

CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL
COMMITTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES

COMMITTEE:	Community & Environment		
MEETING DATE AND TIME	23rd September 2021 7.00pm	LOCATION	Town Hall
REPORT FROM	Jackie MacArthur, Deputy CEO, Communities and Marketing Manager		
AGENDA ITEM	19		
REPORT TITLE	Cheshire East Council's Proposed Car Parking Consultation		
Background	<p>Cheshire East Council (CEC) has notified Town and Parish Councils that it is planning to hold a 30-day statutory consultation on car parking charges starting at the end of September. A decision on the future charges for car parks will then be discussed at the CEC Highways and Transport Committee on the 16th of November and any proposed changes in car parking would not come into force until January 2022.</p> <p>Cheshire East Council will agree whether or not this consultation goes ahead at its Highways and Transport Committee on Tuesday 21st September. If the consultation does not go ahead this paper can be pulled.</p> <p>This paper outlines the key points highlighted in the pre-publicity notice for this consultation, details of the Town Council's response to the first round of consultations on the standardisation of car parks and highlights some actions that the Town Council may wish to take if the proposals outlined in the paper to the Transport and Highways Committee on the 21st September are passed for consultation.</p>		
Situation	<p>From the publicity send out in advance of the consultation at the end of September it says the main proposals before the CEC committee are to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Standardise the approach to parking charges across the borough b) Introduce parking charges in places where parking is currently free c) Introduce Sunday parking charges d) Introduce waiting restrictions at some on-street parking locations to encourage the use of car parks. <p>Cheshire East Feedback on the consultation held earlier in the year, responded to by more than 3,700 people, is that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 51 per cent of respondent agreed that hourly parking charges should be the same across the borough's car parks 2. 59 per cent supported greater enforcement of illegal and inconsiderate parking 3. Support for a greater range of payments options, including cash-free payments 4. Support for more electric vehicle charging points in council car parks. <p>Although b),d) and 2, 3 and 4 are likely to be welcomed by the Congleton Town Council, a), c and 1 will have implications for our Town Centre.</p>		

Currently Congleton is the only town in the former Congleton Borough Council where Cheshire East [charges for car parking](#). Parking charges were introduced in 2011 by Cheshire East as part of the levelling up agenda. Parking charges were intended to be added to in other towns but due to legal or logistical reasons this never happened. Congleton's charges were set less than those in Nantwich, Crewe, Macclesfield, Knutsford, Wilmslow etc as it was based on what was seen as reasonable for the town's offer, viability and local competition. At the time the free car parks in Congleton were nearly always full so there was a need for some management of car parks. It was also recognised that there is a real cost to managing and upgrading car parks.

Income from Congleton's car parks (as shown on the Cheshire East Website) is

Year	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Income from Congleton car parks	£196,568	£182,279	£84,123
Overall surplus from all CEC carparks	£1,866,587	£2,186,698	£1,614,450

It now looks as though Cheshire East Council is intending to introduce standard rates of charges across the whole borough. Previously we were promised that a one size fits all would not happen, understanding that the needs and issues facing the various towns were different and charges needed to be considered on town-by-town basis.

In the paper to be discussed on the 21st of September the recommendation is that all Cheshire East Car Parks should apply standardisation of parking tariffs, with a slight reduction for local (village) shopping centres. For Congleton it is likely that short stay car parks will be zone 1 and long stay zone 2. In addition, there is a recommendation that Roe Street (the car park that services Lawton Street surgery) should become a zone 2 chargeable car park.

The proposed scale of charges is as follows:

Zone	Up to 30mins	Up to 1 hr	1 to 2 hours	2 to 3 hours	3 to 4 hours	4 to 6 hours	6 to 10 hours
Zone 1	£0.40	£0.80	£1.20	£2.40	£3.50	£4.40	£5.60
Zone 2	£0.30	£0.60	£1.10	£1.80	£2.60	£3.20	£3.40
Railway	£0.40	£0.80	£1.20	£2.40	£3.50	£4.40	£7.50

Currently in Congleton Short Stay 0-1 hours 40p, 1-2 hours 60p 2-3 hours £1.10
 Long Stay 0-2 hours 60p 2-4 hours £1.10 4-8 hours £1.60

This new tariff would effectively double the cost of parking in a CEC car park in Congleton.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zone 1 (Z1) comprises central car parks i.e., those located within 300 metres / 5-minute walk of the centre . • Zone 2 (Z2) includes ‘edge of centre or out of centre’ or car parks serving Local Service Centres as defined in the Local Plan. • In Zone 1, short stay (up to 4 hours) parking tariffs would be 20p more expensive for the first hour and 90p more for 4 hours, than in Zone 2 . • Long stay parking (up to 10 hours) would be £2.20 more expensive in Zone 1 than in Zone 2. • These proposed tariffs are consistent with existing tariffs for most Crewe and Macclesfield car parks. <p>Cheshire East Council is also intending to introduce parking charges at the rates above in eight of the towns that currently enjoy free parking.</p> <p>This is a complex matter. With the Climate Change Emergency work, the Town Council and Cheshire East are keen to encourage more people to walk, cycle and take public transport. But we are also keen to see the town centre strengthen and many surveys have shown car parking availability, security and price is a factor in where people chose to go.</p> <p>Congleton Town Centre is not in a strong position, with an increasing number of empty shops and it is reasonable to assume that usage of the town centre will drop further if people are asked to pay twice as much to park. Currently public transport options to the town are limited and many residents are unable to walk or cycle into town to pick up what they need so will be more likely to drive elsewhere.</p> <p>As 71% of respondents across CEC didn’t think charging was needed from 6pm – 10pm that proposal is recommended not going ahead. Parking on a Sunday is recommended on all paid car parks and capped at £1.</p>
<p>Actions</p>	<p>Need to see the facts of the consultation following the CEC meeting on the 21st September.</p> <p>Seek details in advance on the Congleton responses to the original consultation</p> <p>Speakers to attend the meeting on the 16th November to express views for Congleton</p> <p>Encourage residents and businesses to respond to the consultation</p> <p>Agree what the approach to the consultation should be from the Town Council and if it is still in line with the comments we gave to the first round of consultation – attached below.</p>
<p>Financial Considerations</p>	<p>An increase in parking charges could potentially have a big impact on the viability of the town centre and it will be important that there is investment in incentives to come into town. Some traders already claim that car parking charges are the most damaging factor to their businesses. Increasing the charges could lead to more shops and businesses leaving the town centre. Parking issues are complex. Charging must be tailored to the demographic and retail/ business offering nuances of the local area, to optimise the positive impact that charging has on footfall and the overall health of the local economy.</p>
<p>Environmental Considerations</p>	<p>CTC would like to see more people walk and cycle into the town, but without safe routes and available public transport the approach of putting up charges to force</p>

