



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 - 8)

Appendix 3c (ii) – Further representations received

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Car parking call-in: statement from Andy Boddington, Shropshire Councillor for Ludlow North

Financial

The Car Parking Accounts for 2022-23 show a surplus of about £2.4m, after highways and transport costs. This is surely adequate annual income to pay for the proposed reviews and upgrading of car parks over the next few years, though probably not enough for building new car parks. In Ludlow, car park charges currently raise nearly £900,000 a year – c. £692,000 a year after administration and operating costs are deducted. That is sufficient to pay for car park improvements and other needs for the town.

Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 specifies the purposes to which surplus funds should be put. The first is to repay any subsidy the council has made for car parking from the general fund. The second which is pertinent here is “meeting all or any part of the cost of the provision and maintenance by the local authority of off-street parking accommodation, whether in the open or under cover.” Paragraph 7.22 of the cabinet report states: “the alternative to using at least part of the additional income is to transfer funds from the Highways budget, consequently reducing their ability to perform their functions.” The annual surplus of £2.4m seems adequate income to meet the needs set out in Recommendations 5-7 of the cabinet report for the next few years. There are currently no proposals before the council for investment in new car parks in Shrewsbury or elsewhere. At a time when high streets are struggling, the council should not raise charges at the expense of local economies.

Retail Economy

Ludlow town centre’s retail economy is in the balance. In November 2017, there were just seven empty shops in the town centre. By 2020, before the pandemic, there were 20 empty shops. In November 2023, the number had increased to 23.

There are a number of factors behind the increase in vacancies, including internet shopping, increased rents, increased business rates for medium sized shops, and out of town shopping. However, it is clear that the 2018 increase in parking charges has also been a factor in reducing shopping, adding to the other woes facing the town.

Comparisons with charges in other towns doesn’t work for Ludlow. The town is 30 miles from the nearest large urban centre and it’s expensive to get here. Day visitor numbers

have dropped across the county including Ludlow (STEAM Economic Impact Study 2023) and we have witnessed that in Ludlow.

It is difficult to achieve a modal shift in travel in Ludlow. Improvements for cycling and walking have been under consideration but these plans were withdrawn last week. The park and ride service will not achieve a modal shift without substantial improvement. It is half-hourly. The last bus leaves town at 5.30pm. The ageing buses are prone to breakdown and it can take up to 45 minutes to get from the town centre to the park and ride when that occurs.

Conclusion

It is clear from the documents for this meeting and for Cabinet, these charges are led by the needs of Shrewsbury. Due to the policy of banding car parking charges, the smaller towns will suffer collateral damage because of increases in Shrewsbury. The increase in bands does not solve this. The need for new car parks or modal shift in Shrewsbury should not be paid for by Ludlow or other smaller market towns.

The new parking strategy, which I hope will set the rates most appropriate for each town, should be put in place before there is any substantial increase in car park charges.

I contend that there is sufficient money being generated from car parking to fund the service and changes for the next few years. When plans are brought forward for new parking infrastructure, the council should revisit parking charges.

Recommendations

1. The council should implement from 1 April 2024 a modest increase in parking charges to take account of increased costs.
2. The council should use the current surplus funds to pay for the new parking strategy and staffing review.
3. After adoption of the parking strategy, the council should review car parking charges again.

Annexes

Statement from Ludlow Chamber of Commerce

Ludlow Chamber of Commerce, who represent over 100 independent businesses in the town, strongly oppose the proposed parking increases by Shropshire Council for April 2024. By adding 20p onto existing prices it will further deter the appeal of the town to

shoppers. The additional money raised for the Council is disproportionate to the negative longer-term effect it will have on the local economy. However, as a counterbalance for the increase Ludlow Chamber would like to see the free on street 'pop and shop' parking of 15 minutes extended to 30 minutes.

