

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Tuesday 16 January 2018
Report Subject	Budget Stage 2: Review of Car Parking Charges
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for the Streetscene and Countryside
Report Author	Chief Officer - Streetscene & Transportation
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council at its December meeting approved the Stage 2 proposals for the Council Fund Budget 2018/19 subject to several specific proposals being referred to Overview and Scrutiny for detailed scrutiny prior to further consideration by Cabinet and ultimately Council. One of the specific budget proposals referred is the proposed uplift in car parking charges.

In April 2015 Cabinet approved the County wide car parking strategy which introduced parking charges in all car parks which were designated as being within the scope of the new car park charging strategy. A full review of the strategy then took place 12 months after its introduction. The car parking charging levels have not been reviewed since their introduction and the income generated through the Pay and Display machines does not meet the full cost of managing and operating the car parks. This position is contrary to the Council's newly adopted corporate policy for fees and charges which expects chargeable non-mandatory functions to be provided on a full cost recovery basis wherever possible.

Raising charges in the car parks is contentious. However, as one of the corporate solutions to balancing the annual budget, income levels need to be raised across services. All Councils are in a similar position and from comparative research Flintshire has scope to increase its total corporate income. The revised charges proposed are reasonable and would still be low when comparing the cost of parking in Flintshire to other Welsh counties.

The impact of rising car parking charges on the vibrancy of the town centres needs to be considered and the proposed charging levels seek to strike a balance between affordability for shoppers and visitors and raising income. Charging is also a way of for preventing inappropriate long stay use of car parks e.g. for commuters who car share and is one part of local traffic management planning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.	To invite the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review the proposed changes to car parking charges and the benefits, risks and consequences of enacting the proposed changes.
2.	That Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend their preferred option for car parking charges shown in Appendix 1 of this report.
3.	Support the proposal to hold a further review of the impacts of the strategy within 12 months.

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 Talacre – Introduced charging arrangements (partial) in July 2015 Holywell – Introduced charging arrangements in September 2015 Connah's Quay – Introduced charging arrangements in November 2015 Shotton – Introduced charging arrangements in November 2015 Queensferry – Introduced charging arrangements in November 2015 Mold, County Hall – Introduced Summer 2016</p>
1.02	<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 now in the final stages of completion within the town centre. The situation has been further complicated by the proposed retail redevelopment, adjacent to Jade Jones Leisure Centre which will (when work commences) significantly reduce the number of car parking spaces available in the town – particularly for Council staff parking working in the Flint Office. A decision on an implementation date for car parking charges in Flint has still to be made however it is expected to be during April/May 2018.</p>
1.03	<p>Before car parking charges are increased, it is important that the impact on local parking trends (displacement to local streets) and town centre patronage are considered.</p>
1.04	<p>The impact of vehicle displacement has already been considered widely in every town where car parking charges have been introduced. Every opportunity to offer some free on-street parking, close to the town centre has been examined and the Council is currently consulting with two Town Councils about the potential to remove existing pedestrianisation orders, which will allow vehicles back into the High Streets - where free short stay car parking could then be made available. 'Residents Only' parking schemes are also being considered in two areas of the County, where</p>

displaced parking is occurring as a result of the unavailability of car parking in the town centre which is creating issues for local residents.

Staff from the Streetscene and Transportation service will continue to monitor the impact of car parking charges on the local road network adjacent to the Council's car parks and action will be taken to provide further parking controls in any areas where displacement causes parking problems for residents.

1.05 The more challenging element is to measure the impact car parking charges has on the vitality and viability of the Town centres. Before charges were introduced utilisation levels in all of the Council's car parks were measured, in order to estimate the income levels and to provide an indication of the impact on utilisation levels, the charges brought.

