



Date: Monday, 19 February 2024
Time: 2.00 pm
Venue: Council Chamber, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, SY2 6ND
Contact: Tim Ward Committee Officer,
Tel: 01743 257713

ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

TO FOLLOW REPORT (S)

5 Call In of Cabinet Decision - Parking Tariffs, Operations & Development (Pages 1 - 18)

Appendix 3c – Representations received

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APPENDIX 3C

Written Representations Received Regarding Parking Tariffs, Operations & Development Call In Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee 19th February 2024

1. **Pauline Dee BEM, on behalf of the Parishioners who attend the Wem Catholic Church**

I believe that the Committee you Chair, Economy and Environment, will have an item that has been called in from the Cabinet re the proposed car parking charges and the introduction of half price charging on Sundays and Bank Holidays. I have spoken to the other 3 churches who like me are concerned that those of us who attend our church for Sunday worship will now have to Pay to Pray.

Wem should have been in Group 7 as other small residential and business areas. You know Wem and the problems new independent businesses face in attracting customers because of the out of town shops in Shrewsbury and Whitchurch. Also Wem's catchment area was acknowledged as being only 8,000 as opposed to Whitchurch who had a catchment area of 22,000. This report was done when Shropshire became a Unitary Authority. Wem Urban is limited in developing more housing sites as its boundaries are very tight and we are surrounded by Wem Rural.

I am forwarding you the email I sent to Cllrs Lezley Picton, Dan Morris and Mark Barrow, Andy Wilde and the Chief executive Andy Begley:

I am writing this email with the knowledge of my Parish Priest Fr. Pat English who is also concerned about the new proposals. The Catholic Church does have a small car park but the Congregation also have to use the main car park whilst attending Sunday services.

I have read the proposed car parking charges approved by the Cabinet to increase the cost in Shropshire. I am appalled that once again you are proposing to introduce a charge for Sundays and Bank Holidays.

Wem is a small town with all the small shops and businesses, except for the Coop supermarket, run by independent owners. Our town should never have been included in those who have to pay to park but it was the will of the ruling party that it should be included. Wem, unlike the other towns in North Shropshire, does not have a viable Tourist attraction, like the Canals or the Meres, or National enterprises to encourage people to shop here. It is reliant on very hard working independent traders to keep the economy viable.

To charge for parking on a Sunday is a charge on people who attend one of the 4 Wem urban churches . There are no shops or businesses open on a Sunday except for the Coop and the majority of those who park on the main car park are those who are attending Sunday Worship. Why has this not been taken into account and discussed as happened the first time car parking charges were

introduced, in I believe 2018?

I would like a detailed breakdown of how much it will cost to alter the existing machines to the new charges and how much it will cost for officers to be employed (at Double time I presume) to monitor the car park. I would also like to know what the car parking income is for Wem's car parks.

I really think you need to reconsider introducing these new charges as Wem is a town that tries to help itself and is being penalised for doing this. The town is so close to Shrewsbury's out of town stores that it puts the existing business at a disadvantage.

This was recognised by the West Midlands Regional Assembly, Advantage West Midlands, Shropshire County Council and North Shropshire District Council in the 1980's and 90's. Nothing has changed except that more of the local services, e.g. Wem Town Hall Community Trust, the Swimming Pool and Sports facilities rely on grants from the Wem Town Council community charge payers. Examples of the local Town Council and Urban residents helping themselves.

2. From SEB Slater, Executive Director, On behalf of Shrewsbury BID

Please see attached separately below:

- *letter from Seb Slater, Executive Director, and*
- *parking tariff impact assessment report*

3. From Nathan Burley, Pastor Wem Baptist Church

My name is Nathan Burley. I am the Pastor of Wem Baptist Church. It has been brought to my attention that the council intends to begin charging for the use of the car park in Wem on Sundays and Bank Holidays, when it is currently free of charge. On behalf of my congregation, can I express how unsatisfactory this proposal is for a number of reasons.

