



POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Wednesday 20 January 2021

REPORT TITLE:	CAR PARKING CHARGES - MEMBERS' WORKING GROUP
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE

REPORT SUMMARY

The report provides for consideration the final recommendations of the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee in respect to Car Parking Charges resulting from the undertaking of a Working Group by that Committee at the request of the Policy & Resources Committee. The full Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee Report is attached.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee held on 3rd December 2020 resolved to recommend that the Policy and Resources Committee consider the following options submitted to it by the Member Working Group:

- (a) re-introduce parking charges immediately at all locations (Option 4); and
- (b) re-introduce charges at long-stay and on-street and Country parks but not 'shoppers' car parks (Option 6).

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 In April 2020 the decision was made to suspend all the Council's parking charges, at on street and off-street plus country parks locations. In October 2020, the Policy and Resources Committee agreed to extend this suspension until early 2021 and requested the Director for Neighbourhood Services to bring a further report to the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee. The Director for Neighbourhood Services agreed to consult on the options through a cross-party working group formed by the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee.
- 1.2 The Working Group met on two occasions in November 2020 and agreed the recommendations detailed in Appendix B of this report with support from officers and external stakeholders. All options were considered by the working group and Members agreed to forward two for further consideration. The recommendations of the Committee are now presented to the Policy & Resources Committee for consideration.
- 1.3 A report was initially considered by the Policy and Resources Committee on the 7th October 2020 presented by the Director of Neighbourhood Services. The Committee were asked to consider a number of options for the reintroduction car parking charges in borough in 2020/21 and alternative options for parking charges in 2021/22 and beyond. At the request of the Policy and Resources Committee the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee appointed a Working Group to consider options and the recommendations the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee made on 3rd December 2020 are now presented for consideration.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Other options have been considered as reported within the minutes of the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee and appended report.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 A report was initially considered by the Policy and Resources Committee on the 7th October 2020 presented by the Director of Neighbourhood Services. The Committee were asked to consider a number of options for the reintroduction car parking charges in borough in 2020/21 and alternative options for parking charges in 2021/22 and beyond.
- 3.2 Several Members of the Policy and Resources Committee expressed concern at the prospect of re-introducing charges at a time when Covid cases were once again on the rise and many local businesses were struggling.
- 3.3 On a motion carried by the Policy & Resources Committee, it was resolved (16:1) that:

(1) this Policy and Resources Committee agrees not to re-introduce car parking charges at this time; and

(2) authorisation is given to the Director of Neighbourhoods to consult on the implications of the medium to long term options detailed in Appendix 1 of the report and a further report is brought to the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee, as a matter of urgency, in the new year, with a particular emphasis on social inequalities and that in the meantime officers seek to find compensatory savings and that business traders are also consulted.

- 3.4 As a result of this the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee appointed a Working Group to consider these options and further inform the report back to Policy & Resources Committee.
- 3.5 At the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee on 3rd December 2020, Members of that Committee agreed to refer Options 4 and 6 back to the Policy and Resources Committee for further consideration. The minutes of the meeting and the full Working Group report are attached as appendices to this report but the options recommended are detailed below for ease of reference:-

'Members considered the request made by the Policy and Resource Committee to consider the options attached in appendix 1 of this report. After much debate, Members considered the following options were acceptable and wish to submit them to the Policy and Resource Committee for consideration.

Option 4 (re-introduce parking charges immediately at all locations) Members understood that there would be no reintroduction of car parking charges until early 2021. They acknowledge the need to support local retailers during the second lockdown and in the run up to Christmas. Five of the six working group Members wished to put forward Option 4 to be considered alongside any subsequent reviews or studies. Two of the five Members requested an additional caveat that Country Parks remain free until after lockdown due to the perceived health and wellbeing implications. Concerns were raised that introducing car parking charges in Country Parks would limit their accessibility to low-income car owners, especially during COVID-19 when more people are facing financial pressures. One Member also raised the point that charging for parking in country parks did not reduce visitor number and that the income generated would help with repairs and maintenance of the parks.

