

APPENDIX 3B (i) - RESPONSE – LIBERAL DEMOCRAT CALL-IN

CABINET APPROVAL FOR INCREASES TO PARKING CHARGES AND RELATED MATTERS

The purpose of increased tariffs (in response to the 2nd and 7th paragraphs):

The Movement Strategy is examining how people access the town centre, aiming to improve highways infrastructure, public transport, and active travel. However, until those improvements are in place, parking tariffs remain the primary means to influence motorists' behaviour in the short term.

Reduction of traffic in the town centre is influenced by parking tariffs, especially as motorists become aware of the new charges and consider their impact on their parking habits.

Parking ticket sales in Shrewsbury have returned to pre-Covid levels, indicating that visitor numbers have recovered. However, information on how visitors spend their time is not available to Parking Services. Details are provided below under 'Data Use', but at times some car parks reach full capacity, resulting in queues within the car parks as motorists search for a space. This leads some drivers to leave the car park in search of another, contributing to increased traffic on the roads. This situation will likely worsen with the reduction in parking stock at Barker Street when the Travelodge construction begins and at The Gap when the Smithfield Riverside works begin.

Shropshire Led Consultation (in response to the 1st paragraph): Before presenting the report, several people and groups were consulted, including:

- Informal Cabinet, which considered the principles and objectives of the report on October 23, 2023.
- Mark Barrow, Executive Director, Place, who reviewed the report on or before December 5, 2023.
- Councillor Dan Morris, Portfolio Holder for Highways, who reviewed the report on or before January 5, 2024.
- Seb Slater, Shrewsbury BID, who reviewed the report on or after January 6, 2024.

A consultation of individual councillors across the County was not considered appropriate as the report addresses a Countywide matter. Public consultation was also deemed unnecessary, as objections would likely be the only feedback received.

Legal Consultations (in response to the 1st paragraph):

The requirements for Traffic Regulation Orders are outlined in the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and The Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996. The procedure for implementing changes includes:

- For alterations to conditions, a 'notice of proposals' is issued, allowing 21 days for objections. The proposals are then considered for approval, modification, or rejection before implementation.
- For alterations to charges, a 'notice of variation' is published 21 days prior to changes being implemented, with no requirement to seek objections specifically.

A full description of the process is provided in Appendix 3b.

The Parking Strategy (in response to the 3rd and 4th paragraphs):

The Parking Strategy is a local policy document addressing principles, procedures, and guidance for the operation and development of the parking service. Comprehensively updated in 2017, it provided guidance on creating a charging structure, which was widely consulted upon. However, the incorporation of charge levels into the same document may have created an expectation for extensive consultation, which was not always the case in previous increases. Adjusting the guidance from 7 to 11 tariff bands in 2024 reflects changes in circumstances over the last seven years, particularly in Shrewsbury. In the context of the principles and even the detail of the Strategy this change is considered 'minor'.

Charge Level Proposals – General (in response to the 4th and 6th paragraphs):

The Movement Strategy's principle of a graduated system of parking charges, becoming cheaper further from the town centre, aligns with the proposed changes.

- £3.60 for on-street bays closest to the town centre,
- £2.80 for Bridge Street and St. Austins Street,
- £2.00 for Raven Meadows,
- £1.60 for St. Julians Friars,
- £1.20 for Frankwell,
- £1.00 for Abbey Foregate, furthest away.

Increases in charges aim to facilitate this structure, with Raven Meadows not increasing due to its lower quality and without its 'intermediate' level, it is possible Frankwell may not cope with more transferred vehicles. However, it serves as an accessible option for those with limited means or mobility, maintaining access to the Darwin Centre and the town centre without increasing traffic congestion.

In comparison with Hereford these charges are comparable at the level of St Julians and below but Shrewsbury's on-street and town centre car parks are somewhat higher with their top car park being over a pound cheaper. This is reflective of the desire to move traffic from inside the loop.

The tariff structure in Chester is fairly difficult to define. It appears that Shrewsbury will remain slightly cheaper for short term stays, but the use of irregular tariffs makes longer stays cheaper in Chester. This is possibly due to the much higher level of commercial competition and availability of spaces in Chester.

Charge Level Proposals – Sunday (in response to the 4th paragraph):

It is common for towns and cities to charge full rates for parking on Sundays. For instance:

- Hereford charges full price up to 3 hours, after which it becomes free.
- Chester charges full price in most areas, with some exceptions.
- Shrewsbury currently offers half-price parking inside the river loop on Sundays, whilst elsewhere it is free. Adjusting rates to full price inside the river loop while introducing half-price parking elsewhere still compares favourably with other towns. (Note: Raven Meadows will maintain its flat rate of £2 per day to support Sunday shopping in the Darwin Centre and beyond.)

It should be noted that during certain times of the year, Sunday parking usage can approach weekday levels, although only 10% of visitors stay more than 4 hours.

Data Use (in response to the 5th paragraph):

Objective data is available from various sources:

- Counters providing data for Variable Message Signs showing car park capacity in Shrewsbury.
- Pay and Display data from the Council's PowerBI database, including parking period purchased and time of purchase.
- Permit database providing information on active permits, their location, and period of validity.
- Benchmarking data collected from various Council websites.

Subjective data on motorist reactions, such as changes in parking location, usage of Park and Ride, or changes in visiting habits, is not available.

Method of Analysis – Objective Data:

Objective data provides insight into how tariff proposals and other changes might affect usage patterns. However, Shrewsbury's unique characteristics may lead to different responses from motorists. Changes in usage at car parks are modelled using retention rates, with different rates applied based on factors such as popularity and location.

Method of Analysis – Subjective Data:

Subjective data, while less scientific, may offer valuable insights into motorists' intentions. The Shrewsbury Moves Parking Plus Strategy aims to consider how motorists' intentions can be surveyed, although this is not yet available. Assumptions and estimates are applied to determine potential outcomes, such as the relocation of vehicles from one car park to another.

Effects:

The introduction of the report measures is expected to lead to reduced occupancy in most car parks on weekdays, with exceptions such as Abbey Foregate and Raven Meadows. The potential displacement of vehicles to surrounding areas or alternative modes of transport is also considered.

The implementation of a new Resident Parking Zone based on Sunday activity alone would be unusual but may be necessary if concentrated activity in certain areas is observed. If residents have a perception of a change to an unsustainable level then demand/supply in that area could be surveyed to assess the situation and be able to respond to the residents.

Duration of Stay:

The duration of stay profile shows variations both within and outside the river loop. Longer stays are more common outside the loop, with differences observed between on street and off-street parking. The increase in tariffs is not expected to significantly alter these patterns.

Use of Income (in response to the 7th paragraph):

The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 stipulates the use of surplus from parking charges and enforcement activity for specific purposes, including deficit repayment, provision of additional car parks, public passenger transport services, or highway/environmental improvements. Only a portion of the additional revenue is subject to these limitations.

Strictly speaking, only on-street and enforcement surpluses are restricted to particular purposes, but off-street surpluses have historically been used similarly. The current proposals aim to balance supply and demand for parking while meeting policy objectives to limit traffic in the town centre. The estimated surplus from the proposed measures could fund public transport services or other defined purposes.

Conclusion:

Funding for parking operations and maintenance must come from the Council's general account, with work carried out subject to available funds. The current proposals aim to ensure adequate funding for planned car park maintenance and address staffing issues within Parking Services.