Wem is a small market town which struggles to get much footfall as it is. The current cost of the car park already puts people off coming to Wem rather than going to the out-of-town stores on the edge of Shrewsbury where parking is free. To consider introducing more of a deterrent to come to Wem is appalling.

On Sundays, the only shop that is open is the Co-op. This means that the primary users of the car park are those attending local churches, of which mine is the closest. A great many people from my congregation would be enormously inconvenienced, as I'm sure would those attending other churches. Your proposals wrongfully target churchgoers, which is obviously unacceptable. To claim that these kinds of measures will encourage people to use alternative methods of transport is disingenuous since there is no viable public transport on a Sunday in Wem. Those who could easily walk or cycle to church already do so. You would be penalising the elderly, the disabled and those with young families. Our church (and others in the town) provide a real service to the community. The ability for everyone to attend, to

drop off and pick up children and older people without worry about parking, enables this work to continue unimpeded.

I understand that when parking charges were first introduced in Wem, the impact on churches was considered and borne in mind. Why has that not happened this time? Whilst Shrewsbury may be in need of controls like this, small towns like Wem are not. Can I urge you to reconsider these changes by exempting the car park in Wem? Either way, please can you explain how the introduction of such fees would benefit our community?

I look forward to hearing your responses.

4. Councillor Edward Towers

Please see representation attached separately below.

5. Gina Wilding, Town Clerk, on behalf of Ludlow Town Council

I am writing to confirm Ludlow Town Council's stated position against increases in parking charges on street and in car parks.

Ludlow is a rural small market town and it is important that residents and visitors are not deterred from spending time in the town centre due to high parking charges.

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Thursday 15th February 2024

FAO the Members of the Scrutiny Committee,

We at Shrewsbury Business Improvement District (BID), representing over 750 businesses in Shrewsbury town centre, write to present our comprehensive economic impact report relating to Shropshire Council's planned parking charge increases in Shrewsbury (attached).

In January, the Council announced plans to significantly increase parking charges across Shrewsbury from April 1, with hikes between 29-67% in all but one council-owned car parks. This, coupled with the removal of parking charge caps, extension of charging hours and elimination of free Sunday parking, presents a significant challenge to the sustainability of our town centre's economic success.

The attached document evaluates the parking charge increases planned by Shropshire Council and their potential repercussions on our town centre's economy. Among our key estimates are:

- An annual decrease in town centre footfall of approximately 250,000
- A reduction in annual town centre spending of around £7 million
- An increase in parking overflow to residential areas, with an additional 81,000 making use of free street parking, affecting residents and increasing congestion in residential areas

The enclosed report expands on these points.

This is especially significant given today (February 15)'s news that the UK has entered a recession, and the council's announcement regarding its budget and necessary cuts to public services. In light of these developments, we feel it is even more important for the Council to back a thriving private economy.

We have been disappointed by the lack of consultation on such a significant change to town centre access. I refer you to our open letter to the Council (attached), in which we expressed our concerns regarding the impact of the changes and the lack of consultation and engagement with the business community.

In recent years, Shrewsbury has bucked national trends as a thriving town centre known for its vibrant independent business scene, despite several issues threatening the UK economy. To ensure the town can continue to thrive, it is our belief that the Council should be invested in removing barriers to success for businesses, rather than putting new barriers in place.

Considering our findings and feedback from more than 800 local businesses and town centre workers ([see all survey responses here](#)), we are urging the Council to:

1. Immediately halt plans for the proposed increases
2. Limit future increases to align with inflation rates
3. Engage in meaningful consultation with the business community on any future changes affecting town centre access
4. Develop comprehensive strategies that foster economic growth and improve access to the town centre

We are committed to ensuring Shrewsbury's ongoing prosperity as the county town and a major economic centre for all of Shropshire. We believe that through constructive dialogue and collaborative planning, we can ensure the town remains a thriving hub for all who live, work, and visit here.

