



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Urgency Action

Streetscene & Engineering Cabinet Board

Report of the Head of Engineering & Transport

David W. Griffiths

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All

COVID-19 Resumption of Off Street Pay and Display Car Parking Tariffs and associated Enforcement

Purpose of the Report:

To seek Members' approval to re-commence car parking charges on a phased basis in addition to the resumption of associated parking enforcement.

Executive Summary:

The report sets out the requirements to re-commence the collection of car parking charges that were temporarily suspended at the start of the COVID 19 pandemic.

Background:

Members will recall that at the start of the pandemic a decision was made to stop collecting car parking charges and by association stop all enforcement activity. This was considered appropriate given the restrictions in place during the Governments COVID 19 lockdown in relation to the working arrangements of staff and the reduced amount of vehicular activity and comings and goings by the public.

As the COVID-19 virus appears to be under better control, with the 'R' value dropping in most places across the country, the Welsh Government has commenced the

relaxation of the restrictions on a phased basis. To date, outdoor spaces, non-essential retail, the tourism sector and the stay local restrictions have been lifted. On the 24th June a decision was taken to recommence the enforcement of on street car parking. This was largely as a result of an increase in traffic movements following the reopening of non-essential retail and unfortunately as a consequence of an increase in dangerous parking practices. The re-commencement of parking enforcement has been undertaken in accordance with Guidance produced jointly by the British Parking Association and the Welsh Local Government Association. This aims to help local authorities develop and implement local plans for lifting temporary traffic and parking arrangements put in place during April 2020.

Now that additional travel is taking place with people visiting our recreational attractions and town centres, it is considered appropriate to resume charging within the council owned car parks. It is however acknowledged that a one size fits all approach may not be appropriate.

Our parks and open spaces have been open for some time now however due to the lack of toilet facilities open to the public it is acknowledged that this may have constrained the duration of time spent by visitors at such attractions and may have deterred many from visiting. A decision has been taken by the council to reopen public toilets in a number of defined locations including our main attractions and town centres to support visitors as much as possible. It is anticipated that the reopening of such public conveniences may result in a larger amount of trips over a longer duration. Other outdoor facilities are also now available including food and drink establishments, which will again attract visitors. Whilst it is acknowledged that children's playgrounds are not yet open, these form one of many reasons why visitors are attracted to our recreational areas. This was evidenced towards the end of June when people flocked to our coastline during a spell of hot weather.

It is also acknowledged that our town centres and the traders who operate within them have been significantly affected during lockdown with many being prevented from opening. To support our town centre economy it is acknowledged that the continued provision of free car parking would further support their recovery. As a consequence a differential approach is proposed in terms of the resumption of car parking charges.

A two tier approach is therefore recommended as follows:

Recreational Areas

Charges within Council owned car parks located in leisure/recreational areas, including but not restricted to; Aberavon seafront, Margam Park, the Gnoll, and Afan Forest Park will resume from the 1st August 2020. Some visitors may hold permits for these car parks and it is agreed that any period lost from the moment car parking charges ceased to be collected on the 23rd of April 2020 up until the 31st July 2020 will be added to the permit.

Town Centres

Charges within Council owned car parks located in the town centres of Neath, Port Talbot and Pontardawe will resume from the 1st September 2020. Some members of the public may hold permits for these car parks and it is agreed that any period lost from the moment car parking charges ceased to be collected on the 23rd of April up until the 31st of July 2020 will be added to the permit. (The date of 31st of July is as a consequence of the fact that the permits cover all council car parks and not just those in our town centres)

In line with the above, enforcement of the charges within our car parks will also resume but in accordance with guidelines provided by the WLGA. Enforcement is often viewed negatively by the public but it is important to acknowledge that it is an important public service, which provides benefits for pedestrians, cyclists, motorists and the wider community. Those benefits include maintaining road safety and access to jobs, goods and services. This has perhaps never been more important than now as we have had to respond to unprecedented changing demands and priorities.

To aid public acceptance of the resumption of parking charges and associated enforcement, it is advised that our Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) are encouraged to provide help and advice about where people can and cannot park, ensuring that social distancing guidelines are applied and adhered.

Initially it is proposed in accordance with the guidance that Warning Notices, outlining that the vehicle is parked in contravention and may receive a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) in the future if regulations/controls are not observed. In this regard it is proposed that the Council use the Advisory Parking Notice templates created by the BPA.

Financial Impacts:

Initially, for a short period in accordance with BPA and WLGA guidance Warning Notices will be issued in the first instance.

Enforcement will be introduced and parking fines will be issued on any vehicles contravening the off-street legal parking orders located within or close to recreational/leisure destinations from the 1st of August 2020, while those located within town centres will resume on the 1st September 2020. Any fines issued will contribute to the decriminalised parking enforcement budget.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

A first stage Impact Assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act 2010, 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 A, has indicated that a more in-depth assessment is not required.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

No implications.

Workforce Impacts:

No implications.

Legal Impacts:

No implications.

Risk Management Impacts:

No implications.

Consultation:

There is no requirement for consultation on this item. Warning notices will be issued in the first instance and enforcement will be implemented from the 1st of August 2020 at pay and display car parks located within or close to recreational/leisure facilities and from the beginning of September in the Town Centre Council owned pay and display car parks.

Recommendations:

It is recommended in consultation with the Leader and relevant Cabinet Member that car parking charges and parking enforcement be resumed within Council owned Pay and Display Carparks as set out in the report on a phased approach.

That charges be resumed on the 1st August 2020 for Pay and Display car parks located within or close to recreational/leisure destinations.

That charges be resumed on the 1st September 2020 for Pay and Display car parks within Town Centres.

That Season Permits be extended to reflect the period when parking charges ceased to be collected in the authority's Pay and Display car parks to comply with the Governments lock down period which began on the 23rd April 2020 up until the 31st of July 2020.

That Parking enforcement be resumed in the relevant Pay and Display Car Parks to coincide with the dates set out.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

The re-introduction of car parking charges will secure income which will in turn be used to operate the car parks and maintain highway safety.

Implementation of Decision:

For immediate implementation.

Appendices:

Appendix A - First Stage IIA

List of Background Papers:

None

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