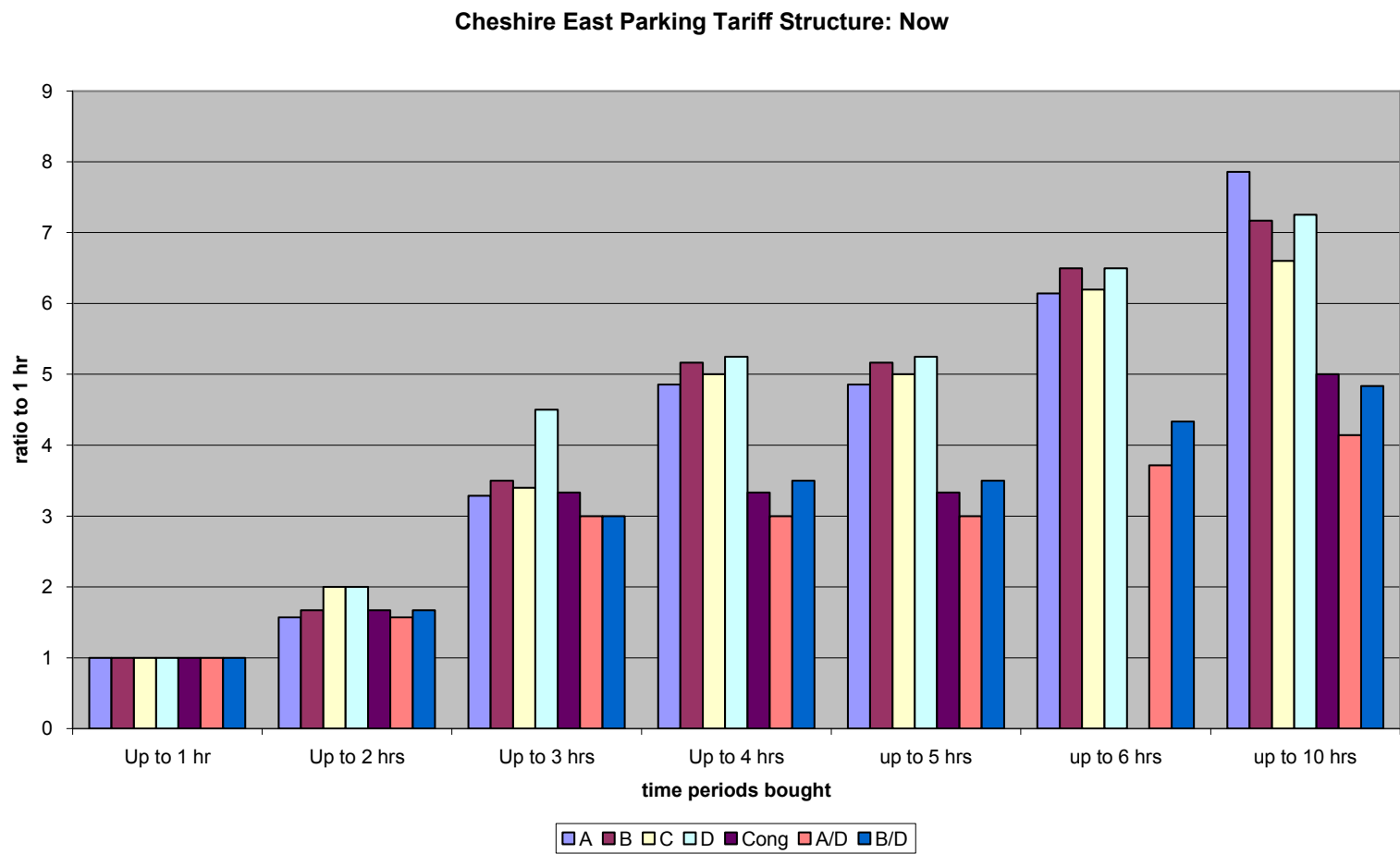
Name: Paul Burns

Designation: Parking Services Manager

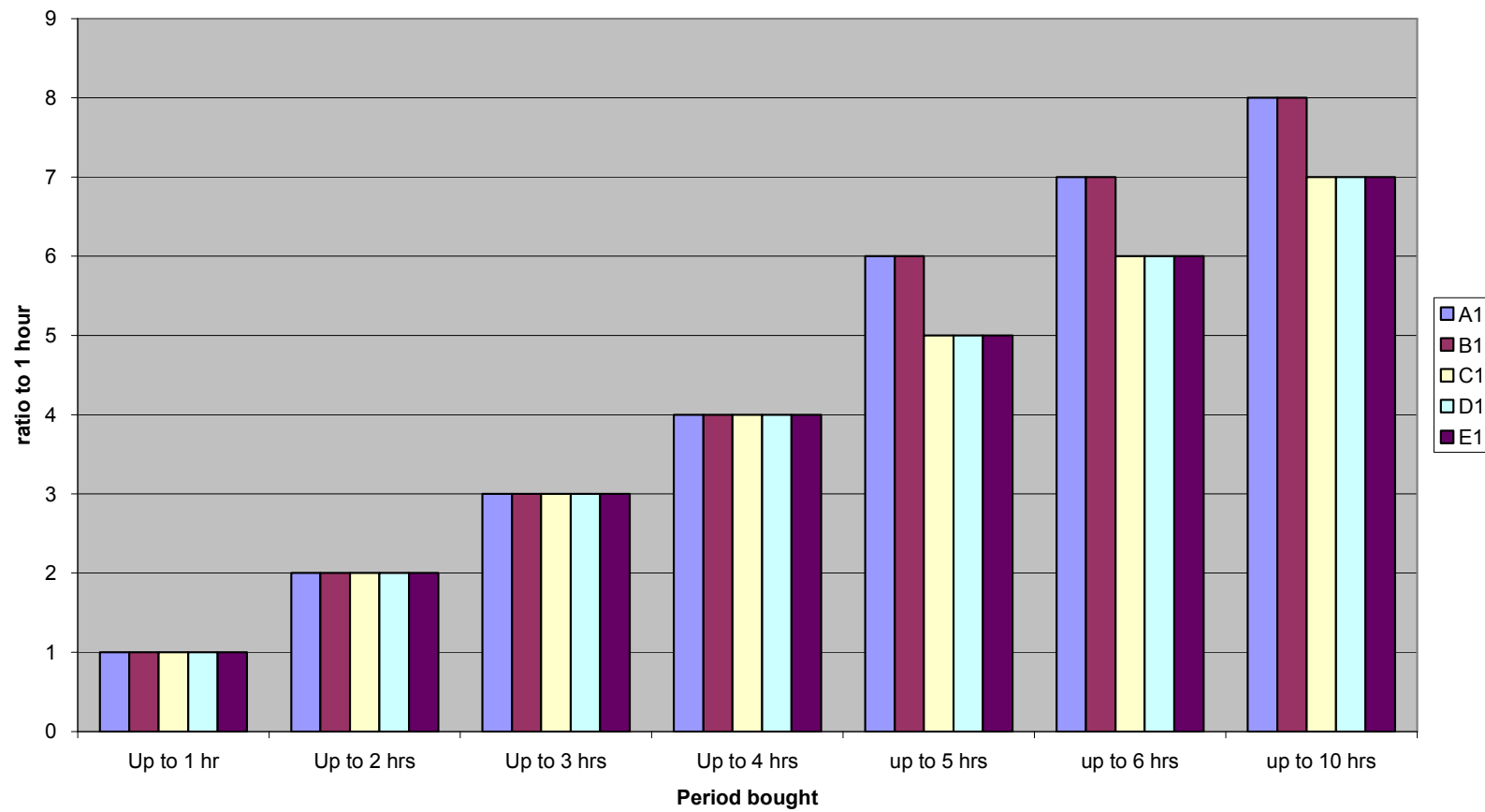
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Appendix 1: Charts of Current and Proposed Tariff Steps



Cheshire East Tariff Steps: Proposal



Appendix 2: Scrutiny Committee Assessment – Towns & Villages

Review of Towns and Villages within Cheshire East – July/August 2010 Draft Report of the Car Parking Task and Finish Group

Agreed Terms of Reference

To rank towns and villages by criteria, to ensure that, if parking charges are reviewed sometime in the future, comparable towns and villages are treated equally and a reasonable tariff is created.

TOWN	POPULATION	UNEMPLOYMENT LEVELS as at Oct 09 (%)	FACILITIES	RAILWAY	CCTV	RETAIL	FOOD AND DRINK PROVISION	NIGHT TIME ECONOMY	EASE OF ACCESS	PUBLIC TRANSPORT	NUMBER OF SPACES ON CHESHIRE EAST CAR PARKS	TOTAL	RANK
CREWE	(50600) 10	5	10	10	(48) 6	10	8	6	5	9	(2643) 10	86	A
MACCLESFIELD	(50470) 10	3.5	8	10	(78) 10	8	10	8	8	9	(2166) 9	90	A