Thank you for considering this crucial matter.

Sincerely,

Seb Slater
Executive Director
Shrewsbury BID

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SHREWSBURY BID

Impact of increased parking tariffs on town centre consumer spending

Page 7

.....
A review of the potential impact of Shropshire Council's planned increases to parking tariffs on both town centre visitors and the local economy.

Key Concerns

1 Damage to Local Economy

Our economic models indicate a annual drop of 250,000 in footfall and around £7m in consumer spending. This significant hit will compound the challenges faces by businesses and consumers at a time of high inflation and cost of living.

2 Risk to Evening/Sunday Economy

The proposed introduction of 6pm-8pm charges and reduction in Sunday offers will result in less visits to the town when no transport options other than driving are available. In particular, this will hit leisure and hospitality businesses, who are operating on small profit margins.

3 Damage to Employment

Workers who need to park in town may look to find employment elsewhere. Significantly increased charges will make it even harder for employers to recruit. This is evidenced in our survey results.

4 Poor Park & Ride Service

By the Council's own admission, current Park & Ride provision is not adequate to support this plan. Significant improvements are required to make this a viable and convenient option to access the town.

5 Penalises Vulnerable People

As stated in the Council's cabinet report, some groups will have no choice but to pay the increased fees or stop visiting town, as they don't have alternative options due to disability or mobility issues, leading to further isolation and social care issues.

6 Impact on Residents

Town centre residents will face significantly increased costs to park in town, even using season tickets. Additionally, neighbouring areas will see significant displaced parking and congestion.

