

CABINET

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 20 th March 2018
Report Subject	Budget Stage 2: Review of Car Parking Charges
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Countryside
Report Author	Chief Officer (Streetscene and 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 to achieve an increase in income of £450k per annum across the County.

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 can be 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 comparable Welsh counties and English counties.

The impact of 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 levels for the Council. Charging is also a way of preventing inappropriate long stay use of car parks e.g. for commuters who car share, and is one part of local traffic management planning.

Car parking charges were discussed by members of an Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee which was open to all Council members on 16 January 2018. A number of suggestions were made by members of the Committee on the car parking charge options including:

- To introduce a free 30 minute stay within a public car park
- To introduce a 30 minute stay for a reduced charge in public car parks
- To allow pay and display tickets to be transferred between certain car parks to allow improved access to shopping facilities
- To provide a full breakdown of costs per car park or per town
- For some town car parking charges to remain at current pricing levels

After due consideration of these options a final charging proposal is made in this report. The report also finalises the arrangements and commencement date for car parking charges in Flint. These have been on hold because of the extensive redevelopment work in the town centre.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.	That Cabinet approves the revised car parking charges as detailed in Appendix 1.
2.	That Cabinet keeps under review the impacts of the new charging arrangement.
3	That Cabinet approves the commencement date for charges in Flint which are detailed in Appendix 1.

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 December 2016</p>
1.02	<p>Uplift of Parking Charges in Flintshire</p> <p>The impact of vehicle displacement has already been considered widely in every town where car parking charges have been introduced. The opportunities to offer some free on-street parking, close to town centres has been examined. The Council is consulting with two Town Councils about the potential to remove existing pedestrianisation orders which would allow vehicles back into the High Streets - where free short stay car parking could</p>

then be made available. 'Residents Only' parking schemes are also being considered in two areas of the County, where displaced parking is occurring as a result of the unavailability of car parking in the town centre and creating issues for local residents.

The Streetscene and Transportation service will continue to monitor the impact of car parking charges on the local road network in all towns 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.

1.03 The more challenging question is how 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 both estimate the income levels and to provide an indication of the impact on utilisation levels of charging.

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</u>	<u>2015-16</u>	<u>2016-17</u>	<u>2017-18</u>	<u>BUDGET</u>
	<u>MODEL</u>	<u>ACTUAL</u>	<u>ACTUAL</u>	<u>ACTUAL*</u>	<u>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	52,986	3,950	11,744	11,029	21,653
QUAY					
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, such as the car park leased to the Health Centre on Fron Road and the private car park which fronts the High Street at the shopping shop parade, as well as extensive on street parking availability on residential streets, has resulted in lower than expected income from local car parks.

Since the introduction of charges it can be seen that utilisation levels have actually increased or have bettered the original projected income in six of the towns over the past two years. This supports the original decision to

	<p>apply low level car parking charges to increase car parking availability and therefore utilisation levels for shoppers and other visitors to the town centres.</p>
1.04	<p>Experience and trials in a neighbouring councils has shown that removing car parking charges altogether quickly removes any parking capacity as it is taken up by shop workers and other local office employees, with shoppers and other visitors then forced to use car parking facilities further from the town centres. The new proposals therefore continue to align with the existing car parking strategy which was intended to manage car parking within the towns of Flintshire to ensure convenient spaces are available for shoppers and visitors.</p>
1.05	<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>
1.06	<p>In addition to the above considerations a project specific Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed. This 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. There being no changes to the charging mechanism and principles from the original car parking strategy.
1.07	<p>There are significant costs associated with operating and managing the Council's car parks, many of which sit outside the main budget for car parks. The main 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