Income from Ludlow car parking

Income (Gross Revenue)

Galelford: £278,966

Castle: £209,446

Smithfield: £44,831

On Street: £336,883

Total: £870,126

Income (Net Revenue)

Galdeford: £191,443

Castle: £168,398

Smithfield: £19,087

On Street: £312,749

Total: £331,836

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Appendix 3C (ii) - Further Representations received.

6. From Councillor Viv Parry

I was in a meeting with Gina Wilding, Clerk Ludlow Town Council, this morning ,we had a discussion about car parking in Ludlow and about parking fees going up, we agreed that we hope this will not happen the feeling was that this could deter people from spending money in the town ,going elsewhere [LEOMINSTER] to shop , there are already closed premises in our main streets , we need encouragement to shop in Ludlow Town Centre , we will shortly have two supermarkets on the outskirts of our lovely town which will take money out of our businesses. I have also spoken to my Five Parishes and they all feel this would affect the time they have to shop here please I hope that you take this into consideration

Viv Parry Shropshire Councillor Ludlow South

7. Wendy Gonsalkorale

I am writing to express my extreme concern and outrage about the new car parking charges that have been passed by Shropshire Council, including charges for parking on a Sunday.

This decision by Shropshire Council will have even more negative consequences for Wem and will make it *even less* likely that people will come into Wem to shop, to take part in the facilities and activities in the town - and therefore the economy and community of the town will suffer *even more*. It has already suffered because of the original introduction and then increase in daily car parking charges and has a very fragile economy which is being even further eroded by the Council's decisions on car parking charges.

This is evidenced by the under-use of Wem's car parks and the struggling High Street and community facilities, e.g. Town Hall, Library.

I am a Wem resident and luckily for me I live within easy walking distance of the High Street. I can safely say though that if I had to use my car to drive into Wem and pay to park the car, I would always opt to drive to Whitchurch or Shrewsbury where I can find places to park for nothing.

Other towns such as Craven Arms and Broseley have been placed in Band 7 and therefore have free car parking but the Council decided to place Wem in Band 6, even though Craven Arms and Broseley have very similar constituencies to ourselves and represented by similar sized Town

Councils. In addition, Wem lies between Whitchurch and Shrewsbury and therefore many residents in Wem and nearby villages go there instead (and there are places in both towns where it is possible to find free parking for up to several hours). AND more people driving to Whitchurch and Shrewsbury means more petrol and diesel

use (fossil fuels) which means more carbon emissions and more harm to the planet - not good!

I hold that the Shropshire Council has acted and is still acting irresponsibly regarding Wem's car parking charges. Its decision is short-sighted and is helping to destroy the town's economy and community even more. Furthermore, it is highly likely that the car parking charges will not even generate the income that the Council is hoping for. At the moment, how much money does the Council get from Wem's car parking charges? (And presumably, you are also paying out for a car park 'attendant' to keep a check on whether people are paying for their parking - which is an extra cost too.)

I strongly implore Shropshire Council to reverse its decision on car parking charges for Wem.

Firstly, the town should not have increased car parking charges and parking for Sunday should remain free. This is the least Shropshire Council can do.

Secondly, and *even more importantly*, **Wem should be placed in Band 7** to have free car parking, in line with other towns like Craven Arms. This has to be a win-win situation for both Wem town and Shropshire Council as the increased benefit to Wem of more people using the High Street and facilities again will have a knock-on beneficial effect for Shropshire Council.

8. Dr S Challis

I live and work on Wem High St and can assure you that car park charges however low they may seem to you have a negative impact on business and social life here- including crowding the narrow side streets with parked cars. Please reconsider the increase and remove charges altogether.

9. Mr and Mrs Wolstenholme

I object to the increase in charges just as I did when they were initially going to be introduced.

There are many people who cannot afford to pay the current charges, people are finding it so hard to get by in the current climate and tourists are already unhappy to have to pay.

