

ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 14 th January 2025
Report Subject	Car Parking Management Policy Review
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Transportation
Report Author	Chief Officer, Streetscene and Transportation
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council recognises that car parks play an important part in promoting the vitality and viability of town centres and communities, assisting both residents and businesses, as well as providing opportunities for access to health, open green spaces and leisure.

The current car parking management policy was introduced as a strategy document for the provision of car parking across the county and was last reviewed in 2015. The policy now needs to be revised to reflect a number of changes that have been introduced since 2015, and to ensure that the Council's parking objectives are consistent with and contribute to the overall aims of the national and regional transport strategies and any legislative changes. The policy sets out proposals for the way we manage and regulate our car parks across the county and our objectives for the next five years.

The policy does not cover parking charges, as this is covered separately, normally through the annual review of fees and charges. However, proposals are included for Wepre Park car park, which is currently managed by the Access and Natural Environment Service, to be included in the traffic regulation orders (TROs) for chargeable car parks from May 2025. Presently, the car park at Wepre Park is free and allows parking without restriction. Visitor numbers have increased significantly in the last five years, with vehicles and footfall having a negative impact on the site leading to an increase in maintenance beyond the current revenue budget. It is proposed to introduce car park charging at Wepre Park to provide an additional income to better manage and maintain the car park and make up the deficit in the revenue budget.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Scrutiny supports the proposed Car Parking Management Policy.
2	Scrutiny endorses the introduction of car parking charges at Wepre Park.

REPORT DETAILS

<p>1.00</p>	<p>Explaining the background to the Car Parking Policy Review</p>
<p>1.01</p>	<p>The Council recognises that car parks play an important part in promoting the vitality and viability of town centres and communities, assisting both residents and businesses, as well as providing opportunities for access to health, open green spaces, and leisure.</p> <p>The current car parking management policy was introduced as a strategy document for the provision of car parking across the county and was last reviewed in 2015. The policy now needs to be revised to reflect a number of changes that have been introduced in the intervening time since 2015 and to ensure that the Council’s parking objectives are consistent with and contribute to the overall aims of the national and regional transport strategies and any legislative changes.</p> <p>A copy of the proposed new car parking policy is included in Appendix 1 for comments and review.</p>
<p>1.02</p>	<p>The previous document was entitled a ‘strategy,’ but it is proposed to amend this to be a policy document, as the provision and management of car parking sits beneath the wider transport strategy for the Council, the Regional Transport Plan and Welsh Government’s overarching transport strategy for Wales: Llwybr Newydd: the Wales Transport Strategy 2021. The following diagram serves as a pictorial representation of the policy context in Wales:</p> <div data-bbox="331 1131 1129 1780" data-label="Diagram"> <pre> graph TD A["Welsh Government Llwybr Newydd: the Wales transport strategy 2021"] --- B["Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) North Wales Regional Transport Plan"] B --- C["Flintshire County Council Integrated Transport Strategy"] C --- D["Car Parking Policy"] </pre> </div>
<p>1.03</p>	<p>This policy covers a five-year period 2025-2030. The document sets out proposals for the way we manage and regulate all council owned car parks. It does not set out every decision or action that will affect car parking management across the county, but it sets out our objectives and what these are intended to achieve.</p>