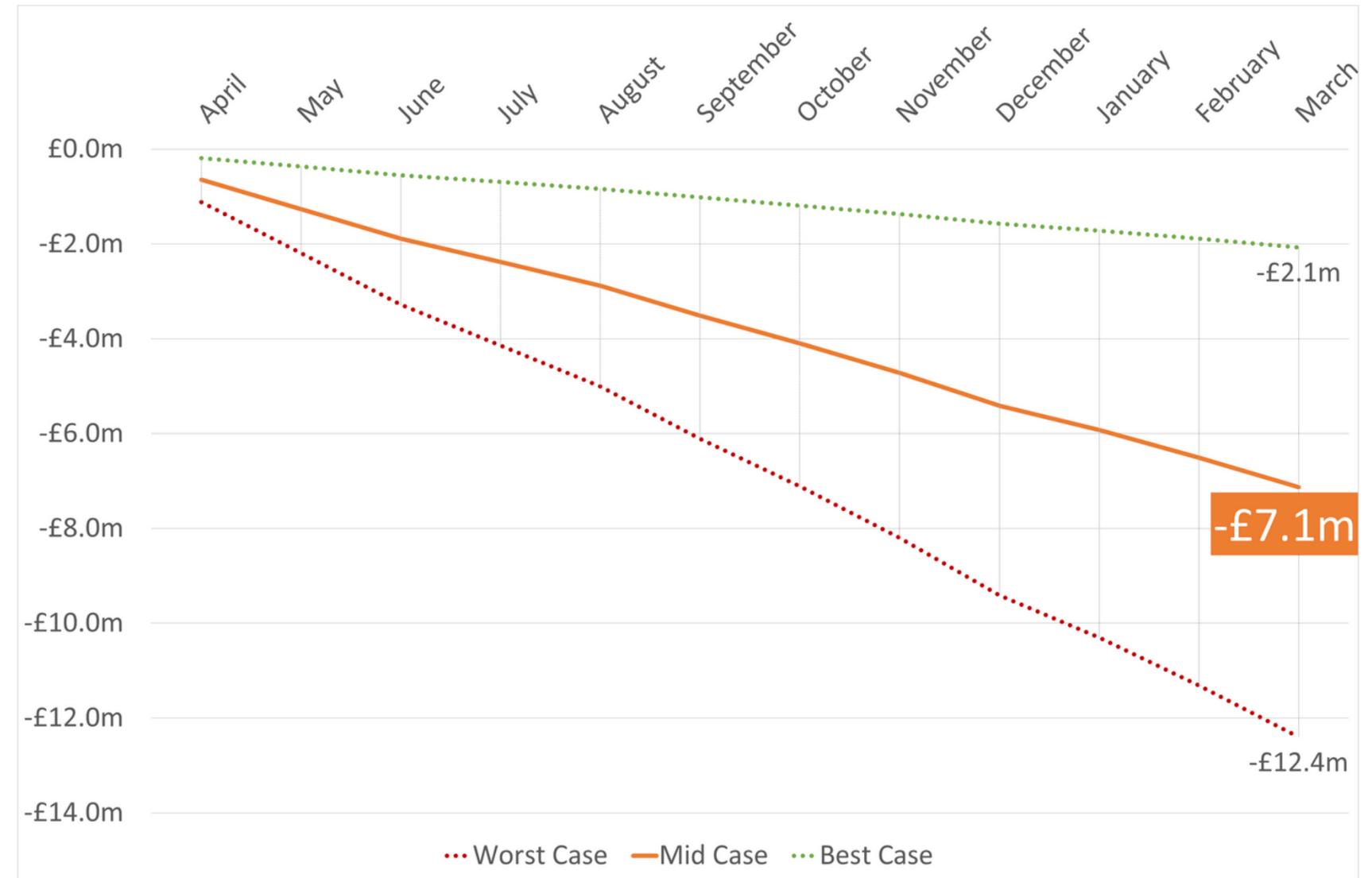
Model A

We have created Model A to estimate the change in consumer spending as a result of the proposed car parking tariff increases.

The model takes Shropshire Council's 2023 parking transaction data, an average trip value of £28.40 from Beauclair bank card data, Town and Place AI trip frequency data, and has projected reductions in visitors due to price sensitivity for a worst, mid and best case scenario.

It is assumed that increased prices will negatively affect demand (i.e. quantity of transactions) resulting in reduced footfall and ultimately consumer spend.

Estimated impact of increased parking tariffs on consumer spending



The model shows a reduction of between £2.1m and £12.4m with a mid case of £7.1m in consumer spend based on visits decreasing and on the average spend of £28.40. Qualitative feedback from the Shrewsbury BID survey indicates that parking charge increases will result in many people reducing the frequency of trips to town, find employment out of town, or go elsewhere to shop.

Model B

We have developed a second model to test the results of Model A.

Model B estimates the annual drop in Consumer Spend as a result of the Council's proposals.

The model takes the total consumer spend from Beauclair 2023 card transaction data, the total 2023 footfall from Springboard cameras and calculates the percentage of footfall coming from car parks to assess how a reduction will impact total consumer spend.

Total Spend Model

Est. Annual Consumer Spend in Shrewsbury Town Centre*	£280,760,807
Est. Annual Footfall from Car Parks**	2,070,191
Total Annual Footfall***	9,320,809
% Annual Footfall from Car Parks	22%
Est. Annual Consumer Spend from Car Park Footfall	£62,358,153

Price Sensitivity Scenarios	Footfall	Consumer Spend	% change
<i>Best Case</i>	- 72,767	-£2,191,897	-6%
<i>Mid Case</i>	- 251,048	-£7,562,046	-19%
<i>Worst Case</i>	- 436,605	-£13,151,384	-34%

