

CABINET

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 16 th March 2021
Report Subject	Suspension of Town Centre Car Parking Charges
Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Countryside
Report Author	Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The County Council took the decision to suspend all Pay and Display car parking charges across the County from 25th March 2020. This decision was made to limit personal contact and reduce the risk of surface transmission of the COVID-19 virus via the pay and display machines and to assist key workers with essential shopping during the emergency. This aligned with national guidance issued by the British Parking Association.

Following the Welsh Government announcement to allow non-essential shops to reopen from the 22nd June 2020, the decision was made to continue the suspension of car parking charges until the 31st August 2020.

In September 2020, Cabinet approved the continued suspension of car parking until the 31st December 2020 to support town centre recovery up to and throughout the Christmas period. The arrangement was then further extended to 31st March 2021 due to the lock down arrangements which had resulted in town centre businesses being closed.

This report provides information on the proposal to further extend the suspension of car parking charges until 30th June 2021 and provides details of the financial impact of such a decision. The extension will support the re-opening of town centres, once lockdown restrictions are removed and support town centre regeneration efforts such as those undertaken in June 2020.

The report also seeks support to explore alternative methods of contactless payment for car parking charges once charging is reintroduced.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Cabinet approves the suspension of car parking charges in Flintshire's town centre car parks until 30 th June 2021.
2	That Cabinet approves providing delegated authority to the Chief Executive, after discussions with the Deputy Leader and portfolio holder, to further extend the car parking charge suspension arrangement until 30 th September 2021, if the circumstance's in place at the time support such a move.
3	That Cabinet supports a review of alternative methods of payment for parking charges such as contactless payment or pay by phone.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE PROPOSAL OF SUSPENDING CAR PARKING CHARGES
1.01	The County Council took the decision to suspend all Pay and Display car parking charges across the County from 25th March 2020. This decision was made both to reduce personal contact and the risk of surface transmission of the COVID 19 virus from machines and to assist key workers and essential shopping at this challenging time. This aligned with national guidance issued by the British Parking Association. At this time the Civil Parking Enforcement team were stood down from routine duties and deployed to assist with other work across the Council.
1.02	Following Welsh Government's announcement to allow non-essential shops to reopen from the 22nd June 2020, the decision was made to continue the suspension of charges until the 31st August 2020. This decision was made to support town centre recovery post lockdown. At this time, the Enforcement team were reinstated into their substantive role to ensure that all parking restrictions were being complied with.
1.03	In September 2020, Cabinet approved the continued suspension of car parking until the 31 st December. This decision was made to support town centre recovery up to, and throughout, the Christmas period. The arrangement was further extended until 31 st March 2021 due to the lockdown arrangements, which resulted in town centre businesses being closed.
1.04	To ensure the turnover of available spaces close to the town centre, there remained a requirement for a person parking in short stay car parks to obtain a ticket from the machine and display it in their vehicle. This ensures that valuable spaces were not taken up by those coming to the town centre to park all day. Whilst parking in car parks, all other rules apply such as parking within a marked bay and displaying a valid blue badge when parked in a designated disabled bay.
1.05	It is now proposed that the suspension of car parking charges in Flintshire is extended to 30 th June 2021. With the Country still under lockdown restrictions, this proposal is intended to further support the cross Council

	<p>work to support town centre recovery and encourage shoppers and visitors to return to our town centres when permitted to do so.</p> <p>It is recommended that short stay parking continue to be controlled by way of displaying a valid Pay and Display ticket in the window of the vehicle to ensure the turnover of vehicles in spaces closest to the town centre and all other restrictions, such as displaying a blue badge in a disabled space, will still apply.</p>																														
1.06	<p>The financial impact of suspending parking charges April 2020 to March 2021</p> <p style="text-align: right;">£m</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 80%;">Expected income 2020/21</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£0.844</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Loss of income (Apr-March)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£0.844</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2"> </td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Welsh Government Grant Support:</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(Already Received for Q1)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(£0.202)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(Already Received for Q2)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(£0.133)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(Already Received for Q3)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(£0.105)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(Estimated to claim Q4)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(£0.144)</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2"> </td> </tr> <tr> <td>Residual Income Loss (Apr-March 2020/21)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£0.260</td> </tr> </table> <p>The financial impact of suspending parking charges April 2021 to June 2021</p> <p style="text-align: right;">£m</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 80%;">Expected income Q1</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£0.211</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Loss of income Q1</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£0.211</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2"> </td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Welsh Government Grant Support:</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q1 (2021/2022)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">To be calculated from utilisation</td> </tr> </table>	Expected income 2020/21	£0.844	Loss of income (Apr-March)	£0.844			Welsh Government Grant Support:		(Already Received for Q1)	(£0.202)	(Already Received for Q2)	(£0.133)	(Already Received for Q3)	(£0.105)	(Estimated to claim Q4)	(£0.144)			Residual Income Loss (Apr-March 2020/21)	£0.260	Expected income Q1	£0.211	Loss of income Q1	£0.211			Welsh Government Grant Support:		Q1 (2021/2022)	To be calculated from utilisation
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1.07	<p>April to June 2020 (Q1) In line with Welsh Government (WG) guidance, a bid for the first quarter income loss (Q1) was made at a value £0.202M and settled without challenge.</p> <p>From Q2 however, WG criteria for supporting lost income from car parking charges changed and only the income lost due to actual reductions of usage of the car parks would be admissible. Therefore a calculation was made on the projected car park income should charges have been reintroduced, to form the loss income claim to WG:</p> <p>July to September 2020 (Q2) Consultation with our immediate neighbouring Councils has shown that utilisation levels were at about 37% during this period, at car parks serving similar towns to those in Flintshire. On this basis the Council claimed the difference between the budgeted income level and the projected income level (based on 37% of projected income) to a sum of £0.133M. This claim has been settled.</p>																														

