

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that Cabinet approve the proposed increases in parking charges as set out in paragraph 7.2 and Appendix 2.

REPORT

4 Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1 People's behaviour may change because of experiencing financial difficulties as the cost-of-living crisis bites, this could impact parking demand and hence the level of income receipts. It is considered however, that the relatively low-cost increases proposed are unlikely to be a significant factor in influencing choice on its own. It is recognised however that the overall cost of parking, even if maintained at current levels, may be an influencing factor.
- 4.2 An Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessment (ESHIA) has been carried out to record consideration of the various impacts that the proposals could have on people and the environment and is included as Appendix 4.
- 4.3 It is recognised that for low-income households, whose needs we seek to consider within a broad grouping of social inclusion, there may be a negative equality impact. This also includes those we may consider to be vulnerable, e.g. single parent families, serving members of the armed forces and veterans.
- 4.4 The grouping likely to be the most affected, both in likely positive terms and in likely negative terms, is the Protected Characteristic grouping of Disability. Free parking concessions are available to disability groups for on -street parking therefore there will be no direct impact. However, it is considered that there will be positive improvement for the disabled and low mobility groups resulting from the consequential improvements of reduced parking congestion and better traffic management facilitating safer movement of vehicular and pedestrian movements. Blue badge holder parking remains free within all allocated on-street pay and display areas, hence a positive impact. Although concessionary rates are available to blue badge holders within off street carparks, disabled badge holders parking will be subject to the proposed increase in charges, a negative impact. There is thus a balancing act here of which the Council is acutely mindful.
- 4.5 There will be an anticipated likely potential negative impact for all Groupings within the Protected Characteristic categories set out in the Equality Act 2010: age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race and ethnicity; religion or belief; sex;

and sexual orientation. Due to the increase in charges, they may be forced to utilise alternative parking arrangements a greater distance from their final destinations, curtail or reduce visits, seek alternative destinations or utilise alternative options in obtaining goods and services.

- 4.6 As with pedestrianisation measures, the positive health impacts that are likely to accrue for all pedestrians are around decreased exposure to vehicle emissions. The improvements to perceived safety are likely to lead to positive mental health and wellbeing by encouraging certain groupings to venture out. These are particularly those with caring responsibilities such as parents with babies and small children, those who have physical and/or learning disabilities and their carers, and those who consider themselves to be vulnerable.
- 4.7 It is possible that parking behaviour will change with an increase in indiscriminate parking both on and off street to avoid charges. Should that occur, it may therefore be necessary to change enforcement patterns and increase patrols, which may require the provision of additional resource.
- 4.8 Failure to maintain signs and lines, or to ensure that TRO's in place are recorded and maintained effectively could put at risk the ability for the Council to carry out enforcement of drivers avoiding parking charges. These activities have reduced over recent years as costs have come under pressure with respect to current income levels. This is despite other efficiencies having been identified and implemented on parking operations, which have had an impact on the level of services provided and the maintenance of the parking infrastructure.

5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 Influencing parking behaviour goes hand in hand with pricing structure with the influence in demand for bands 1, 2 and 3 (see Table 1 below) car parks appropriately being reduced.
- 5.2 During the Covid Pandemic car parking receipts reduced significantly. The proposed parking charges will only put the authority back within the range of original budget expectation.
- 5.3 At present, costs for parking do not reflect a full cost recovery model and as such the council is effectively subsidising these costs. It is becoming apparent that the revenue pressures that the council faces means that this is not a sustainable position and full cost recovery should be considered as part of a full review of the Council's strategy and associated pricing mechanisms.

6 Climate Change Appraisal

- **Energy and Fuel Consumption** - The parking strategy, through the banding system and linear model, is designed to promote the transport hierarchy and hence promote more sustainable modes of travel and reduce carbon emissions, particularly in the larger towns of Shrewsbury, Oswestry and Bridgnorth. The strategy is therefore expected to have a positive effect on carbon emissions from energy and fuel consumption.

6.1 **Renewable Energy Generation** – The parking strategy is not expected to provide any opportunities for renewable energy generation.

6.2 **Carbon Offsetting and Mitigation** - The parking strategy is not expected to provide any opportunities for carbon offsetting or mitigation.

6.3 **Climate Change Adaptation** - The parking strategy is not expected to provide any direct opportunities for improving climate change resilience and adaptation.

7 Background

7.1 The current parking charging structure was approved by Cabinet on 17th January 2018, there have been no increases since. The current charging structure is based on a linear pricing model and uses standard criteria for the setting of standard banding levels. There are 7 bands of carparks and on-street parking areas with bands 1 to 6 currently being chargeable. In addition to the linear hourly charges, specified car parks also offer:

- Discounted weekly tickets
- 3 monthly, 6 monthly and 12 monthly season tickets
- Residents parking permits
- Tariffs for HGV parking
- Free coach parking

7.2 The existing and proposed pricing levels for each band are shown in the table below:

Band	Charges- Linear hourly rate	
	Existing	Proposed
	£	£
Band 1	2.40	2.80
Band 2	1.80	2.00
Band 3	1.00	1.20
Band 4	0.70	0.80

Band 5	0.50	0.60
Band 6	0.30	0.40

A full list of carparks and on-street areas within each band allocation is shown in Appendix 1 and full details of proposed increases for weekly tickets, season tickets and concessions for each carpark are shown in Appendix 2.

