

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Off Street Car Park Charges</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	The Executive on Tuesday, 21 March 2023
<b>WARD</b>	(All Wards);
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	Director, Place and Growth - Simon Dale
<b>LEAD MEMBER</b>	Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways - Paul Fishwick

## **PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)**

To recommend to the executive following the end of the objection period that having reviewed all objections there are no material reason to alter the proposals and to approve the increases to the off-street, car parking charges as detailed in the report.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Executive

- 1) Considers the objections received to the proposed Traffic Regulation Order in respect to off-street parking charges;
- 2) Agree to the increases to the parking charges as detailed in Appendix 1;
- 3) Agree to proceed with the making of the Wokingham Borough Council (Various Off-Street Borough Car Parks) (No. 1) Order 2023 TRO in accordance with the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and the Local Authorities Traffic Order Procedures 1996; and
- 4) Instructs the Assistant Director for Highways & Transport to inform those who have responded to the consultation accordingly.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Council has not increased off street car parking charges since 2018, unlike many other Local Authorities and although this has primarily been welcomed, the current tariffs have not been subject to inflationary increases in line with the councils' other fees and charges.

The income collected for parking is essential for helping to maintain the Councils roads and footways to ensure they are of high quality and safe for all users. If the fees and charges are not increased, then the Councils ability to continue to maintain the highway to the current standards will be significantly compromised.

The Notice of Proposal was advertised on the 15<sup>th</sup> December 2022. The 21 day statutory objection period was extended to the end of January (29<sup>th</sup>) due to the holiday period given a total objection period of 44 days.

Following the advertising of the Notice of Proposal which allowed for objections the council received 156 objections and 122 comments to the proposal's details of these along with officer comments can be found in Appendix 5.

Officers have considered all objections received and report no material changes required to the proposals. It is therefore recommended to proceed with the increases in parking charges as proposed and to advertise the making of the Order.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Council has not increased off street car parking charges since 2018, unlike many other Local Authorities and although this has primarily been welcomed, the current tariffs have not been subject to inflationary increases in line with the councils' other fees and charges.

The income collected for parking is essential for helping to maintain the Councils roads and footways to ensure they are of high quality and safe for all users. If the fees and charges are not increased, then the Councils ability to continue to maintain the highway to the current standards will be significantly compromised.

The Off-Street Parking proposals were considered by the executive on the 29 September 2022 recommending an increase in parking charges proposing different levels of charges in Wokingham Town and outside of Wokingham Town car parks. See Appendix 1.

The Executive approval was subsequently called in to the Extraordinary Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on the 25 October. See Appendix 2. Officers' responses to the call in can be seen by following the link at Appendix 3 below. The decision to proceed with the proposed advertising of the order was resolved at this meeting see Appendix 4 (hyper link provided below).

### **Proposal**

To increase the charges for off street parking as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

### **Responses following the Advertising of the Notice of Proposal**

The Notice of Proposal was advertised on the 15<sup>th</sup> December 2022. The 21 day statutory objection period was extended to the end of January (29<sup>th</sup>) due to the holiday period given a total objection period of 44 days.

Following the advertising of the Notice of Proposal which allowed for objections the council received 156 objections and 122 comments to the proposal's details of these along with officer comments can be found in Appendix 5.

### **Recommendation & Conclusion**

Officers have considered all objections received and report no material changes required to the proposals.

It is therefore recommended to proceed with the increases in parking charges as proposed and to advertise the making of the Order.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION**

***The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.***

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Year 1 – 2023/24	£50k  (£320k)	Yes  £180k shortfall (see other financial information section below for details)	Capital  Revenue
Year 2 – 2024/25	(£540k)	£160k shortfall (see other financial information section below for details)	Revenue
Year 3 – 2025/26	(£540k)	£160k shortfall (see other financial information section below for details)	Revenue

### **Other Financial Information**

The £50k of additional costs in year 1 is in relation to updating the signs in all the car parks with the updated pricing. This cost will be covered by the additional income generated.

An additional £500k of income has been included in the budget for 2023/24, which is unlikely to be achieved due to the time frame for implementing the increased charges, which is not due to take place until part way through 2023/24.

Budgeted income increases to £700k for 2024/25 onwards, which based on current forecasts is unlikely to be achieved, although the numbers included in the table above are best estimates based on current parking trends. However, parking behaviour changed as a result of the pandemic causing the level of income generated from car parking tickets to reduced significantly but this is beginning to rise. If demand for car parking increases, then the level of income in future years will also increase.

### **Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation**

Due consideration has been given to the need for those living, working and visiting the borough, those operating businesses and the need to support economic recovery in the borough's commercial centres as well as increased population, resident development and car ownership/use.

### **Public Sector Equality Duty**

Due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty has been taken and an equalities assessment is not required as no change to existing policy or procedures is involved. The report will assist in providing equality of charges across all car parks and exempt valid blue badge holders as disabled spaces will remain free.

**Climate Emergency – This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030**

There has been no increase to borough parking charges since 2018. To ensure we meet our Parking Management action plan to discourage inappropriate journeys which would contribute to reduction in air pollution and encourage more use of public transport active travel, walking/cycling and promoting health and wellbeing.

**Reasons for considering the report in Part 2**

N/A

**List of Background Papers**

Appendix 1 - Proposed Parking Charges (attached)

Appendices 2, 3 and 4 can be found at this location or by clicking the links below.

<https://wokingham.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=142&MId=4526&Ver=4>

Appendix 2 - [Extraordinary Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on the 25 October report pack \(LINK\)](#)

Appendix 3 - [Officer Response to Call-In re Off Street Car Park Charges \(LINK\)](#)

Appendix 4 - [Minutes of Extraordinary Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on the 25 October \(LINK\)](#)

Appendix 5 - Responses received following statutory objection period (please see supplementary paper)

Appendix 6 – EQIA (please see supplementary paper)

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