1.04	<p>This policy review is being treated separately to any charging structure with car parking tariffs anticipated to remain part of the annual review of fees and charges schedule in July each year. Nevertheless, we will continue to consider our fees and charges for car parking in line with the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and budget setting process, and charges will be set at levels that encourage sustainable travel and are competitive with neighbouring local authorities, but which do not act to suppress the local economy.</p>
1.05	<p>The aspects included within the new policy that have been introduced since the original strategy document was implemented are as follows: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental impacts (sustainable transport) • Integration with active travel (walking, cycling, wheeling) • Alternative payment methods, such as PayByPhone • Clarity on permit types (annual, resident, business) • Electric vehicle (EV) charging provision • Coach parking provision / Park and Ride provision • Free car parking for Town/Community Councils e.g. free after three initiative • A formalised mechanism for charging for events / businesses utilising the car parks for social and public events • Blue badge management and misuse
1.06	<p>The aims and objectives of the policy are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise the needs of disabled people, residents, businesses, and their customers and manage parking capacity for both on-street and off-street facilities. • Promote sustainable travel choices through the availability and effective costing of car parking, where demand is identified in support of the highway network. • Where appropriate, discourage the use of central parking spaces for long stay and seek to maximise the availability of short stay spaces and turnover of customers. • Retain long stay parking places and offer competitively priced permits. • Ensure all on-street and off-street restrictions are effectively enforced and the impact on surrounding residential areas is minimised. • Prioritise parking enforcement in areas where the requirement is greatest and to be responsive to changing needs, local factors, and demand; with particular regard to reducing congestion and increasing the availability of short-stay parking spaces. • Provide parking dispensations and suspensions, as appropriate. • Ensure the ability to keep roads clear of vehicles in contravention of a restriction, which create safety and obstruction issues. In doing so, this can reduce traffic delay, improve the reliability of bus services and enhance the environment for pedestrians and cyclists to provide easier access for emergency vehicles. • Increase the turnover of short-stay spaces and encourage the appropriate use of long-stay spaces through better enforcement, which can result in less circulating traffic and help support the vitality and vibrancy of communities and town centres.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve enforcement to help 'Blue Badge' holders by ensuring that dedicated spaces are not used inappropriately.
1.07	<p>Section 5 of the policy covers the various pieces of legislation that apply to the regulation of car parking by local authorities.</p> <p>The Council is responsible for all aspects of on-street parking on the local highway network, introducing regulations to improve safety and the turnover of spaces, as well as the enforcement of regulations by civil enforcement officers. Traffic regulation orders (TROs) are in place within our towns and communities, designated with appropriate restrictions, signing and lining. TROs place restriction on parking, for instance loading/unloading, disabled and residential permits.</p> <p>There is no statutory duty on local authorities to provide car parking; however, the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 provides powers under which Councils are able to provide and manage off street car parks. The use of the Council's car parks is regulated by traffic regulation orders permissible under the Act. It also provides powers for the Highway Authority to make traffic regulation orders for the control and regulation of traffic and parking on the highway.</p> <p>Further information on the use of TROs is detailed within Section 5 of the policy (see Appendix 1).</p>
1.08	<p>Proposals are included in the policy for the car park at Wepre Park, which is managed by Flintshire's Access and Natural Environment Service, the intention is for the park to be included in the TROs for chargeable car parks from April 2025. Currently the car park at Wepre Park is free of charge and allows parking without restriction. Visitor numbers have increased significantly in the last five years, with vehicles and footfall having a negative impact on the site leading to increase in maintenance beyond the current revenue budget. It is proposed to introduce car park charging to provide an additional income to better manage and maintain the car park and make up the deficit in the parks' revenue budget.</p>
1.09	<p>Wepre Park is an ancient woodland, rich in wildlife and history. It is a greatly valued green space for the residents of Connah's Quay and for visitors from across the region. The park's 160 acres are cared for on a daily basis by Flintshire's Access and Natural Environment Service for the public to enjoy its open green spaces and facilities. Visitor number have increased significantly in the last five years, with cars and footfall having a negative impact on the site.</p>
1.10	<p>The overflow, seasonal grass car park, was improved in 2021 to provide all year-round parking using Welsh Government Green Recovery Grant Funding. This work enabled the park to be more resilient to increasing visitor numbers throughout the year.</p>
1.11	<p>As noted above, the car park is currently free of charge and allows parking without restriction. There was a proposal to include Wepre Park in the wider Flintshire County Council car park charging introduction in 2019, but this was halted at the time, as Cabinet wished to maintain free access to the countryside.</p>