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 approximately £886k per annum and this figure would now be recovered by the proposed car parking charges. This would result in the car parking service achieving full cost recovery and being cost-neutral .</p>
1.08	<p>Members of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the new charges at an open meeting on 16 January 2018. Suggestions put forward which have now been accommodated within the new charging proposals are:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An option for a 30 minute reduced charge which would permit short visits to town centre shops. The rate proposed is comparable with the charge in similar towns in Denbighshire 2. Amalgamate some car parks in Holywell to allow visits to both car parks without having to purchase a separate ticket for each – this will be accommodated in the new order which will be required to introduce the revised charges.
1.09	<p>The following proposals which were suggested by members could not be accommodated within the new charging structure for the reasons given:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide free parking for the first half an hour – this was considered in the initial review of car parking charges and was rejected because (1) of the impact on income levels and (2) that it would provide an incentive to leave the towns more quickly. There is also free short stay parking (30 minutes) already in place in most town centres to facilitate those wanting to shop quickly. 2. Reflect the cost per car park or per town in the charges for that respective car park/town. This was not possible because most of the maintenance charges are recorded on a County-wide basis and are not broken down by town e.g. winter maintenance, cleansing and grounds maintenance operations. 3. Car parking charges in town centres will not remain at current levels was rejected as the uplift in charges is needed to reach corporate budget targets.
1.10	<p>The proposed revised charges are shown in Appendix 1. The new charging arrangements will be advertised in each car park during April 2018 and will come into effect from 14th May 2018. This expected timescale is subject to change following the outcome of the formal consultation process.</p>

	<p>The figure which is projected to raised by the new charges meets the £450k annual figure agreed by full Council for additional car parking charges in the Stage 2 Budget Settlement. The predicted income increase has been calculated by using current utilisation figures within each town centre and calculating the new tariff structure against current daily usage for each time band and feedback from neighbouring authorities that have similar tariffs. This forecast is subject to variation due to changing parking behaviours, if there is a downturn in utilisation this could create a budget pressure.</p>
1.11	<p>There are no plans to raise the car parking charges which are currently in place in Talacre as the rates charged there are already above those charged elsewhere in the County due to the location, limited parking availability and specialist nature of the parking need in this location (i.e. as a tourism end destination).</p>
1.12	<p>All income from car parking charges will be retained by the Authority, unless there is a specific agreement with the local town and community council, as a Council policy in support of the policy for fees and charges. There is a prior agreement with Mold Town Council for the retention of a percentage of the income above the base level of the charges set across the County. This will continue.</p>
1.13	<p>Town councils may consider subsidising car parking charges in their area. Any such proposal will be considered on merit and deliverability within the current car parking strategy. Any proposal should continue to protect the corporate car parking income targets which are set at affordable and deliverable levels. The service is provided as a county-wide service.</p> <p>Buckley Town Council has expressed an interest in subsidising local parking charges. Their proposal would have to be considered against the following criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the overall net income of individual car parks and individual town centre car parks as a whole are not reduced; and 2. That any proposal meets the principles of the car parking strategy and promotes management of the car parking network to provide available spaces and thereby access to the town centres.
1.14	<p>The car parking charging system will be kept under review.</p>
1.15	<p>Flint Car parking Charges</p> <p>The introduction of car parking charges in Flint has been delayed due to the general unavailability of car parking spaces in the town as a result of the town centre regeneration programme which is now close to completion. The situation has been further complicated by the proposed retail redevelopment, adjacent to Jade Jones Leisure Centre which will significantly reduce the number of car parking spaces available in the town from July 2018.</p>
1.16	<p>On street parking orders will be introduced on some roads in the area around the town centre at the same time as the car parking charges. This will prevent vehicles parking inconsiderately in local streets. In line with all other towns in the County, the impact on on-street parking in all areas</p>

	around the town centre will be reviewed and further appropriate traffic orders introduced if parking problems arise.
1.17	Once approval for the charges has been confirmed, the orders for on and off street parking will advertised. Subject to objections, the target date for introducing the new charging arrangements is Monday 21st May 2018. This expected timescale is subject to change depending on the complexity and outcome of the formal consultation process.
1.18	Flint Railway Station car Park will offer a multi-day parking ticket to allow users to leave their vehicle for up to seven days.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	The projected income from the new charges is shown in Appendix 1 and it meets the £450k income figure stated in the Stage 2 Budget setting process.
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 and compares our own sector with that of the surrounding market adopting a differential pricing approach for some specific services where they are warranted.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	The new charges will be displayed at all car parks, within local newspaper and via documents for deposit in Council buildings during April before their introduction in May 2018.
3.02	Consultation has already been undertaken with an open meeting of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Committee will further discuss the matter at their joint meeting with Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee on March 15 th . Feedback from this meeting will be provided verbally at the Cabinet meeting.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	Utilisation and subsequent income levels are monitored as part of the regular budget monitoring process and the actual income levels will obviously be directly dependant on utilisation. Reduced car park utilisation levels (from the predicted level) will result in financial pressures within the service.
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.
4.03	An impact assessment has been completed for the proposal.

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.