Since introducing charges, the actual income levels at each of the car parks can be now compared against those initial projections and a summary of income levels against projections for each town are shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1 Car Parking Income Summary

<u>TOWN</u>	<u>BUSINESS MODEL</u>	<u>2015-16 ACTUAL</u>	<u>2016-17 ACTUAL</u>	<u>2017-18 ACTUAL</u>	<u>BUDGET 17/18</u>
FLINT	99,996	0	0	0	100,000
HOLYWELL	43,500	25,633	48,020	47,547	48,000
MOLD	300,000	264,150	267,977	272,547	275,653
BUCKLEY	46,536	35,256	54,304	55,399	55,000
QUEENSFERRY	16,582	3,784	11,795	16,653	16,500
CONNAHS QUAY	52,986	3,950	11,744	11,029	21,653
SHOTTON	40,901	11,683	35,866	39,834	41,000
TALACRE	15,000	1,350	11,785	16,750	15,000
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>615,501</u>	<u>345,807</u>	<u>441,490</u>	<u>459,760</u>	<u>572,806</u>

*2017/18 includes projections for final quarter

It is clear from the above table that charges have not impacted on car parking usage. The exception being Connah's Quay, where the availability of extensive off-street parking arrangements has resulted in lower than expected income and therefore utilisation levels in the local car parks.

Since the introduction of charges it can be seen that utilisation levels have actually increased in six of the towns over the past two years which vindicates the original decision to apply low level car parking charges to increase car parking availability and therefore utilisation levels for shoppers and other visitors to the town centres.

1.06 Experience in a neighbouring Council has shown that removing car parking

	charges altogether quickly removes any parking capacity because it is taken up by shop workers and other local office staff with shoppers and other visitors then forced to use car parking facilities further from the town centres.
1.07	<p>Car parking charges are now applied in the majority of towns in North Wales and the proposed charges are at or below the levels charged in the following towns:</p> <p>Denbigh – Factory Ward car park. 30min – 30p 1 Hr - £1 3 Hrs - £1.50 All day - £3.50</p> <p>Ruthin – Market St car park 30min – 30p 1 Hr - £1 3 Hrs - £2 All day - £7</p> <p>Llangollen – Market St car park 30min – 30p 1 Hr - £1 3 Hrs - £2.50 All day - £7</p>
1.08	<p>In addition to the above considerations a project specific - Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed which has concluded that the proposals do not prejudice any of the protected groups for the following reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The relatively low level of the proposed new charges 2. The intention to keep free parking in designated disabled bays for motorists displaying a valid blue badge. 3. That there were no changes to the charging mechanism and principles from the original car parking strategy.
1.08	<p>There are significant costs associated with operating and managing the Councils' car parks, many sit outside the main budget for car parks. The areas of expenditure include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Maintenance costs • Street Lighting repairs • Street Lighting energy costs • Cleansing costs • Gully emptying and sweeping costs • Ground maintenance works • Inspection costs • NNDR • Infrastructure maintenance replacement costs e.g. Ticket machines, signage etc. • Enforcement costs. • Administration / management. • Winter Maintenance <p>The total cost of delivering and managing the car parking service is £886k</p>

	per annum and this figure would now be recovered by the proposed charges. This would result in the car parking service being cost neutral and achieving full cost recovery.
1.09	<p>The proposed revised charging arrangements are shown in Appendix 1. There are 2 options shown for the revised charges and the Scrutiny Committee are requested to express a preference for one of the options.</p> <p>The new charging arrangements will be advertised in each car park during February and March 2018 and will come into effect from 1st April 2018.</p>
1.10	There are no plans to raise the car parking charges currently in place in Talacre as the rates charged are already above those charged elsewhere in the County due to the location and specialist nature of the parking need in this location (i.e. tourism – end destination).
1.11	It can be seen from the proposed charging schedule in Appendix 1 that the charges in Mold town centre car parks are at a higher level than those at other towns in the County. In order that the Town Council gains some financial benefit from the higher charges, 10% of the increased financial benefit is provided to the Town Council, which can then be used for visitor infrastructure improvements which are within the scope of national spending guidelines.
1.12	In order to provide assurances to the Committee on the impact the increased charges have on the utilisation levels, a review and further impact assessment will be undertaken, 6 months after the new charges have been introduced. The outcome of that study will be reported back to Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October 2018.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	The projected income from the new charges is shown in Appendix 1
2.02	The approach is in line with the Council's Fees and Charges Policy in that it seeks to maximise revenue generation with full cost recovery wherever possible, compares our own sector with that of the surrounding market and adopts differential pricing for some specific services where warranted.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	The new charges will be displayed at all car parks during February and March before their introduction in April 2018.
3.02	Consultation took place with the Cabinet Member and Streetscene and Transportation Programme Board on all of the amendments contained within the report.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
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
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.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – New car parking charges

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Contact Officer: Stephen O Jones Telephone: 01352 704700 E-mail: stephen.o.jones@flintshire.gov.uk

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	None