



Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date:	Thursday, 30 July 2020
Time:	6.00 p.m.
Venue:	Virtual meeting on Microsoft Teams app

This meeting will be webcast at
<https://wirral.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

Contact Officer: Mike Jones
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Website: <http://www.wirral.gov.uk>

AGENDA

1. MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST / PARTY WHIP

Members are asked to consider whether they have any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

Members are reminded that they should also declare whether they are subject to a party whip in connection with any item(s) to be considered and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of the whipping arrangement.

2. CALL-IN PROCEDURE (Pages 1 - 2)

3. CALLED-IN BUSINESS - REINTRODUCTION OF CAR PARKING CHARGES (Pages 3 - 14)

4. EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The public may be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information.

RECOMMENDED

That, in accordance with section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business, on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by the relevant paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The public interest test has been applied and favours exclusion.

5. CALLED-IN BUSINESS - REINTRODUCTION OF CAR PARKING CHARGES (PRIVATE PAPERS) (Pages 15 - 18)

CALL IN PROCEDURE

Chair's opening remarks (5 minutes)

The Chair will open the special Committee meeting convened to consider the Call-In and set out the procedure as follows:

Explanation of the call in by the lead signatory (5 minutes)

The Chair will invite the lead signatory to set out the reasons for the Call-In. Members of the Committee will be invited to ask the lead signatory questions.

Overview and explanation of the decision taken by the relevant Cabinet Member (5 minutes)

The Chair will invite the Cabinet Member to explain the reasons for the decision. Members of the Committee will be invited to ask the Cabinet Member questions.

Evidence from call in witnesses

The Chair will invite the following witnesses to come forward. Witnesses may read out a written statement (not to exceed 5 minutes) if they wish, prior to questions from Members of the Committee. (Running order of witnesses – List of witnesses to be confirmed)

Evidence from decision-taker's witnesses

The Chair will invite the following witnesses to come forward. Witnesses may read out a written statement if they wish (not to exceed 5 minutes), prior to questions from Members of the Committee. (Running order of witnesses – List of witnesses to be confirmed)

Summary of the lead signatory (5 minutes)

The Chair will invite the lead signatory to summarise the key points of evidence given in support of their case.

Summary of the decision-taker (5 minutes)

The Chair will invite the decision-taker to summarise the key points of evidence given in support of the initial decision.

Committee Debate

The Chair will invite comments, observations and discussion from members of the Committee.

Committee Decision

The Committee having considered the evidence and debate may:-

- Refer the decision back to the Cabinet Member setting out in writing the nature of its concerns.
- Refer the matter to the Council. Such a referral should only be made where the Overview and Scrutiny believes that the decision is outside the policy framework or contrary to or not wholly in accordance with the budget. The procedures set out in those rules must be followed prior to any such referral.
- Uphold the decision - If the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agrees with the initial decision the relevant Senior Officer may implement it without delay.

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EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION FORM

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY: Cllr Julie McManus

KEY DECISION YES

PORTFOLIO AREA: Community Services

PORTFOLIOS AFFECTED: Community Services

WARDS AFFECTED: All Wards

SUBJECT: REINTRODUCTION OF CAR PARKING CHARGES OPTIONS REPORT

1.0 RECOMMENDATION:

The Cabinet Member is requested to agree

1. a further one month suspension of charges beyond phase 2 of high street re-opening on 4 July 2020
2. that parking charges be re-introduced at previous rates across all off street and on street Council facilities with effect from Monday 3 August 2020;

2.0 REASONS FOR THE DECISION

- 2.1 The recommended option is considered to offer the most appropriate compromise and balance between council income loss, economic recovery of local businesses and public health implications.
- 2.2 The council is potentially able, subject to sufficiency of resource received, to recover lost car parking income from the start of lockdown in March 2020, until the more extensive re-opening of high street retail and hospitality outlets on 4 July 2020, from Covid-19 related funding made available from government. Any costs and losses relating to parking income beyond 4 July 2020 may not be eligible and would need to be recovered from alternative council budgets. The estimated reduction in income for a further one month suspension of charges is estimated to be in the region of £30,000 to £50,000.
- 2.3 Any other charging regime options, other than returning to previous rates, would require a decision of full Council as the rates and budget have been set by Council.
- 2.4 It is proposed to concurrently re-introduce changes across all council facilities at the same time to avoid any confusion, ensure consistency and assist the process of communicating the change by keeping the information simple.