*Beauclair debit card transaction spend 2023 and ONS 2022 POS payment split data

**Shropshire Council Car Parking Transactions x 1.6 average occupancy per vehicle

***Springboard Footfall Counter data

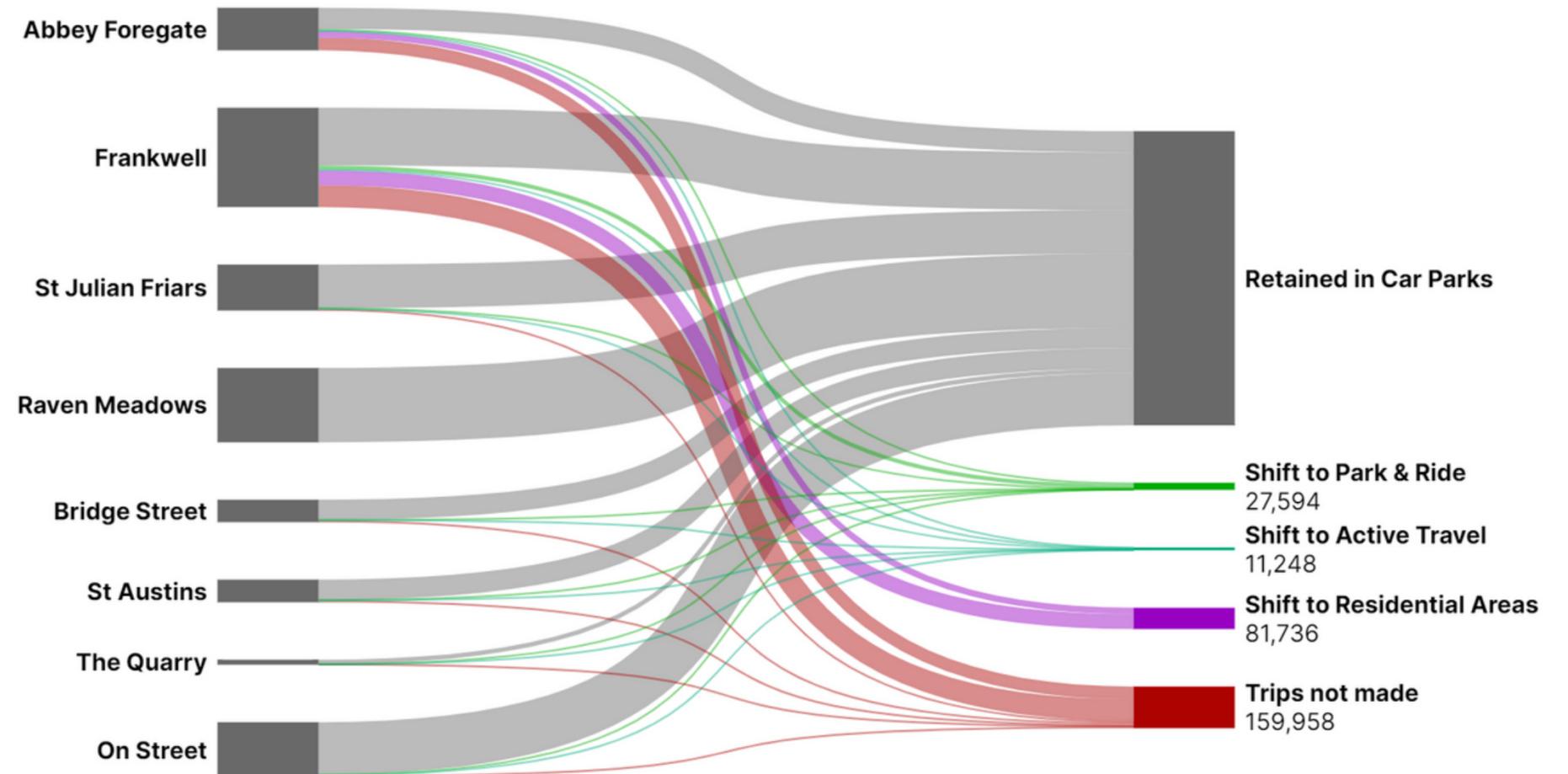
The reduction in footfall from car parks and subsequent economic impact shows a decrease in consumer spend of circa £7.6m, which is a similar figure as produced by Model A.

Mode shift analysis

This model was created to evaluate the impact of change in behaviour due to increase in parking tariffs at the individual car park level.

