

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Full Council – 7 July 2020

Car Parking Charging

**This matter is the responsibility of the Portfolio Holder for Car Parking and Planning
Cllr Mike Rigby**

Report Author: Andrew Pritchard Director External Operations

1.0 Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the impact of Covid-19 on Car Parking charging and for Members to make a decision as to how to proceed in terms of charging for parking.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Council resolves to suspend parking charges until 30th August 2020.

3.0 Risk Assessment

- 3.1 If the Council were to resume charging for parking at the current time this could potentially have a negative impact on the district and in particular town centres, especially when other Councils are continuing to offer free parking.
- 3.2 The other risk to the Council is the impact the loss of parking income would have on its financial position and ultimately the services that it delivers to the public. However measures are underway through use of reserves to cover the loss of income and will be the subject of future Council Reports.

4.0 Background and Full details of the Report

- 4.1 The schedule of fees for Off Street Car Parking for 2020/2021 was approved by the Council at its meeting on the 19th February 2020.
- 4.2 From the 23rd March 2020, the Country went into legally enforced lockdown due to the Coronavirus Pandemic. This resulted in members of the public being directed to stay at home, unless classed as a key worker.
- 4.3 Enforcement activity was suspended as the contracted enforcement services were withdrawn.
- 4.4 Government issued further rulings and advice in March 2020 that mandated the cessation of parking charges.

- 4.5 With the gradual easing of the lockdown restrictions, and a large proportion of town centre shops reopening from 15th June. However as lockdown has continued to ease and will ease again from the 4th July 2020 it was felt that further support for continued cessation of charging was now required from full Council.
- 4.6 As the local economy starts to rebound from the lockdown the Council have an opportunity to be part of helping that recovery. As a short term measure specifically aimed at stimulating economic growth the council could hold off reintroducing parking charges. There is a cost to the council, but the opportunity to help economic stimulus is one that should not be lost.

5.0 Links to Corporate Strategy – N/A

6.0 Finance / Resource Implications – The Coronavirus Pandemic lockdown and subsequent closing of town centres has impacted on the amount of car parking income that has come into the Council. Now that the lockdown is being gradually lifted, and town centres are starting to reopen, the Council has to make a decision on whether to charge for car parking and to consider the potential financial implications of any decision. Car parking income for the period Apr – June 2019 generated circa £1.1M. For the same period in 2020 circa £3k. There have been extensive discussions and detailed work is underway on how to cover the financial impacts of Covid and a report will be coming to full council in due course on how the shortfall in income is being met.

7.0 Legal Implications - The Council has been following the guidance set out by the Government and Local Government Association in respect of managing car parking during the Coronavirus Pandemic.

8.0 Climate and Sustainability Implications - There has been an obvious decrease in air pollution due to a large reduction in car journeys through lock down. The Council is striving to move forward more sustainable forms of transport across the District however there is a need to support the Town Centres for a limited period.

9.0 Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications - None

10.0 Equality and Diversity Implications - None

11.0 Social Value Implications - None

12.0 Partnership Implications - None

13.0 Health and Wellbeing Implications – We will need to ensure that Social Distancing measures are in place for enforcement staff when we begin charging again and risk assessments will need to be conducted across all car parks at that time.

14.0 Asset Management Implications – We will need to inspect our assets when we are due to re-open.

15.0 Data Protection Implications - None

16.0 Consultation Implications - None

Scrutiny/Executive Comments / Recommendation(s) – None as this report is a matter for Full Council

Democratic Path:

- **Scrutiny / Corporate Governance or Audit Committees – No**
- **Cabinet/Executive – No**
- **Full Council – Yes**

Contact Officers

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