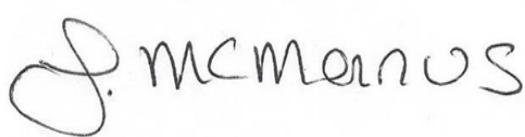
2.5 Allowing one further month free parking sends out a positive message that the council wishes to help local businesses in their recovery and local people make use of our open spaces after lockdown is eased.

3.0 STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

3.1 The recommendations are made further to legal advice from the Deputy Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been completed. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

4.0 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

4.1 There are no declarations of interest.

<p>Signed:</p>  <p>Executive Member: Cllr Julie McManus</p> <p>Date: 1 July 2020</p> <p>Also present:</p>	<p>Signed:</p>  <p>Chief Officer: Simon Fox</p> <p>Date: 1 July 2020</p>
<p>Date of Senior Policy Team Meeting(s):</p>	

A list of background papers on this issue is held with:

TCG JESIP Report Suspension of car park charges at country parks

TCG JESIP Report Suspension of ALL parking charges

Contact Officer: Steve Atkins

Date: 23 June 2020

Date of Publication:

Date of Expiry of Call-In Period:

REPORT TITLE	Reintroduction of car parking charges options report
REPORT OF	Interim Assistant Director – Highways & Infrastructure Simon fox

Councillor Julie McManus, Cabinet Member for Community Services said:

“Coronavirus has not gone away, but we are moving to a new stage in the way we are tackling with it, and seeing our economy begin to re-open.

“I’m pleased that we are able to offer this help to businesses as more and more of them move forward with re-opening. I hope that by adding an extra month to the suspension of car parking charges people will be sensible and not all rush to the shops at the same time. I would urge everyone to remember to follow social distancing and handwashing advice and continue to work together to Keep Wirral Well.”

REPORT SUMMARY

On 24 March 2020 the Leader of the Council delegated authority to the Head of Paid Service and Directors to take any action that that officer considers is reasonably necessary to protect the health, safety or welfare of individuals’; or is ‘in furtherance of the [executive] priorities of

- (i) preservation of life;
- (ii) supporting the vulnerable;
- (iii) safeguarding children; and
- (iv) aiding the Borough’s businesses and economy

during this period that contingency planning is required to respond to an emergency situation and manage the effects of a covid-19 epidemic’

The decision was therefore taken under the delegated authority given by the Leader to suspend all car parking charges.

This report discusses the options and alternatives for the reintroduction of car parking charges.

The decision supports Objective 2 of the Wirral local plan 2020 – 2035 to ‘Promote safe, efficient and sustainable travel, improve accessibility, connectivity, and ease of movement, which reduces the need to travel by private car and encourages healthy lifestyles. Direct new development to locations which will provide easiest access to existing centres, high-frequency public transport corridors, pedestrian and cycle routes’

This matter affects all Wards within the Borough.

This decision is a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Cabinet Member is requested to agree

1. a further one month suspension of charges beyond phase 2 of high street re-opening on 4 July 2020
2. that parking charges be re-introduced at previous rates across all off street and on street Council facilities with effect from Monday 3 August 2020;

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 The recommended option is considered to offer the most appropriate compromise and balance between council income loss, economic recovery of local businesses and public health implications.
- 1.2 The council is potentially able, subject to sufficiency of resource received, to recover lost car parking income from the start of lockdown in March 2020, until the more extensive re-opening of high street retail and hospitality outlets on 4 July 2020, from Covid-19 related funding made available from government. Any costs and losses relating to parking income beyond 4 July 2020 may not be eligible and would need to be recovered from alternative council budgets. The reduction in income for a further one month suspension of charges is estimated to be in the region of £30,000 to £50,000 based on an initial estimated 30% parking demand compared with pre COVID usage.
- 1.3 Any other charging regime options, other than returning to previous rates, would require a decision of full Council as the rates and budget have been set by Council.
- 1.4 It is proposed to concurrently re-introduce changes across all council facilities at the same time to avoid any confusion, ensure consistency and assist the process of communicating the change by keeping the information simple.
- 1.5 Allowing one further month free parking sends out a positive message that the council wishes to help local businesses in their recovery and local people make use of our open spaces after lockdown is eased.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The various options for reintroducing car parking charges and what other authorities are doing in respect of car parking charges are set out in table form in the attached appendices,

Appendix 1 – Options for reintroducing car parking charges

Appendix 2 – What other authorities are doing

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 On 24th March 2020 the Leader of the Council delegated authority to the Head of Paid Service and Directors to take any action that that officer considers is reasonably necessary to protect the health, safety or welfare of individuals'; or is 'in furtherance of the [executive] priorities of

- (i) preservation of life;
- (ii) supporting the vulnerable;

- (iii) safeguarding children; and
- (iv) aiding the Borough's businesses and economy

during this period that contingency planning is required to respond to an emergency situation and manage the effects of a covid-19 epidemic'

The decision was therefore taken under the delegated authority given by the Leader to suspend all car parking charges.