WILMSLOW	(30020) 6	2.5	7	10	(62) 8	9	10	8	9	8	(1239) 6	81	A
NANTWICH	(14100) 2	2.6	9	8	(15) 5	9	10	8	9	8	(750) 4	72	B
KNUTSFORD	(12650) 2	2.7	10	8	(14) 5	9	10	9	8	8	(635) 4	73	B
CONGLETON	(26350) 5	3.2	7	7	(8) 3	7	8	6	7	7	(799) 4	61	C
SANDBACH	(17840) 3	3.1	5	7	(5) 3	6	8	7	9	8	(487) 3	59	C
POYNTON	(14360) 2	2	7	8	(6) 3	6	7	6	7	7	(204) 2	55	C
ALDERLEY	(4710) 1	1.4	6	8	(3) 2	6	7	8	8	7	(181) 2	55	C
MIDDLEWICH	(13450) 2	3.1	5	0	(5) 3	6	7	3	5	4	(133) 2	37	D
ALSAGER	(12440) 2	2.6	5	7	(6) 3	5	7	3	8	7	(403) 3	50	D
HANDFORTH	(8014) 1	3.5	5	8	(3) 2	6	6	4	8	8	(102) 1	49	D
BOLLINGTON	(7400) 1	3.5	6	0	(0) 0	4	6	8	7	4	(71) 1	37	D
HOLMES CHAPEL	(5780) 1	1.3	5	8	(3) 2	5	7	4	8	6	(47) 1	47	D
DISLEY	(4210) 1	2.1	4	7	(3) 2	4	6	4	6	7	(60) 1	42	D
PRESTBURY	(3290) 1	1.1	4	7	(0) 0	3	7	7	5	7	(122) 2	42	D
HASLINGTON	(6670) 1	1.8	2	0	(0) 0	3	2	2	8	4	(15) 1	23	E
AUDLEM	(1940) 0	1.7	2	0	(0) 0	4	7	6	7	4	(59) 1	31	E

The above criteria have been scored out of 10

The population, number of CCTV cameras and number of carparking spaces for each town are quoted in brackets.