

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 15 June 2016
Report Subject	12 month review of the Councils Car Parking Strategy
Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for the Environment
Report Author	Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation)
Type of Report	Strategic & Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In April 2015 Cabinet approved the County wide car parking strategy which introduced parking charges in all car parks within the County which were designated as being within the scope of the policy.

Cabinet requested that a review of the car parking strategy should be undertaken, 12 months after its introduction.

The review has now been completed and the outcome and recommended changes to the policy resulting from the review are detailed in this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	To seek a recommendation to Cabinet from the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee to approve the outcome of the 12 month review of the Council's car parking strategy and the proposed changes to the strategy resulting from the review.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	BACKGROUND TO REVIEW OF THE CAR PARKING STRATEGY
1.01	<p>Following approval of the Council's car parking strategy in April 2015, car parking charges were introduced at the following locations within the County:</p> <p>Mold – Revised charging tariffs introduced in August 2015 Buckley – Introduced charging arrangements in August 2015</p>

	<p>Talacre – Introduced charging arrangements (partial) in July 2015</p> <p>Holywell – Introduced charging arrangements in September 2015</p> <p>Connah’s Quay – Introduced charging arrangements in November 2015</p> <p>Shotton – Introduced charging arrangements in November 2015</p> <p>Queensferry – Introduced charging arrangements in November 2015</p> <p>Flint – Delayed due to town centre development work</p> <p>Mold, County Hall – Due to be implemented Summer 2016</p>
1.02	<p>Prior to the implementation of the charges, projected income levels were assessed, based on the car park utilisation levels before the charges were introduced. The actual income levels at each of the car parks can be now compared against these projections and a summary of income levels against projections for each town are shown in Appendix 1.</p>
1.03	<p>The outcomes can be summarised as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Greater than expected monthly income levels in Buckley and Holywell (i.e. higher utilisation levels than expected). 2. Marginal variances from expected monthly income levels in Mold, Talacre, Shotton, and Queensferry. 3. Significantly lower than expected income levels in Connah’s Quay. (i.e. lower utilisation levels than expected). <p>The significantly lower income levels in Connah’s Quay can partly be attributed to the high availability of off street parking in the immediate locality of the car parks within the town.</p>
1.04	<p>The introduction of car parking charges in Flint has been delayed due to the general unavailability of car parking spaces, resulting from the various town centre regeneration schemes which are in various stages of completion within the town centre. A decision on an implementation date for the charges has still to be made.</p>
1.05	<p>Since the introduction of the scheme a number of suggested amendments to the parking strategy have been received from various individuals, companies and public bodies. All of these suggestions have been assessed and considered and a number of changes to the car parking strategy are now proposed as a result of this review. The full list of suggested changes are detailed on Appendix 2, together with an assessment of their impact on the original proposals and therefore acceptability.</p>
1.06	<p>The changes that can be accommodated within the revised car parking strategy are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Issue of parking permits in short stay car parks. This confirms the formal adoption of the pilot scheme which has operated in the Holywell area since September 2015 and allows those businesses and residents closest to a short stay car park to purchase annual permits in these car parks at the same rate as permits for the long stay facilities in the town. The maximum number of permits issued for any short stay car park will be restricted to 20% of the available spaces, which is the same level as long stay car parks and this will ensure the majority of spaces remain available for shoppers and general visitors.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Issue of 'double tickets' through the parking ticket machines. This will be introduced at the individual request of the Town Council or Town Trade forum and will allow the businesses in the town to offer a refund to their customers on receipt of one of the tickets. A sign could be placed in the car park, advertising which companies offer the refund within the town. 3. The rear of the tickets can be offered for advertising local business 4. A review of the status of each car park (i.e. long stay or short stay) will be undertaken. This will be based on validated usage levels and comments received during the period since charges were introduced. 5. A review of the number of disabled spaces available in each car park will be undertaken to ensure the provision is appropriate and sufficient. Similarly a review of motorcycle space provision will also be carried out. 6. A review of the signage at each site will be considered to ensure the signage is sufficient to ensure users are aware of the need to pay and that sufficient ticket machines are also available at each location. 7. A review of the availability of short stay on street parking in the areas surrounding each town will be undertaken in order to provide some free short stay parking for quick visits to the town centres, if possible 8. The possibility of allowing the disabled spaces to become dual use, allowing drivers with young children to park in the spaces in some car parks, will also be considered
1.07	<p>The following suggestions which were been put forward cannot be accommodated within the revised car parking strategy :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Remove car parking charges completely – not possible due to the impact on car parking availability in the town centres and the impact on income levels to the Authority - which are used to partially offset car park maintenance costs. 2. Review the scope of car parking charging arrangements. Charging in some towns and not others would create inconsistencies and unfair advantages in those towns without charges. Extending the strategy to other villages and rural areas was also not considered appropriate at this time. 3. Reduced hours of application. This option cannot be considered, due to the unknown impact on car park usage within the remaining period of the day. For example, the provision of free parking after 3pm across all car parks would reduce income levels by a minimum of 13% or approximately £80k per annum – And this figure does not take into account the cost of users moving from a currently charged periods in the day to a 'free parking' period. 4. Provision of a free parking period throughout the day e.g. 'first hour free'. This would have a detrimental effect on income levels and encourage visitors to restrict their stay to one hour. 5. Review the percentage of income above the 'core charging level' paid to Town Councils. The existing level (10%) provides the T&CC with a sustainable income which can be invested in local related projects and it is considered to be at an appropriate level and should therefore remain constant. 6. A request for Town Councils to receive a percentage of the income above the predicted level cannot be taken forward as the initial projections did not take into account other considerations such as the availability of on-street parking alternatives and the arrangement