This model takes Shropshire Council car parking data from 2023 and projects how consumer behaviour will be impacted by the proposed tariff changes, estimating how many customers will be retained in car parks, how many will shift to active travel or Park and Ride, how many will park in residential areas, and how many will choose not to come to Shrewsbury.

This model includes a higher estimation in mode shift to Park & Ride (of 27,594) than the Council's own estimate of 10,000.



The model shows a proportion of customers will choose to park in residential areas or not come to Shrewsbury as a result of the increased parking tariffs. We are estimating that 81,736 extra cars will park in residential areas each year and 159,958 fewer trips will be made to Shrewsbury.

Survey Responses

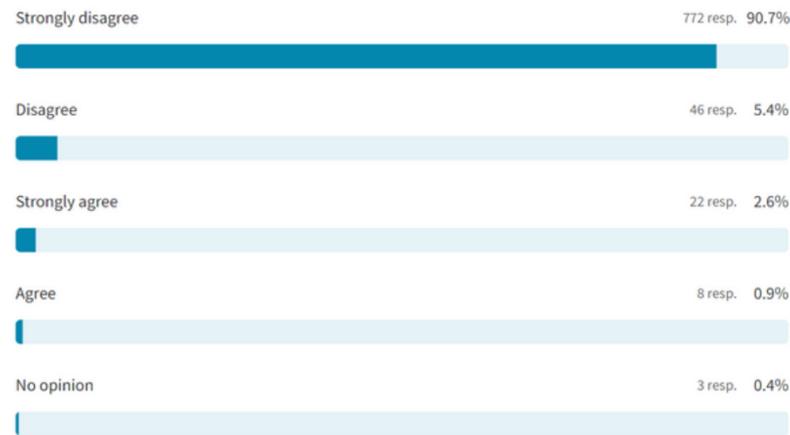
Shrewsbury BID has undertaken a survey of 800 local businesses, residents, and visitors to Shrewsbury. The overwhelming response to the proposed increases to parking tariffs is extremely negative.

Qualitative feedback from the survey supports the BID's assertions that Shrewsbury's economy will be severely impacted if these changes are implemented.

A common theme across our survey responses is the feeling that Shropshire Council should be supporting businesses as an invested partner, not putting in place barriers to economic growth and employment in the town at a time of recession and increased cost-of-living.

Generally, do you agree with the car parking charge increases proposed by Shropshire Council?

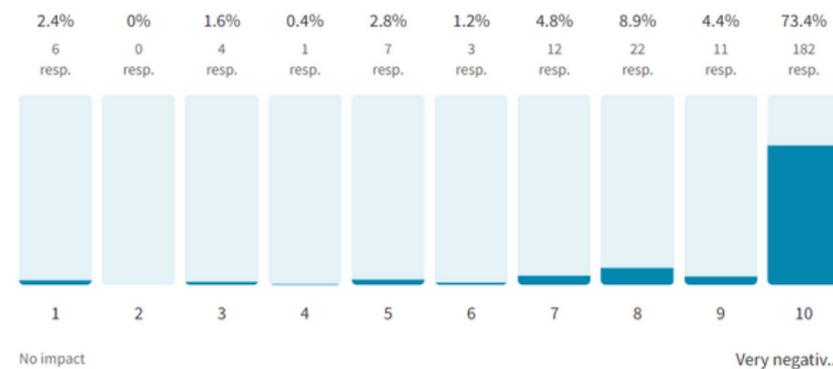
851 out of 851 answered



How will the car parking charge increase impact your business?