- 7.3 The proposed level of fees and charges to be applied by Shropshire Council in 2022/23 was approved by Cabinet on 16th February and subsequently by Full Council 24th February 2022 and included increases to all parking fees for on and off-street parking across the county.
- 7.4 Any variation of charges for car parking are required to be laid down in a TRO before they can be implemented. Before making such an order statutory consultation is required to be undertaken and due consideration given to any objections received.
- 7.5 The required statutory consultation was undertaken between 24th March and 20th May. A total of 18 comments were received during the consultation and included 1 comment in support of the proposals and 8 objections and these are outlined in Appendix 3.
- 7.6 There has been no evidence submitted with the objections to demonstrate the assertions that the proposed increases in charges will have a detrimental impact on users. It is recognised however, that the increase in the cost of living has increased at an unusually accelerated rate in recent months and is forecast to remain at a high level in the short term. However, this has also had a knock-on impact on operational costs as well with significant rises in energy charges anticipated once the councils current supply arrangement ends.
- 7.7 The majority of charges are rising from between 10p and 20p from previous levels with only those Band 1 car parks rising by 40p, having remained static for the last 4 years with the council absorbing the rising inflationary costs in that time. Many other authorities have raised charges at least once in the same time period. Indeed, within the pricing structure, the Council is still significantly subsidising costs of operating the service.
- 7.8 The Council has sought to resist, for the time being using town centre charging mechanisms to deter travel into large urban areas to subsidise and encourage the take up of more sustainable means of travel which is common in many large towns and cities across the country but this will be reviewed as part of a further review of parking charges in the Autumn.

- 7.9 When considering the proposed increases against inflationary rises in the last 4 years the proposed charges are considered necessary as the alternative would be to require increased subsidising of parking budgets which is not affordable within current budget pressures.
- 7.10 During the period since implementation of the new linear tariffs no inflation increase has been applied and there is need to recognise that inflation rates have been significant over that time.
- 7.11 The new proposed linear hourly rates have been rounded to a sensible value taking into account size of coinage for shorter periods of stay giving variations in proposed uplift, hence for bands 4,5 and 6 there is no other option but to implement a full 10p increase to the hourly rates.

8 Additional Information

- 8.1 Details of the comments received to the consultation are listed in Appendix 3. Most of the comments and objections received relate to concerns with the current increase in cost of living and a perceived detrimental impact that parking will be displaced to other towns with cheaper parking or to on-street.
- 8.2 It is not considered that the increase alone will have a significant displacement impact nor that the overall cost of parking will be sufficiently high to outweigh the additional costs incurred in driving to out of county centres. It is however recognised that the total cost of parking may increase the proportion of parking diverted to on street where available.
- 8.3 Worthen with Shelve Parish Council have commented to say they would like the monies raised to go towards rural bus services. Whilst the current proposals purely seek to match costs to income and so would preclude the funding of any additional services, a review of the parking strategy over the coming months could consider factoring in an alternative travel funding mechanism.
- 8.4 Since the introduction of the new parking strategy and the linear model there have been no parking price increases, however costs have increased significantly in that time resulting in the total cost of operating the parking arrangements being more than the funding received in income.
- 8.5 Cost pressures are now resulting in impacts on service levels with a number of TRO's requiring updates to better reflect contemporary situations to ensure that parking provision is appropriate and enforcement able to be undertaken where needed. Any enforcement of these restrictions will either not be occurring or is unlikely to be upheld if challenged. The Council's TRO record system is also in

need of review and upgrade. If this issue is not addressed as a priority the ability to present cases at adjudication will continue to be restricted, again increasing the likelihood of challenges not being upheld and the gap between costs and income rise still further. Increased charges are therefore required to ensure that good parking availability is maintained and not subject to abuse.

9 Conclusions

- 9.1 There have been no parking price increases since the approval of the new parking strategy in 2018. However, inflation has increased significantly in this period and the Council is still receiving the same level of receipts with operational costs increasing.
- 9.2 The Council have resisted price increases for many years but the subsidising of rising costs is no longer affordable and service provision is already being impacted with urgent need of upgrade of systems to ensure enforcement continues to protect the interests of the residents and businesses that the parking restrictions seek to support.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Cabinet Wednesday 17th January 2018: Parking Strategy – consultation results

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Councillor Dean Carroll

Local Member

All

Appendices

Appendix 1: Parking provision band allocation for chargeable carparks and on street pay and display

Appendix 2: Proposed changes to parking charges for car parks and on-street charging areas

Appendix 3: Responses received to consultation for proposed increase in on and off- street parking charges

Appendix 4: Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessment (ESHIA) - Initial Screening Record 2021-2022