We rarely go into Wem now since you introduced the charge and used to enjoy the shops on the high street who cannot afford to lose even more custom, hence the reason we have so many hairdresser, beauty parlours and food outlets. Our experience from a family member know that other businesses struggle to make a living wage.

10. David Goddard

I understand that the Economic and Environment Scrutiny meeting on Monday 19th February will be considering the issue of increasing car parking charges in Wem, and introducing charges for Sunday parking. I want to place on record my strong concerns around the impact that such proposals would have on the town if implemented. Any further disincentives to people visiting Wem will have a devastating impact on a high street already struggling and appalling badly served by the council. I implore the meeting to have the council reconsider this short-sighted and unfair proposal before it is implemented. Thank you.

11. Graham Joynes

As a resident of Wem I am very concerned to hear of the proposal to increase parking charges in the town and also to include charging on Sunday. This will have the effect of further damaging Wem's businesses and residents.

When parking charges were last looked at, Wem was placed in Band 6 while similar sized towns (i.e. Craven Arms and Broseley) were placed in Band 7 (Free Parking). Whitchurch with all its extra amenities has 3 hours free car parking compared to Wem's 15 minutes. This anomaly needs to be rectified.

The current proposal to start charging for parking on a Sunday will clearly affect the congregations of the 4 churches in the town. Those who cannot walk into town due to age, infirmity or distance have to travel by car (due to there being no Sunday bus services). The local newspapers have already written an article highlighting Wem's problem of Sunday charging and headlined it '**Pay to Pray**'! This proposal can clearly be viewed as anti-religious and unacceptable.

If the proposal is passed, then residents will find that local streets will become more clogged up as motorists use side streets to avoid paying for parking on the underused official car parks.

I have seen no estimation of how much income will be generated by charging for using the car parks in Wem on a Sunday. In fact, the salaries and travel costs of paying parking attendants to patrol the car parks on a Sunday will probably be higher than any income generated.

12. Carl Raybould

It has come to my attention that the council is planning on charging for car parking on Sundays, which includes the car park near the co op in Wem.

The car parks on Sundays in Wem are normally fairly empty and I fail to see why these are going to be charged for. The majority of users will be church goers and Co-

op shoppers. No other business is open on Sundays. So I fail to see any reason to limit overuse of the car park.

Further, I'm unsure if you are aware that in 2013 a resident in the London Borough of Barnet applied for a judicial review of the Council's decision to increase the charges for residents' parking permits and visitor vouchers in Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs) in contravention of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (RTRA 1984) (R (Attfield) v London Borough of Barnet [2013] EWHC 2089 (Admin)). The court held that the Council's purpose in increasing the charges for resident parking permits and visitor vouchers was to generate additional income to meet projected expenditure for road maintenance and improvement, concessionary fares and other road-transport costs and reduce the need to raise income from other sources, such as fines, charges and council tax and that this was unlawful. There was no evidence that the increase was required to cover increased running costs of the parking scheme.

As a matter of general principle, a public body must exercise a statutory power for the purpose for which the power was conferred by Parliament and not for any unauthorised purpose. The RTRA 1984 is not a revenue-raising or taxing statute and did not authorise the Council to use its powers to charge local residents increased parking charges with the purpose of raising surplus revenue for other transport purposes funded by the General Fund. The Council's purpose in increasing the charges for resident parking permits and visitor vouchers was to create a surplus and was not therefore authorised under the 1984 Act and therefore its decision to do so was held to be unlawful.

With the above in mind and given that Wem has ample parking on Sundays, will you reconsider allowing the car park to remain free on Sundays of which is predominantly used by Church goers?

13. From K and D Gregory

Please can you justify your reasoning behind increasing car parking charges at Wem main car park The town is already on its knees and needs to encourage people to visit the town to ensure the few shops that are trying to make a living can continue to do so Most afternoons if you travel along the Main Street the pavements and shops are deserted We need to abolish parking charges completely not increase them
Concerned residents Kim and David Gregory

14. Councillor Andy Boddington

Please see attached