	<p>Since the pandemic, visitor numbers have increased to a point where their impact is having a detrimental effect on the site and the revenue budget is insufficient to maintain the park standards.</p>
1.12	<p>Introducing a traffic regulation order at Wepre Park will help to better manage visitors through enforcement and thereby provide a safe, organised, and well-structured area for visitors to park and to discourage users who may be using the area to park long stay.</p> <p>The introduction of traffic management on the roads in the vicinity of the park entrance will also address the issue of people who do not want to pay to use the car park and park on the residential streets adjacent to Wepre Park.</p> <p>A SWOT analysis has been undertaken to assess the factors that might affect charging at the car park at Wepre (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors (opportunities and threats), which is detailed in Appendix 2.</p>
1.13	<p>A full cost analysis for introducing car parking charges at Wepre Park was produced in 2021 and this will need to be updated to reflect current costs; however, the initial outlay is estimated to be around £20,000 and can be met from the Access and Natural Environment Service revenue budget in-year.</p> <p>A conservative estimate for projected income of around £28,000 (full year) and annual running costs of around £5,000 have been calculated with the revenue budget transferring to Streetscene and Transportation to align with all other chargeable car parks.</p> <p>The proposed parking tariffs are set out in Section 2.02 and the proposed operational (chargeable) days will be Monday to Sunday (including bank holidays) from 09:00 to 21:00 hours.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>Revenue: The revised policy is not anticipated to have any negative implications for the revenue budget within the Streetscene & Transportation portfolio and cost recovery for public events that are held on car parks will ensure that the revenue budget is maintained.</p> <p>The current cost of delivering and managing the car parking service is £1,052,384 per annum (2024/2025). The income from car parking helps to offset the costs of providing and maintaining car parks in the county, but it does not meet the full cost of managing and operating the car parks. This position is contrary to the Council's adopted corporate policy for fees and charges which expects chargeable non-mandatory functions to be provided on a full cost recovery basis wherever possible.</p> <p>The current budgeted income target for 2024/2025 for car parking income is £729,306 with an expected outturn of £732,064 (as at month 7 budget reporting). Income from the payment of penalty charge notices (PCNs) is also used to help finance the operational costs of the council's parking service.</p>

2.02	<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 • Inspection costs • National non-domestic rates (NNDR) • Infrastructure maintenance replacement costs e.g. Pay and display ticket machines, signage etc. • Enforcement costs • Administration / management. • Winter Maintenance e.g. salt bins, priority 2 gritting <p>However, car parking maintenance is viewed as a whole service and there will be cross subsidy across the car parks in terms of repairs and maintenance, which are carried out on car parks as and when they are needed, and this is not necessarily distributed evenly over the car parks.</p>
2.03	<p>In terms of the impact on the revenue budget for Flintshire's Access and Natural Environment Service, it is likely that there would be negative implications for this service if car parking charges were not introduced at Wepre Park with maintenance costs increasing and visitor numbers becoming unsustainable, impacting the local community, and surrounding road network.</p> <p>The introduction of charges will see the transfer of responsibility for income generation and maintenance transfer to the Streetscene and Transportation portfolio to align with other chargeable car parks.</p> <p>The proposed tariffs for car parking at Wepre Park are as follows: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1 for up to 2 hours • £2 up to 4 hours • £4 all day • Season ticket permit - £50.00 (full year) <p>The proposed charges are not in line with other Flintshire town car parks, but it is felt that they are appropriate for the usage at Wepre Park and align to those charges in Talacre. For comparison, other similar country park charges elsewhere in north-east Wales are as follows: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loggerheads Country Park £1.50 for 2 hours / £2.00 for 4 hours / £5.00 all day. • Alyn Waters Country Park Daily charge - £1.00 / Season ticket £50.00