- 3.2 The suspension of car parking charges across all areas would go some way to assisting our residents in parking for free when accessing shops for food and essentials and may have helped those businesses that were able to remain open to survive.
- 3.3 At the beginning of lockdown in March the Government guidance was to avoid large gatherings of people, for good hand hygiene and the avoidance of unnecessary physical contact. The Government guidance said you can go for a walk or exercise provided that you stay more than 2 meters away from each other. Travel was limited to essential journeys only.
- 3.4 These restrictions have been relaxed and we have already seen large gatherings of residents at our parks and open spaces.
- 3.5 From the Monday 15th June 2020 non-essential retailers were able to open their doors to shoppers. From Saturday 4th July further retailers and hospitality premises will be permitted to open. It is anticipated that this will lead to an increase in use of the Council's car parks.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The suspension of car parking charges across the whole of the borough has resulted in a loss of income of approximately £35,500 per week / £150,000 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 per week).
- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 However, as the 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.

- 4.4 The reduction in income, for a further one month suspension (4th July to 3rd August) of charges, is estimated to be in the region of £30,000 to £50,000 based on an initial estimate of approximately 30% parking demand compared with pre COVID usage.
- 4.5 The budget to account for this reduction in income, which cannot be covered by the Covid-19 Emergency fund received from Government, will be agreed by the Director of Resources who will consult with the Cabinet Member and the Director of Neighbourhood Services.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council have powers under sections 32 and 35 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act (RTRA), 1984 to charge parking fees. Parking enforcement has been scaled back to meet the reduced demands. When parking charges are reintroduced, then parking enforcement will be stepped up.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 The proposals can be met from existing resources with no additional costs.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 By continuing to offer free parking in all areas may encourage large groups of people to travel and gather at our public parks & open spaces and shops which may lead to an increased risk of the spread of the virus.
- 7.2 Not continuing to offer free parking for the foreseeable future may have a negative impact on local businesses, however, we are offering a further one month suspension of the charges to help local businesses in their recovery and local people make use of our open spaces after lockdown is eased.
- 7.3 Effective management of car parking spaces through the use of charges can ensure a turn-over of parking and manage the supply of parking spaces.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The Cabinet member and council officers have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

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 This scheme has been subject to an equality impact assessment. A copy can be found at:-

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments>

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The link between poor air quality, the climate emergency and emissions from vehicles is undeniable. 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/climate change impact.

The content and/or recommendations contained within this report are expected to:

- Reduce emissions of green house gases

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Options for reintroducing car parking charges

Appendix 2 – What other authorities are doing

BACKGROUND PAPERS

TCG JESIP Report Suspension of car park charges at country parks

TCG JESIP Report Suspension of ALL parking charges

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
COVID 19 TACTICAL CO-ORDINATING GROUP	
Suspension of car park charges at country parks	23 March 2020
Suspension of ALL parking charges	23 March 2020

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! Metropolitan Borough of Wirral

CALL-IN

Decision to be called in:

Date of decision:	09/07/2020
Decision maker:	Cabinet Member – Community Services
Decision details:	Reintroduction of car parking charges options

Reason(s) for call-in:

We request a review of the decision published 9 July 2020 to reintroduce parking charges at all off street and on street council facilities from Monday 3 August 2020 because:

While Wirral shops and small businesses in our retain areas have shared in the £63 million given to Wirral Council to support them, the economic recovery of the high street is not yet assured.

The medium-term impact of consumer demand shifting to online shopping has yet to be assessed or understood.

Many consumers remain understandably wary of a return to traditional means of shopping and reintroduction of charges will act as a further discouragement.

The justification for the decision is, itself, based on very rough estimates of potential income and loss of income to the Council.

The wider budget of the Council has yet to be reviewed or amended following the outbreak and so piecemeal budgetary decisions should be avoided.

This issue should be deferred until the new Committee system is in place from September, enabling the decision to be reached in public.

Called in by:

Tom Anderson

Bruce Berry

Mike Collins

Tony Cox

Wendy Clements
Andrew Gardner
Jeff Green

Paul Hayes
Andrew Hodson
Kathy Hodson
Jenny Johnson – lead signatory
Mary Jordan
Ian Lewis
Cherry Povall
Lesley Rennie
Les Rowlands
Steve Williams
Alison Wright

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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