	<p>October to December 2020 (Q3) Surveys of utilisation levels in Council car parks shows car parking levels were at about 50% of pre-COVID levels during this period. Consultation with our immediate neighbouring Councils has also shown that utilisation levels have improved to approx. 50% during this period. The claim for this period followed the format of the Q2 format and is £0.105M. This claim has been settled.</p> <p>January to March 2021 (Q4) Surveys of utilisation levels in Council car parks shows car parking levels are at about 32% of pre-COVID levels (January data to date) due to the national lockdown. The claim for this period will follow the format of the Q2 & Q3 format and is estimated to be £0.144M</p> <p>April to June 2021 (Q1) Ongoing monitoring of utilisation levels in car parks will continue in to Q1 (2021/22) to calculate expected income loss for a claim to WG.</p>
1.08	There will also be an additional loss of income of approximately £0.088M from the reduction in Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) issued, due to service users not being required to purchase Pay and Display tickets. A claim has been made to Welsh Government for Q1, Q2 and Q3 income to the value of £0.071M and has been settled. A claim for Q4 will be made.
1.09	A further review will be necessary in June 2021 to assess the situation and plan for the reintroduction of the charging scheme from 1 st July 2021. The report seeks approval to provide the Chief Executive, after discussion with the Deputy Leader and portfolio holder, with delegated authority to extend the arrangement until 30 th September 2021.
1.10	<p>In anticipation for the reintroduction of parking charges the service proposes to explore options for introducing non-contact methods of payment.</p> <p>At present each user is required to pay for their parking using coins on a daily basis. This can be inconvenient and, as brought to light during the pandemic, a point of transmission for the virus. Alternative methods of payment are available such as pay by phone or contactless card payment at the machine. It is proposed that all options are reviewed for their future suitability in Flintshire. A future report will be presented for consideration.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>The financial impact of suspending car parking charges from 1st April 2020 until 31st March 2021 will be £0.260M (if all claims to WG are successful). The financial impact of suspending car parking charges from 1st April 2021 to 30th June 2021 will be known following assessment of utilisation, maximum loss of income should a claim not be successful would be £0.211M.</p> <p>There will be an additional loss of income of approximately £0.088M for the reduction in issuing Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) due to service users not being required to purchase Pay and Display tickets. A claim has</p>

	<p>been made to Welsh Government for Q1, Q2 and Q3 income to the value of £0.071M and has been settled. A claim for Q4 will be made.</p> <p>There will be an approximate saving of £0.025M paid for the management of cash collections and purchase of P&D Tickets</p> <p>Cost of upgrading officer uniform will equate to approximately £4K and will be paid from the service revenue budget</p> <p>A claim to Welsh Government for the loss on income for Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 has been successful with £0.335M awarded to date. Claims for quarter 3 and 4 will be made, however the outcome cannot be confirmed.</p>
2.02	<p>There will be no impact on staff resources due to this proposal. The seven Enforcement Officers employed will still be required to patrol town centre car parks for compliance with set rules. They are also required to undertake on street parking enforcement and environmental crime (fly tip, dog control, littering) patrols and investigations.</p>

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT	
3.01	Ways of Working (Sustainable Development) Principles Impact	
	Long-term	Positive – Suspending car parking charges in the short term will support a longer term objective of regenerating the local high streets of Flintshire into recovery following the lockdown phase. Assisting with free parking will encourage more residents to shop local, supporting smaller independent businesses to allow for sustainability in to the future.
	Prevention	Positive – The suspension of parking charges will assist with town centre recovery and prevent further deterioration of the town centre high streets and local independent businesses.
	Integration	Neutral – No impact
	Collaboration	Positive – Collaborative working across portfolios and with Town/Community Councils and local businesses to work on an integrated approach to town centre recovery
	Involvement	Neutral – No impact
	Well-being Goals Impact	
	Prosperous Wales	Positive This approach will assist the recovery of local, Welsh, town centre businesses post lockdown to assist with their sustainability in to the future.

	Resilient Wales	Positive This approach will assist the recovery of town centre businesses post lockdown to assist with their sustainability in to the future.
	Healthier Wales	Neutral – No Impact
	More equal Wales	Neutral – No impact
	Cohesive Wales	Neutral – No impact
	Vibrant Wales	Positive Ensuring the sustainability of local independent Welsh businesses is important to the future of these high streets. Short term loss on income will assist with longer term recovery of businesses to improve the vibrancy of town centres.
	Globally responsible Wales	Neutral – No impact

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Countryside.
4.02	Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education and Youth.
4.03	Chief Officer Team.
4.04	Neighbouring Authorities (information purposes only).

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	N/A.

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	Contact Officer: Stephen O Jones Telephone: 01352 704700 E-mail: Stephen.o.jones@flintshire.gov.uk

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Short Stay Parking – Time restricted parking (usually 2-3 hours) to allow the effective turnover of vehicles for shoppers to access parking spaces close to the town centres</p> <p>Penalty Charge Notice – A financial penalty for not complying with the rules and regulation of a legal parking order</p>