

**Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee**  
**Tuesday, 22 January 2019**

<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	<b>Impact of Car Parking Charges in Country Parks - Update</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>Interim Director – Highways &amp; Streetscene</b>

**REPORT SUMMARY**

This report provides an update on the income generated from parking charges at the Country Parks.

The report recommends that the contents are noted, that charging for parking at the Country Parks remains and that the impact of the charges on traffic management issues is continually monitored.

The Wirral Plan 2020 pledge relevant to this report, and to the parking service area, is Pledge Thirteen: Transport and Technology Infrastructure fit for the future, and the proposal supports the Transport Strategy priority to keep traffic moving safely and efficiently.

This matter affects all wards within the Borough.

This is not a Key Decision.

**RECOMMENDATION/S**

Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee is requested to:

- i. Note the information contained within this report and continue to support charging for parking at the Country Parks; and
- ii. Request officers to continue monitoring the impact of the parking charges in future years.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1.1 Committee have requested an update on the impact of the parking charges at the Country Parks.

### **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 2.1 No other options have been considered. However, if parking charges are removed from the Country Parks then this will result in a deficit in the Council's approved financial plan for future years of over £150,000 which would need to be covered by compensatory savings or income from other service areas.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Following the approval by Cabinet in June 2017 to implement parking charges at the Country Parks the pay equipment and signs etc. were procured. This took longer than envisaged and therefore charging didn't commence until week commencing 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2018.
- 3.2 In order to not financially disadvantage any of the staff who work at the businesses or those who volunteer to undertake work at the Country Parks in conjunction with the park rangers a number of 'free permits' have been issued. 21 permits have been given to staff from the several businesses and 20 permits for volunteers.
- 3.3 Appendix 1 attached to this report shows the income received from the 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2018 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018. The total income from charging at the Country Parks for this period is £168,000. This includes £27,100 from the sale of 542 annual parking permits. The annual parking permits can be used in any vehicle and in any of the Country Parks so represents value for money for regular park users.
- 3.4 The total number of transactions (parking tickets purchased) is approximately 139,000 for the same period. This patronage at car parks doesn't directly reflect on visitor numbers as driving / parking habits may have changed since the introduction of the parking charges.
- 3.5 To date £100k has been spent or committed to maintenance and improvements at the Country Parks which can be related to car parking, e.g. resurfacing of the car park at Arrowe Country Park.
- 3.6 There have been several incidents of vandalism to the machines at Royden Park and Arrowe Park, but none at Wirral or Eastham parks. The machine at Arrowe Park was severely vandalised by being set on fire in October and it has therefore taken longer to repair. When this car park reopens at the end of January 2019 following the resurfacing works the pay machine will be fully working.

3.7 The parking services manager met with ward members and business owners in July 2018 to listen to any concerns. The feedback from businesses is as follows:-

- Parking has displaced further onto Ferry Road following the introduction of the charges, this affects the amount of free on-street parking available for motorbikes / blue badge holders and short stay visitors.
- Parking occurs at the entrance to the park near Torr Drive / Ferry Road junction sometimes on the pavement.
- Visitors are spending less time and less money in the area,
- The volume of motorcyclists visiting the area has reduced due to the reduction in the availability of on-street parking spaces.
- The manager of 'The Tap' pub has introduced bollards to prevent the displaced cars being parked on private land; motorbikes can still be parked in between the bollards.
- Several of the business owners say that income is down by as much as 20%.

3.8 Whilst there has been an accident at the junction of Torr Drive and Ferry Road in the past twelve months, the accident is still subject to a 'live' investigation. Road safety and traffic management officers from the Council are considering measures such as yellow lines and/or bollards for this junction, however, this won't be finalised until the current 'live' investigation is concluded. There were no parked vehicles at the time of the incident.

3.9 Most of the other issues raised were highlighted in previous reports as risks prior to the introduction of the parking charges. No formal assessment of the impact on businesses has been carried out, therefore there are no other traffic or highway measures proposed other than those mentioned in 3.8 above.

#### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 These proposals have met the predicted increased income to the Council of £150,000 p.a. which has been included in the Council budget for future years.

4.2 If parking charges are removed from the Country Parks then this will result in a deficit in the Council's approved financial plan for future years of over £150,000 which would need to be covered by compensatory savings or income from other service areas.

#### **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 These proposals were implemented in accordance with the process set out in the Traffic Order Procedure Regulations 1996.

5.2 The management of traffic is a statutory duty for the Council.

## **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS**

- 6.1 Existing staff resources would be utilised to continually monitor the impact of the parking charges at the Country Parks.

## **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 7.1 Charges at Country Parks may result in reduced visitor numbers to the Country Parks affecting the economy of the visitor centres and cafes and other businesses. The charges may also impact on the numbers of people who join the parks friends and volunteer groups.
- 7.2 Scrapping the parking charges at Country Parks will require alternative budget savings to be identified to offset the loss of income included in the Council's approved budget.

## **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 Parking services staff have regularly been in contact with the business owners and park rangers at the Country Parks. A meeting was also held on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2018 at Eastham Country Park to listen to comments from several of the business owners including, the café, cattery, ice cream parlour and pub.

## **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?

- (a) Yes and impact review is attached – <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversity-cohesion/equality-impact-assessments/eias-regeneration-envir>

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: Monthly Income by Country Park Location

## **REFERENCE MATERIAL**

Observations and feedback from the local businesses has been used in the preparation of this report.

**SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Cabinet	19 June 2017
Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee	13 March 2017
Extraordinary Council meeting	6 March 2017