



CABINET – 24TH MARCH 2021

SUBJECT: CAR PARKING CHARGES

REPORT BY: INTERIM CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITIES

--

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on the latest position with the Economic impact on town centres caused by the coronavirus pandemic and to recommend a further period of free car parking to support the local economy,

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Many businesses within the County Borough have faced significant challenges as a result of Covid-19 and the lockdown and/or trading restrictions that have resulted. This includes many town centre businesses and particularly the town centre hospitality sector.
- 2.2 Supporting town centres is a key feature of the Council's over-arching regeneration strategy (A Foundation for Success) and the Area Regeneration Masterplans that sit under the over-arching strategy.
- 2.3 The length of Welsh Government lockdown periods and the resultant restrictions on the retail and hospitality sector have placed significant pressure on the high street and businesses within our town centres. This continues to make the economic position extremely challenging for our town centre businesses.
- 2.4 On 17th June 2020 the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, Cabinet Members and Acting Section 151 Officer took a delegated powers decision to temporarily suspend car parking charges until 31st December 2020 as part of the Covid economic recovery plan. On 9th December 2020 Cabinet took a further decision to extend the suspension of car parking charges until 31st March 2021.
- 2.5 In light of the continued economic challenges and continued imposition of trading restrictions this report therefore seeks Cabinet approval to further extend the temporary suspension of car parking charges until 30th September 2021.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Cabinet is asked: -

- 3.1.1 To approve a further extension of the temporary suspension of car parking charges until 30th September 2021 subject to further review at that time.
- 3.1.2 To agree that the estimated income shortfall of circa £324k is funded from the £2.713m Covid-19 Earmarked Reserve approved by Council at its meeting on the 10th September 2020.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To support the Authority's local town centre economy in the current, challenging economic climate and to support local residents in "staying local" for shopping.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 As outlined above, the economic climate remains extremely challenging for town centres and the continued use of lockdown and/or trading restrictions is contributing to the challenging economic trading conditions.
- 5.2 One of the key messages in the fight against Covid-19 has been "stay local" which equally applies to shopping and routine, daily exercise.
- 5.3 One of the key ways in which the Authority can assist in supporting this "stay local" message is to reduce the financial burden on residents by continuing to offer free car parking at its town centre car parks.
- 5.4 The Authority has already committed to offer free car parking until 31st March 2021 but given the continued lockdown and resultant trading restrictions then it is clear that this period should be extended.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 The report has assumed that the challenging economic climate for businesses and residents will last into the Spring and Summer of 2021.

7. LINKS TO RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES

- 7.1 The report links to a number of corporate well-being objectives, namely.
 - Objective 2 – Enabling employment.
 - Objective 4 – Promote a modern integrated and sustainable transport system that increases opportunity, promotes prosperity and minimises the adverse impacts on the environment.
 - Objective 5 – Creating a County Borough that supports a healthy lifestyle in accordance with the sustainable development principle within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
 - Objective 5 – Support citizens to remain independent and improve their well-being.

8. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

8.1 Economic Recovery contributes to the Well-being objectives as set out above. It is consistent with the five ways of working as defined within the sustainable development principle in the Act and it is aimed at improving the economic, environmental, social and cultural well-being and recovery of the area.

8.2 As such it aligns with the following well-being goals:

- A Prosperous Wales – Providing more jobs and housing in the area will create more wealth for the local population.
- A Resilient Wales – Providing additional and more diverse employment will make the area more resilient to external economic factors.
- A Wales of Cohesive Communities – providing local employment and more diverse will help to stabilise and develop local communities and prevent outmigration.

8.3 The report recommendations are consistent with the five ways of working as defined within the sustainable development principle in the Act. The five ways of working of the sustainable development principle, listed in the Act are:

- Long Term – The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability of future generations to meet their long-term needs;
- Prevention - How acting to prevent problems getting worse, may help public bodies meet their objectives;
- Integration – Considering how the public body's well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies;
- Collaboration – Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives;
- Involvement – The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no equalities implications arising from the report.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The continued provision of free car parking results in loss of income of circa £54k per month from town centre car parks.

10.2 The extension of free parking for the period 01/04/2021 to 30/09/2021 will therefore result in lost income of circa £324k.

10.3 The loss of income is not eligible for funding through the WG Covid-19 Hardship Fund as the waiving of the charges is deemed to be a local decision. The lost income for the 2020/21 financial year has been absorbed within the projected underspend on the Council's wider revenue budget. Moving into the 2021/22 financial year this is unsustainable and it is therefore recommended that the income loss of circa £324k for the period 01/04/21 to 30/09/21 should be funded from the £2.713m Covid-19

Earmarked Reserve approved by Council at its meeting on the 10th September 2020.

11. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no personnel implications associated with this report.

12. CONSULTATIONS

12.1 The report reflects the view of the listed consultees.

13. STATUTORY POWER

13.1 Local Welsh Government Act 2000. This is a Cabinet function.

Author: Mark S Williams, Interim Corporate Director of Communities

Consultees: Councillor Sean Morgan, Cabinet Member for Economy & Enterprise
Councillor John Ridgewell, Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure
Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Stephen Harris, Head of Financial Services & S151 Officer
Marcus Lloyd, Head of Infrastructure
Rhian Kyte, Head of Regeneration and Planning
Councillor Tudor Davies, Chair of Environment & Sustainability Scrutiny
Councillor Adrian Hussey, Vice Chair of Environment & Sustainability Scrutiny
Councillor Andrew Whitcombe, Chair of Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny
Councillor Christine Forehead, Vice Chair of Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny

Background Papers:

Council 6th October 2020 – Report on “Decisions taken by the Chief Executive During the Pandemic”.

Cabinet 9th December 2020 – Car Parking Charges