Option 6 (re-introduce charges at long-stay and on-street and Country parks but not 'shoppers' car parks) One Member of the working group also wished to put forward option 6 for consideration. This Member was satisfied with this option in its entirety, however other working group members again raised concerns about reintroduction of car parking charges in Country Parks, for the reasons stated above and because of the environmental impact.'

- 3.6 The Policy and Resources Committee are therefore requested to:-
- a) Note the Minutes of the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee held on 3rd December 2020 attached as appendix A to the report
 - b) Note the final report of the Working Group attached as appendix B of this report;

- c) Determine which, if any, of the options recommended by the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee they wish to approve.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The suspension of car parking charges (and parking enforcement) across the whole of the borough has resulted in a loss of income of approximately £47,500 per week / £200,000 per month on average based on pre COVID existing use, (£24,500 from car parks, £7,500 from on-street and £3,500 from country parks and £12,000 from loss of Penalty Charge Notice revenue per week).
- 4.2 The operational running costs for maintaining car parking facilities enforcement is approximately £800,000 per annum.
- 4.3 The COVID19 restrictions/guidance from Government from March 2020 led to a drop in travel and, by extension, parking requirements, therefore the loss of income directly relating to the suspension of parking charges is limited.
- 4.4 However, as the COVID19 restrictions are relaxed, car park usage is increasing, particularly at the country parks, as residents make the most of being able to undertake non-essential journeys.
- 4.5 Suspending car parking charges for the whole of this 2020/2021 financial year would result in budget pressure of £1.9 million deficit. Parking enforcement resumed in full on street from June and is expected to bring in £300 - 350k of Penalty Charge Notice income for 2020/2021.
- 4.6 The budget to account for any loss of income, which cannot be covered by the COVID19 Emergency fund received from Government, will be agreed by the relevant Committee and the Policy and Resources Committee in conjunction with the Director of Neighbourhood Services as part of the budget setting process.
- 4.7 Several of the car parking charges options as tabulated in Appendix 2 could minimise the loss of income or possibly increase income in future years.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 In accordance with the Part 3B of Constitution (Committee Terms of Reference), decisions to formulate, co-ordinate and implement the Budget that are not reserved to full Council are the responsibility of the Policy and Resources Committee. This includes responsibility for any virement between Budget funds (revenue) requested by a Committee or officer in excess of £100,000 or which is deemed significant in terms of impact on the Council's revenue or capital (as determined by the Head of Paid Service and/or Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Leader).
- 5.2 The decision in this matter is the subject of a recommendation from another Committee. The Policy and Resources Committee must take into account the recommendations Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee and give due regard to the guidance and comments made by the Working Group. The Policy and Resources Committee must not fetter its discretion, however, and cannot be bound by the recommendations; its Members must come to their own decision. In

doing so, the Committee must satisfy itself that it has been provided with all relevant information or a suitable précis to enable it to comply with its duties and make a lawful decision.

- 5.3 Other legal considerations, including the specific provisions that apply under the Road Traffic Regulation Act (RTRA) 1984 in relation to charging parking fees, are as set out in the annexed report(s).

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 This report is for information only and does not contain any direct resource implications.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 The risks were covered in the original report submitted to the Committee.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Engagement and Consultation were covered in the original report submitted to the Committee.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.
- 9.2 The reintroduction of car parking charges has been subject to an equality impact assessment. As indicated in the annexed report, a full EIA will be required for each of the options once agreed.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The link between poor air quality, the climate emergency and emissions from vehicles is widely accepted. An effective car parking charging regime encouraging modal shift away from the private motor car towards cleaner, more sustainable modes of transport will have a positive environmental and climate change impact. Any car parking and transport strategy needs to link to the council's Climate Emergency Declaration and Active Travel agendas.

If parking charges are reintroduced or increased in future as per several of the options contained within this report, this may reduce emissions of green-house gases.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – Minutes of Environment, Climate Emergency & Transport Committee of 3rd December 2020

Appendix B – Report to Environment, Climate Emergency & Transport Committee, including:

Appendix 1 - Working Group Report

Appendix 2 - Car Parking Options

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Policy and Resources Committee, ‘car parking charges options – 7th October 2020

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Environment, Climate Emergency & Transport Committee	3rd December 2020
Policy and Resources Committee	7th October 2020
Environment, Climate Emergency and Committee	22nd October 2020