

Democratic Services Committee

22nd July 2024

JOINT REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND HEAD OF ENGINEERING AND TRANSPORT

Revised Member Car Parking Scheme

Matter: For Decision

Purpose of Report

To agree revised arrangements in relation to the Member Car Parking Scheme.

Background

The Staff and Member Car Parking Scheme was first implemented in 2011, as part of several measures agreed under the Workforce Strategy Collective Agreement, and with the aim of avoiding compulsory redundancies. The terms of the Scheme have been updated since 2011. The Scheme states:

“The income generated through the operation of this Scheme will continue to contribute to the safeguarding of the employment of all Neath Port Talbot employees to the maximum extent possible, as part of the Council’s Forward Financial Plan”.

The Scheme sets out a framework for charging council staff and elected members who park in pay and display car parks or Civic Office car parks, either via a purchased parking permit, or using pay and display parking at the appropriate tariff.

Suspension of payments

On 23rd March 2020, the Welsh Government introduced a series of measures designed to curb the spread of the Covid 19 virus pandemic and protect the nation. This became known as ‘lockdown’. For a period, many businesses and workplaces were closed, and only key workers could attend their place of work. In June 2020, the instruction changed to ‘those who can work at home must work at home’.

In accordance with the guidance from Welsh Government, the majority of the council’s office-based workforce, approximately 2,000 employees, became home workers in March 2020 and the decision was taken to suspend the payments associated with the car parking scheme for both officers and members. This decision was taken via an Urgency Action dated 1st May 2020, to suspend off-street charging and on-street enforcement and the payments have not yet been re-instated. It is important to note that whilst payments have been suspended, carpark permits have continued to be issued, now as a virtual permit via the Mi Permit Application – employees and members must have a valid virtual permit to park without payment in e.g. Neath or Port Talbot multi-storey carparks.

Hybrid Working

The introduction of Hybrid working which enables employees and elected members to work in a much more flexible and mobile way, working or undertaking duties where the activity can best be carried out.

As a result of the changes in the workplace, it was proposed at a Personnel Committee on March 11th, 2024, to withdraw the Staff and Member Car parking Scheme, and replace with a permit scheme that would enable employees and elected members to park without payment in a restricted number of carparks associated with their place of work, e.g., Port Talbot and Neath multi-storey carparks and The Quays.

Member Car Parking

Following the decision and on review of the position in respect of elected it was felt appropriate that a more bespoke policy be put in place for elected members. Their role is significantly different from that of members of staff, requiring specific extensive and varied travel and parking arrangements across the County Borough. There is also a requirement to work outside traditional working hours such as evenings and weekends.

It is also important to note that the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) framework for remuneration sets out that no elected member should incur a financial detriment for carrying out their public duty.

Proposal:

It is proposed to separate the Staff and Member Car Parking Schemes and to introduce a new Member Car Parking Scheme (attached at Appendix 1). The policy provides two options for elected members:

- Option 1- a permit scheme that will enable elected members to park without payment in a restricted number of car parks associated with Council Civic Buildings (those being Neath Civic Centre, Port Talbot Civic Centre and The Quays). Those car parks being Port Talbot and Neath Multi Storey car parks, the Civic Centre Car Park (post barrier) and the Quays.
- Option 2- re-introduce a paid for permit which can be purchased for £250 per annum which will allow members to use those car parks listed in the Scheme. This will equate to £20.80 per month.

In order to afford as much flexibility to members as possible, it would be a personal choice as to the option they would select and an email will be issued to all elected members to ask them to confirm which option they wish to pursue.

Financial Impacts:

Any additional income gained from the parking permits would generate income for the Council.

Integrated impact assessment:

A first stage impact assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The first stage assessment, attached at appendix 3 has indicated that a more in-depth assessment is not required. A summary is included below:

“A full impact is not required as there is no impact on any protected group. It also has no negative impact on bio-diversity or the Welsh Language”.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

No Impacts.

Workforce Impacts:

There will no longer be a requirement for some elected members to pay for car parking in designated council car parks.

Members will be required to hold a valid car parking permit to park in designated car parks set out in the revised scheme.

Legal Impacts:

No impact.

Risk Management Impacts:

No impact.

Crime and Disorder Impacts

No impact.

Counter Terrorism Impacts

No impact

Consultation:

There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item. Informal consultation has been carried out with the political groups and the proposed revisions to this policy have been fully endorsed by the Trade Unions.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that having due regard to the integrated impact screening assessment members approved the Member Car Parking Scheme annexed to this report at Appendix 1.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Member Car Parking Scheme

Appendix 2- Integrated Impact Screening Assessment

List of background papers:

None.

