



## OFFICER DECISION

2 APRIL 2020

REPORT TITLE	Parking Charge Suspension
REPORT OF	Interim Director (Highways & Streetscene)

### REPORT SUMMARY

As our residents follow the Government guidance on limiting travel to essential journeys only and to work from home if possible, the demand for parking across the borough has already dropped dramatically. The number of shops and businesses temporarily closing has also led to significantly reduced parking in our town centres.

The Covid-19 virus is obviously causing a great deal of uncertainty and anxiety and some families are inevitably going to feel an added financial pressure if they can't maintain their current levels of income.

Suspending 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 also help those businesses that are able to remain open to survive.

The parking charges in country parks have, in effect, already been suspended as enforcement has been scaled back to a skeleton service to allow staff to focus on road safety and network management issues on the main road network. The Government has issued guidance that Key Workers should not be charged for parking and this decision supports this approach.

### RECOMMENDATION/S

**It is recommended that:**

- (1) parking charges across the whole of the Borough be suspended; and**
- (2) the suspension of parking charges takes effect as soon as is practicable and continues until 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020 or until such time as the Director of Delivery Services considers that the suspension is no longer required to meet community needs in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.**

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

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

- 1.1 As our residents follow the Government guidance on limiting travel to essential journeys only and to work from home if possible, the demand for parking across the borough has already dropped dramatically. The number of shops and businesses temporarily closing has also led to significantly reduced parking in our town centres.
- 1.2 The COVID19 virus is obviously causing a great deal of uncertainty and anxiety and some families are inevitably going to feel an added financial pressure if they can't maintain their current levels of income.
- 1.3 Suspending 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 also help those businesses that are able to remain open to survive.
- 1.4 The parking charges in country parks have already, in effect, been suspended as enforcement has been scaled back to a skeleton service to allow staff to focus on essential road safety and network management issues on the main road network. The Government has issued guidance that Key Workers should not be charged for parking and this decision supports this approach.

### **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- a) Continue to monitor the current parking use and only suspend charges if demand falls below an agreed level.
- b) Suspend parking charges on the car parks only (maintain charges on-street, only applies to Birkenhead).
- c) Suspend parking charges on-street only (maintain the car park charges).

These options would not fully meet the identified community needs in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Responsibilities set out in the national Covid-19 response plan and Chief Executive's/WBC Covid-19 Tactical Group procedures and priorities, including operational changes to protect service users, the public and staff from risk of being exposed to, or transferring Covid-19 to vulnerable groups or other people.

### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The suspension of car parking charges across the whole of the borough would usually result in a loss of income of up to £32,000 per week under normal conditions

(£24,500 from off-street car parks and £7,500 from on-street). The COVID19 restrictions/guidance from Government has already resulted in a significant reduction in use hence the financial implication of this decision is significantly reduced.

## **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Parking charges are a choice for the Authority as a means of managing traffic flow, congestion and placement of vehicles in addition to sourcing funds to meet transport needs.

5.2 Enforcement will be adjusted accordingly to meet the reduced demands.

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

6.1 Not applicable at this stage.

## **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

7.1 Government guidance is to avoid large gatherings of people, for good hand hygiene and the avoidance of unnecessary physical contact. Suspending the parking charges may assist residents in parking whilst shopping for food and essentials which is in line with Government guidance on limiting travel to essential journeys only.

7.2 If this decision is implemented it is proposed that this approach is kept under review specifically in three weeks' time or when government guidance changes.

## **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

8.1 Our responsibilities set out in the national Covid-19 response plan and the Covid-19 Tactical Group procedures and priorities, including operational changes to protect service users, the public and staff from risk of being exposed to, or transferring Covid-19 to vulnerable groups or other people.

8.2 The recommendations have been discussed with Group Leaders.

## **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no negative impacts created by the prospective decision in relation to the Council's equality duties.

## **10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 The content and/or recommendations contained within this report are expected to have no negative impact on the environment.

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**SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Analysis of parking.