2.03	Capital: Investment funding would be required for the introduction of new pay and display machines, for instance with contactless functionality, and for EV charging. Options would be explored through grant funded schemes in the first instance.
2.04	Human Resources: There are no implications for additional capacity or for any change to current workforce structures or roles because of any amendments to this policy.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
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3.01	<p>As this is a strategic report, a full integrated impact assessment has been completed, attached as an appendix to this report, which elected members are advised to read.</p> <p>The key risks for introducing charges at Wepre Park are detailed below: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial reaction of the public and visitors to Wepre Park could reflect negatively for the Authority. • Risk of not achieving the projected income targets introduced to the Access & Natural Environment Service will lead to ongoing overspend. • Not implementing charges at Wepre Park may lead to budget and resource pressures in the park, which may lead to declining standards in park infrastructure. <p>The Ways of Working principles of Sustainable Development focus on balancing economic, social, and environmental factors to ensure long-term viability and minimise harm to the planet. When applied to the design and management of car parking provision, these principles can help create systems that are more efficient, equitable, and less harmful to the environment. Details are shown below how each of the Sustainable Development principles can impact car parking:</p> <p>Ways of Working (Sustainable Development) Principles Impact</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="274 1480 587 1854">Long-term</td> <td data-bbox="587 1480 1428 1854">Positive - By linking the car parking policy with Welsh Government's Llwybr Newydd: Wales Transport Strategy and Regional Transport Plan, it takes account of the sustainability and long-term impact, for instance, the policy reflects the transport hierarchy in terms of promoting alternatives to private car use, such as public transport, cycling and walking, and ensuring that parking areas are equipped with charging stations to support the transition to electric vehicles.</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="274 1854 587 2105">Prevention</td> <td data-bbox="587 1854 1428 2105">Positive - In the context of sustainable development, the principles of prevention and impact in car parking policies focus on reducing the negative environmental, social, and economic consequences of car use and parking. The revised car parking policy is based on sustainable development principles, which involves strategies that prioritise reducing the need for car use,</td> </tr> </table>	Long-term	Positive - By linking the car parking policy with Welsh Government's Llwybr Newydd: Wales Transport Strategy and Regional Transport Plan, it takes account of the sustainability and long-term impact, for instance, the policy reflects the transport hierarchy in terms of promoting alternatives to private car use, such as public transport, cycling and walking, and ensuring that parking areas are equipped with charging stations to support the transition to electric vehicles.	Prevention	Positive - In the context of sustainable development, the principles of prevention and impact in car parking policies focus on reducing the negative environmental, social, and economic consequences of car use and parking. The revised car parking policy is based on sustainable development principles, which involves strategies that prioritise reducing the need for car use,
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	<p>promoting alternative transportation, and minimising the environmental footprint of parking infrastructure, such as integrating EV charging points into new and existing parking infrastructure. The policy aims to promote sustainable travel choices through the availability and effective costing of car parking, where demand is identified in support of the highway network.</p>
<p>Integration</p>	<p>Positive - Sustainable development should ensure social inclusion, accessibility, and equitable opportunities for all individuals, regardless of income or background. The policy aims to prioritise the needs of disabled people, local residents, businesses, and their customers and manage parking capacity for both on-street and off-street facilities. The policy also aims to improve enforcement to help 'Blue Badge' holders by ensuring that dedicated spaces are not used inappropriately.</p>
<p>Collaboration</p>	<p>Positive - The policy prioritises active travel and sustainable travel methods like walking, cycling, and public transport. With the growing adoption of electric vehicles, the parking policy supports the installation of EV charging stations to encourage low-carbon transport options. Opportunities for collaboration are employed e.g. working with Transport for Wales, NMWTRA and neighbouring local authorities through the CJC and adoption of the Regional Transport Plan.</p>
<p>Involvement</p>	<p>Positive - Having a car parking policy can help mitigate climate change by encouraging alternatives to car usage. For example, implementing electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, or prioritising active transportation (walking, cycling) and public transport over car parking. Sustainable development emphasises equity and accessibility. The car parking policy can ensure that parking spaces are available for everyone: people with disabilities, families with young children, or those who depend on cars for mobility in areas with limited public transport options.</p>

Well-being Goals Impact

Prosperous Wales	Positive – The car parking policy takes into account the use of sustainable transport: providing alternatives to car use (such as cycleways, public transport or walking) can reduce reliance on cars, improve air quality, and potentially lower traffic congestion, benefiting the economy and productivity. Using technologies such as electric vehicle (EV) charging stations can support innovation and create new business opportunities, contributing to a prosperous and sustainable economy. The policy promotes sustainable travel choices through the availability and effective costing of car parking charges.
Resilient Wales	Positive - Oversubscription of parking spaces and the stress of finding a parking spot can negatively impact mental well-being. Ensuring well-managed parking facilities and prioritising spaces or reducing the need for parking through better promotion of more sustainable travel can alleviate this stress and improve resilience. The policy seeks to discourage the use of central parking spaces for long stay and seek to maximise the availability of short stay spaces and turnover of customers, where appropriate. The policy also aims to increase the turnover of short-stay spaces and encourage the appropriate use of long-stay spaces through better enforcement, which can result in less circulating traffic and help support the vitality and vibrancy of communities and town centres. The introduction of charging stations within car parks for electric vehicles can help the transition to cleaner, more resilient energy systems.
Healthier Wales	Neutral - If car parking is limited or more expensive, people might be encouraged to use other modes of transportation, such as walking or cycling, which improve physical health and reduce air pollution.
More equal Wales	Positive – The policy prioritises the needs of disabled people, local residents, businesses, and their customers and manage parking capacity for both on-street and off-street facilities, by ensuring car parking spaces are available to people with disabilities, which can support a more equal society. Ensuring access to sustainable transport, whether public or private, can have a significant impact on people’s ability to engage in work, education, and social activities.
Cohesive Wales	Positive - The car parking policy aims to supports residents, businesses, commuters and visitors alike, and provides a sufficient number of suitably located and well-managed parking spaces to sustain the long term economic, social and environmental wellbeing within Flintshire’s towns and communities.

