

Individual Executive Decision Notice

Report title	Amendment of parking charges on exiting lockdown April 2021	
Decision designation	GREEN	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Steve Evans Cabinet Member for City Economy, Cabinet Member for Resources in conjunction with Councillor Louise Miles Cabinet member for resources	
Wards affected	Blakenhall; East Park; Ettingshall; Graiseley; St Peter's;	
Accountable Director	Ross Cook, Director of City Environment Claire Nye Director of Finance	
Originating service	City Transport	
Accountable employee	John Roseblade	Head of City Transport
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Report to be/has been considered by	Directorate Leadership Team	23 March 2021
	Strategic Executive Board	N/A

Summary

Following the Government's announcement of reopening non-essential retail on the 12 April there has been a request to support retail businesses as much as possible. It is proposed to offer a phased reduction in car parking charges if payment is undertaken using the mobile phone app.

Recommendations for decision:

That the Cabinet Member for City Environment and the Cabinet Member for Resources, in consultation with the Director of City Environment and the Director of Finance:

1. Approve the reduced parking rates for payment by mobile phone and App methods only at all pay and display car parks as follows:
 - a. 50% discounted of full rate from 12 April 2021 to the 17 May 2021, then
 - b. 25% discounted of full rate until 21st June 2021.
(note that these dates coincide with government's key steps to recovery and may change if these key dates are altered).

Signature
Councillor Steve Evans

Date:

Signature
Councillor Louise Miles

Date:

Signature
Ross Cook

Date:

Signature
Claire Nye

Date:

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Government announced its roadmap for recovery from lockdown restrictions earlier this year which included the reopening of non-essential retail businesses from 12 April 2021.

2.0 Current payment structure and methods.

- 2.1 City of Wolverhampton Council currently operate 19 car parks in and around the City Centre using various charging structures developed to support the various businesses, CWC staff and match day demand.
- 2.2 Currently 69% of payment are through the use of pay and display machines.
- 2.3 The City also has an arrangement with Ring Go who provide the facility to pay by phone or mobile app on all of the City Centre car parks, excepting the Civic Centre.
- 2.4 The Civic Centre operates a barrier system where people pay on exit. It is not possible to operate a Ring Go option with the barrier system in operation as the barriers are lifted by a permit or paid for ticket.
- 2.5 Pay and Display machines do represent a potential infection risk as they are a point of multiple contact.

3.0 Evaluation of alternative options

- 3.1 Do nothing and retain current car park charges.
- 3.2 Offer free car parking for a specified time. Whilst superficially offering the greatest incentive such an offer contradicts the messages of retaining safety and caution, including social distancing, within the City centre. There is also the potential for popular and convenient car parks to be filled with workers preventing shoppers from accessing these car parks.
- 3.3 Offer a reduction in parking charges for a specified time. This option coincides with step changes in restrictions and also encourages the use of contactless payment methods. In this way CWC can offer a degree of incentivisation but also preserves quality parking areas and encourages Covid secure (contactless) payment.
- 3.4 Following the introduction of a similar offer, in July 2020, the parking sessions paid for through the RingGo app had increased by 45% in comparison with the same period of time in July 2019.

4.0 Civic Centre Car Park.

- 4.1 The Civic Centre operates a barrier system where people pay on exit. The 4 payment machines accept cash and card payments including a contactless option.

5.0 Recommended action

- 5.1 Encourage the use of mobile payments by offering the 50% and 25% reductions for the dates specified when using Ring Go contactless payment only.
- 5.2 The above will be accompanied by robust communications and promotional activity.

6.0 Reasons for decision(s)

- 6.1 There is considerable income generated from parking charges which has been lost during the pandemic. The need for a considered charging structure both assists with the City's ambition to encourage active travel and also helps manage parking behaviours supporting retail and commercial businesses.
- 6.2 The recommended proposals as set out encourage the use of contactless, mobile payments which are both more sustainable in the longer term and represent less of a Covid transfer risk.

7.0 Financial implications

- 7.1 Prior to the 23 March 2020, when the government announced the initial lockdown, the City Centre parking charges generate approximately £180,000 per month in income. Following the announcement all charges were suspended but reintroduced in July 2020. The use of car parks has been vastly reduced during lockdown so actual income has been significantly lower than normal.
- 7.2 It is difficult to estimate the loss of income at this period of time in Covid, however, based on the average income generated for the 4 week period, 1 July – 28 July 2020, the estimated financial impact of the 50% and 25% discount parking offer would result in a potential loss of £18,945 income.

[SB/09042021/Y]

8.0 Legal implications

- 8.1 The permanent changing of parking tariffs would require a Traffic Regulation Order.
- 8.2 [SZ/09042021/P]

Equalities implications

- 8.3 Disabled parking provision will not be affected by these proposals. Protecting capacity at short stay car parks will assist those less mobile to park closer to their destinations.

9.0 Climate change and environmental implications

- 9.1 The proposals are aimed at both supporting the city centre economy yet balancing the need to support continued social distancing and caution.

10.0 Human resources implications

10.1 None.

11.0 Corporate Landlord implications

11.1 None.

12.0 Health and Wellbeing Implications

12.1 The proposals will support the extensive work of the Council in supporting recovery from lockdown restrictions and encourage fewer contact points for service users.

13.0 Covid Implications

13.1 The need for this report is driven by the government announcement and the roadmap timings as we exit the current third lockdown period. Consideration in the proposals is given to reducing the potential to spread infection and maintain social distancing in our City Centre.

14.0 Schedule of background papers

14.1 None

15.0 Appendices