	<p>would therefore be inequitable across all areas. If Town Councils accepted charges above the core level then they would receive a financial contribution based on the increased income - in accordance with the existing strategy.</p> <p>7. A suggestion that disabled users should pay for their parking has been considered and discounted. Consequently disabled parking will remain free of charge - in disabled spaces in all Council car parks</p>
1.08	<p>The level of parking charges were also considered, along with the suggestion that 3 hrs should be the minimum stay level at short stay car parks - for a charge of 50p. The conclusion that the charge of 20p for 2 hours (as core level) should continue to be applied, was made for the following reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The charge is set at a minimal level, which achieves the desired effect of ensuring users do not abuse the facility by parking all day in the facility - with the spaces then being lost for shoppers and visitors. <p>and</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. It provides a level of income for the Council to contribute to the overall maintenance costs of operating the car parks. <p>The review concluded that the current overall charging levels and charging periods should be monitored and reviewed annually and that any change to the charges should be reported to Cabinet through the portfolios annual review of charges.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>Total full year budgeted income from car parking charges (2016 - 17) is £716,000 - (£616,000+£100,000 County Hall)</p> <p>Projected income based on current utilisation levels projected to full year is £451,673*</p> <p>Projected income from County Hall (September 2016 to March 2017) is £48,609.</p> <p>Total Projected Income from all car parks - £500,282</p> <p>Total in year (2016 – 17) projected shortfall - £215,718</p> <p>*Figures include approx. £100k loss of income from the delayed introduction in Flint</p>

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	<p>Suggested changes have been received during staff visits to Town Council meetings and from various correspondences received during the period since implementation of parking charges.</p>

3.02	Consultation took place with the Cabinet Member on all of the amendments contained within the report.
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4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
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4.01	Loss of car parking income will result in financial pressures within the service. Utilisation levels and income levels are monitored as part of the regular budget monitoring process
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4.02	The introduction of car parking charges was intended to ensure the availability of parking within the town centre whilst providing a contribution to the overall cost of maintaining the facilities.
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5.00	APPENDICES
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5.01	Appendix 1 – Projected Utilisation levels in each town Appendix 2 – Summary of proposed amendments to the parking strategy and considerations
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6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
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6.01	- Contact Officer: Stephen O Jones Telephone: 01352 704700 E-mail: stephen.o.jones@flintshire.gov.uk
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7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
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7.01	None
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