

URGENCY ITEMS - MINUTE OF DECISION

Delegation arrangements for dealing with matters of urgency

Paragraph 7.2.1 of the Council's Constitution provides that Chief Officers may take urgent decisions if they are of the opinion that circumstances exist which make it necessary for action to be taken by the Council prior to the time when such action could be approved through normal Council Procedures. They shall, where practicable, first consult with the Leader and Chairman (or in their absence the Vice-Chairman) and the Opposition Spokesperson of the appropriate committee.

Given the current emergency in respect of the Covid 19 pandemic and the decision taken to suspend committee meetings while social distancing measures continue, the urgency decision provision under Paragraph 7.2.1 of the Council's Constitution has been widened to extend the consultation to include the Leaders of all the political groups on the Council.

Subject: Car Parking Charges Review – Covid-19

Appropriate Committees:

Leisure & Environment
Policy & Finance
Economic Development

Details of Item (including reasons for use of urgency procedure):

Members may be aware that since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic enforcement of parking charges for NSDC car parks has been frozen, meaning that car parks have essentially been 'Free of Charge' since 4th April 2020. External communications have focused on the ability of car parking availability to be utilised by key workers and the wider community accessing essential shops and services which remained open (such as pharmacies for example).

As the economy slowly reopens (non-essential retail can open from 15th June, with others sectors likely to follow on 4th July) it is necessary for us to revisit when we will again enforce car parking charges. For awareness Nottinghamshire County Council have informed all Districts that on-street parking enforcement will resume imminently.

Some local authorities are reintroducing charging regime in full from 1st July 2020. Others are considering offering a short period of free parking whilst the economy reopens.

Current Car Parking Capacity

Within the last 2/3 weeks there has been a noticeable increase in the use of the Council's car parks to such a degree that most of our car parks are now close to capacity on most days of the week. This is a position which exists without the majority of Newark shops being open for trading. There is a concern that if we simply extended free parking on an all-day basis that shops which are re-opening would simply not benefit. This is aside from the significant financial impacts for the Authority from the loss of all car parking income.

In order to strike a balance between assisting the reopening of the economy and actually creating a level of car parking capacity for shoppers to use it is proposed that a 2 hour free parking regime be adopted until 31st August 2020 (between the hours of 08.00-17.59). It is also recommended, again until 31st August, that parking after 18.00 continues to be free in terms of assisting the night-time economy. From 1st September all car parking tariffs would be reinstated to previous levels.

In order to affect this change all parking machine software would be amended and additional signage would be installed. In practical terms customers would obtain a 0-2 hour 'Free Parking' ticket by pressing the ticket issue button on the parking machine. This would need to be displayed inside the vehicle.

Members are advised that this proposed recommendation will come at a significant cost for the 2 month period suggested. This is in addition to revenue income already lost. It is proposed that communications are clear that this is a time-limited measure in order to assist re-opening.

Equalities Implications

Members will be aware that our car parks are subject to statutory requirements in operating to adhere to relevant equalities legislation. The new regime would also be subject to a Covid-Secure risk assessment that will consider any equalities implications.

Financial Implications

Members will be aware that the pandemic has already inevitably impacted upon car parking fee income with the service not collecting fees since the lockdown began. It is estimated that the proposals for free parking for 2 hours for this additional 2 months will lead to an assumed loss of around £50,000 (based on comparison to last year's figures). There is an additional cost of £3,000 to implement software and signage changes. This additional cost can be funded from the Government funding received relating to Covid-19.

In context, the annual income estimated for car parking is £843,000. Based on current forecasting (which assumes this proposal for 2 hours free parking is approved and that car parks are not full from the start), it is expected that fees will be £348,133 for this year, an overall loss, due to Covid-19 of £494,867. This assumes a reduction of 40% usage for the remaining 9 months of the year. This loss, as with any other financial consequences of Covid-19 will be presented to Government.

Decision

That between 1st July and 31st August, inclusive, NSDC adopts a policy of free parking between 18.00-07.59hrs and the first 2 hours between the hours of 08.00-18.00 Monday-Sundays (inclusive).

Reason for Decision

To assist with reopening the economy as the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions are lifted.

Members Consulted:

Councillor David Lloyd – Leader NSDC, Chairman – Policy & Finance	11 th June 2020
Councillor Paul Peacock – Leader of Opposition	10 th June 2020
Councillor Gill Dawn – Leader, Independent Group	11 th June 2020
Councillor Peter Harris – Leader, Liberal Democrat Group (no reply)	10 th June 2020
Councillor Roger Jackson – Chairman, Leisure & Environment	10 th June 2020
Councillor Keith Girling – Chairman, Economic Development	11 th June 2020



Signed:
Director – Growth & Regeneration

Date: 11 June 2020