248 out of 851 answered

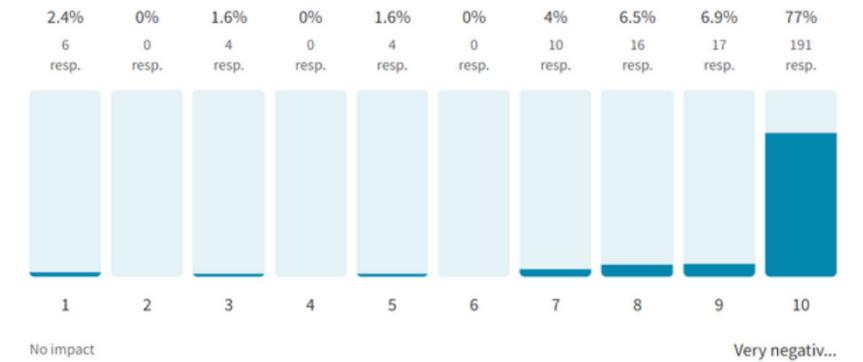
9.1 Average rating



How will the car parking charge increase impact you and your staff?

248 out of 851 answered

9.3 Average rating



"I work in the middle of Shrewsbury and travel over 40 minutes to get to work. The nature of my work means that I will sometimes need to visit clients at their homes and therefore use my car, making use of the park and ride unfeasible. The cost of parking at the moment is at a level that works, the steep increase in cost will have a huge impact on my weekly wage, which would seriously make me consider alternative employment outside of Shrewsbury."

Survey Responses

"To introduce additional cost to both visitors and shoppers (as well as workers) runs a significant risk of reducing footfall in the town, discouraging visitor to the night-time economy, pushing some businesses to the edge and starting a domino effect of closures that have been in evidence in other towns in the UK."

"Parking charges are already high compared to other towns/cities. Our customers already say that this impacts their decision to come to the town centre regularly so this planned increase will be extremely negative for the footfall in the town, nevermind those of us who already have to pay excessively to park for work."

"All these increases will force shoppers to go to the out-of-town retail parks where parking is free, or encourage them to shop on-line instead. The high street is struggling enough for trade already without Shropshire Council making the situation even worse by increasing parking charges."

"The car parks in the town centre are vital to shoppers and our customers. Seeing an increase of already high car parking charges will see a significant drop in footfall for all businesses, especially local businesses who already have to work twice as hard to bring in a profit."

"As well being adversely affected by over £1000 per year personally, it provides a disincentive for locals to use the "High Street" for shopping with the huge hikes in parking - pushing them to shop more online, or shop on the Retail Parks or in Telford. There is no Bus Service on a Sunday, so you are discouraging shopping on a Sunday by charging for parking."

"The proposed increase in prices would have a detrimental impact on my independent business. To the point where I would consider relocating away from the town centre."

"These increases are just a surcharge on people who support town centre traders, they are disproportionate, inappropriate, and do not represent increased operating costs."

"I work at an independent retailer in the town. If I had to pay the proposed prices to park my car it would be a quarter of my wages. I can't afford that. It would also put visitors off coming to our town."

"These increases are way above inflation and are fiscal madness. They will severely damage the town as a shopping and tourist destination."

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FROM COUNCILLOR EDWARD TOWERS

Representation to Shropshire Council Economic and Environment Scrutiny Committee regarding the 'Call In' for the Parking Tariffs Operations and Development Proposals - February 2024

Background:

I am very concerned to hear of the unanimous cabinet decision taken in January to increase parking charges in the way that has been set out. They will have the effect of further eroding the economy of Wem. When they were introduced in 2018 our SC Car Parks were full on a regular basis and trade in the town was brisk. We found out then that we were being placed in Band 6 and not Band 7 (Free Parking) and were alarmed at this because we feared that although only a small charge was being made for 2 hours of parking during the hours of 8.00am until 6.00pm from Monday to Saturday (at that time), this would damage our town's fragile economy placed as we are between the larger towns of Whitchurch and Shrewsbury. Craven Arms and Broseley have very similar constituencies to ourselves and represented by similar sized Town Councils, but they were placed in Band 7. During the 1990's we were placed as a Tier 1 town for 'rural deprivation' and it was hoped that Shropshire Council would recognize this and so place us in Band 7 with its benefit of free parking. However, this 'one size fits all policy of making all Market Towns have parking charges' wasn't adjusted to take account of our particular location, small size and economic difficulties.