Vibrant Wales	Positive - The car parking policy can contribute to the well-being of Welsh citizens, by improving air quality, reducing congestion, enhancing social inclusivity, and promoting healthier lifestyles, all while supporting a prosperous economy. The policy includes the allowance of public events on car parks, which supports vibrant cultural experiences that may lead to the repurposing of car parks for cultural events that emphasise local traditions and creativity.
Globally responsible Wales	Neutral - The car parking policy can have a significant impact on the well-being goal of being globally responsible and also relate to issues of sustainability and community well-being. For instance, car parking contributes to increased carbon emissions from cars. Reducing the need for car parking, promoting electric vehicles (EVs), and improving active travel and promoting public transport can reduce emissions and make towns and communities more sustainable.

The car parking policy also reflects some of the Council's **Well-being Objectives** 2022-2023 (<https://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/PDFFiles/Council-Democracy/Council-Plan-and-Well-Being-Objectives/Well-Being-Objectives-2022-23.pdf>), as follows: -

- Limiting the impact of the Council's services on the natural environment and supporting the wider communities of Flintshire to reduce their own carbon footprint – EV charging, promotion of active travel and sustainable transport.
- Enabling a sustainable economic recovery and growth - Providing safe and convenient parking is vital to the economy and vibrancy of Flintshire, ensuring that our towns and communities remain easily accessible for people who choose to drive and offer access to amenities and places to visit.
- To have a parking estate that meets the needs of the county and remains fit for purpose in the current modern day is key to achieving this. A policy that supports its residents, businesses, commuters and visitors alike, and provides a sufficient number of suitably located and managed parking spaces to sustain the long term economic, social and environmental wellbeing within Flintshire's towns and communities is important.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	Consultation will be required with the park stakeholders to share plans around the proposals of introducing car parking charges at Wepre Park.

4.02	<p>Statutory public consultation will be required as part of the Traffic Regulation Order (normally 21 days). Public notices will be displayed in the Wepre Park visitors' centre, online through the Flintshire County Council website and will be publicised via social media.</p> <p>A communications plan will be developed for wider publication of the charge following approval and subject to the statutory consultation.</p> <p>An indicative timescale for implementation is included below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with all stakeholders to be completed in early February 2025 • Review of outcome from consultation period in mid to late February 2025 • Advertisement of Off-Street Order in early March 2025 (21 days) • Civils and installation works in early April 2025 • Go live date in May 2025.
4.03	<p>Consultation to be undertaken with the Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee.</p>

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – Car Parking Policy 2025-2030
5.02	Appendix 2 – SWOT Analysis Wepre Car Parking Charges

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>Llwybr Newydd: the Wales Transport Strategy 2021 https://www.gov.wales/llwybr-newydd-wales-transport-strategy-2021</p>

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Ruth Tulley, Regulatory Services Manager Telephone: 01352 704796 E-mail: ruth.tulley@flintshire.gov.uk</p>
7.02	<p>Contact Officer: Tom Woodall, Access & Natural Environment Manager Telephone: 01352 703902 E-mail: tom.woodall@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	<p>GLOSSARY OF TERMS These are provided corporately on the Infonet (link) and maintained by the Executive Office</p>
8.01	<p>TRO = Traffic Regulation Order EV = Electric Vehicles</p>