Wem's High Street and trading arrangements have really suffered from these car parking charges. Since their introduction we have seen a steady decline in our shops and services, just as we feared. Our Car Parks are now under-used. Shropshire Council clearly hasn't listened because there has been no communication with bodies such as the Town Council about these issues even when parking charges were reviewed a short while ago. Prices were increased by 200% and also went from a two hourly charging period to an hourly one. Now, although small in 'pence' terms it is proposed to have further increases of 50% and have half price charging for Sundays. The Co-Op is the only shop open on Sundays. The main people affected by the Sunday parking charges, are the congregations of our four town centre churches. These Church goers travel in by car because they either cannot walk far or have to travel across our large rural hinterland – as other churches and chapels nearer them have now closed. The local newspapers have already written an article highlighting Wem's problem of Sunday charging and headlined it **'Pay to Pray'!**

As a local member I am now receiving increasing representation from people living in the side streets around the town centre as they cannot always find places to park as these free spaces are being filled by shoppers/visitors trying to avoid paying the parking fees. Our shop workers are not paid a big wage as it is and of course they will try and fill such places to protect the money that they earn – not an uncommon problem across the county, but here all the more likely if there are increased parking fees in the main car parks. Having free car parking would help reduce this problem at a stroke. I have written to two officers pointing out these issues, back in December/January, prior to these proposals being seen by Cabinet but regrettably I have not received a reply! I would now urge the Economic and Environment Scrutiny Committee to request Shropshire Council look again at the very difficult economic situation that Wem is in.

Wem's carparks are small and therefore will not be contributing significantly to Shropshire Council's funds.

If Wem were given Band 7 free car parking status, this would greatly help the town compete with Whitchurch and Shrewsbury, which have a greater variety and number of retail outlets as well as 2-3 hours of free parking on offer.

Consequently, in summary I object to these proposals on the following grounds:

- They don't propose that Wem should be moved to be from Band 6 to Band 7 of the Car Parking strategy because of our economic vulnerability to nearby larger towns.
- Our weekend economy is now to be targeted for the first time causing yet more serious impact to our town.
- The increase in tariffs further harms our already fragile local economy reeling from the impositions we have already had since 2018. They are very likely to drive business away towards the larger towns.
- There has been no public consultation with businesses or residents to assess the possible implications of these recommendations. SC needs to know first-hand what these feelings are before announcing policy changes and is contrary to the Shropshire Plan proposals.
- Wem's Town Car Parks are not fully used and well below optimal occupancy level (ref Paragraph 7.40 in the Officers Report). Following price increases, already introduced, they are now much emptier than they were before charges were introduced. Where is the evidence for this assertion in the Proposal document?
- The price increase in our central car parks simply add to our side/residential street parking problems - so called displacement parking (see paragraph 7.25 of the Officers report)
- I question the amount that will be generated by these increases. Nowhere in the documentation is there an estimate of the extra income that will come from Wem and how this is to be used. It mustn't be used to fill other gaps in Shropshire Council's finances! (see Paragraph 7.26 of the Officers Report)
- In the report Climate Change is appraised, but we do not have very frequent bus services like that of our larger towns....or even to/from them, to save the use of the car. There has recently been a Scrutiny Committee Report in Shropshire on Rurality. These proposals do not seem to take account of some of the transport recommendations now being considered by Shropshire Council.

Conclusion:

In short, the proposals the Cabinet have agreed unanimously are not only problematic for other towns in Shropshire, but they are particularly harmful for the long-term future prospects of Wem as a township and likely driving business away towards larger towns, even out of County. I would ask for the Economic and Environment Committee's help in asking for:

1. Changes to the proposals for Wem along the lines suggested.
2. A reconsideration of the 'Parking Tariffs, Operations and Development' document that allows a public and business consultation to take place across the County prior to any new proposals being put forward.

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