	people out of their cars could well encourage people to drive to larger towns with a bigger offer and the same parking charges. This would have a negative impact on the environment increasing carbon emissions.
Equality and Diversity Considerations	This will have an impact on low paid town centre workers who due to the lack of public transport often have little option other than driving to work. It may also make it harder to recruit for town centre jobs, although it must be remembered that parking charges only impact those who own and drive cars.
Proposals	Congleton Town Council prepares to react to the consultation when it is issued. Following discussions at this committee a paper with a suggested response will be discussed at Council on the 20 th October 2021 when the consultation has been made public.

13 September 2021

INFORMATION BULLETIN

Committee to consider consultation on parking proposals

Cheshire East Council’s highways and transport committee is to consider giving the green light for a consultation to seek people’s views on proposals to change parking charges.

The proposed public consultation would be on measures that would deliver fairness, standardisation and transparency and are aimed at encouraging greener and ‘more active’ travel, such as walking, cycling and public transport. The proposed changes are designed to support the vitality of our town and village centres.

The revenue generated from the proposals would also support the council’s strategic approach to providing continued investment in highways and transport, as laid out in the authority’s balanced medium-term financial strategy.

The main proposals before the committee are to:

- Standardise the approach to parking charges across the borough.
- Introduce parking charges in places where parking is currently free
- Introduce Sunday parking charges; and
- Introduce waiting restrictions at some on-street parking locations to encourage the use of car parks.

Subject to approval by the committee, the council would hold a 30-day statutory consultation on the proposals starting at the end of September 2021. The statutory minimum consultation for such proposed changes is three weeks.

Final recommendations, following the conclusion of the consultation, would go before a meeting of the council's highways and transport committee for decision. The intention is that any changes to parking would *not* come into force before January 2022.

The current proposals follow a borough-wide public engagement survey in autumn 2020 and early 2021 to test key principles and identify key issues for residents in relation to car parking. This survey received more than 3,700 responses.

The survey found:

- 51 per cent of respondent agreed that hourly parking charges should be the same across the borough's car parks.
- 59 per cent supported greater enforcement of illegal and inconsiderate parking.
- Support for a greater range of payments options, including cash-free payments; and
- Support for more electric vehicle charging points in council car parks.

For more information, see the highways and transport committee [agenda](#) on the council's website.

CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL RESPONSE TO FIRST CONSULTATION

Our Ref CE/54/2021

28th January 2021

Congleton Town Council Response to the Car Parking Survey 2020

Congleton Town Council has considered the Parking Consultation Survey and developed its collective response to each of the questions. Our responses are consistent with the current circumstances in Congleton. If in the future, as set out in the Transport Delivery Plan, there were cheap, convenient and reliable alternatives mode of travelling to the town centre and other destinations rather than private motor car then the car parking policies be reconsidered in line with the circumstances of the day.

Future Role of Car Parking

1. Cheshire East Council should be providing both short and long stay parking in Congleton Town Centre. Councillors believe the biggest need is for short-stay parking for shoppers. The current balance of short stay closest to the Town Centre (Fairground and Antrobus Street) and longer stay car parks slightly further out of town seems the right approach. Princess Street started as a short-stay car park in 2011 but was amended to cater for both long and short stay car parking as this is the car park used by the Market Traders on a Tuesday and Saturday.

Accessing Town Centres

2. Cheshire East Council should provide parking as it does today, but in line with actions proposed in the Local Transport Plan delivery plan should also actively seek to make it easier and safer for residents and visitors to access our town in other ways. a) Congleton Town Council has requested significantly enhanced public transport services; if they are provided and maintained by Cheshire East Council, we should aim to ensure there are no additional cars on our roads'. b) It should be possible to catch frequent, low-cost bus services into and out of each of our towns in Cheshire East.

c) We would like to encourage non-car travel for short journeys (< 2 miles) and local transport services should support this.

d) The Congleton Link Road gives us an opportunity to re-plan bus services and make them reliable and frequent in Congleton.

Comments/ Views of the Future of Parking in Congleton Town Centre

3. Parking in Cheshire East future ideas

a) Initial free period on car parks (two hours) would really help to stimulate and encourage people to use Congleton town centre businesses and help to revitalise the Town Centre. Local people often opt to use Barn Road, West Heath Shopping Centre, Biddulph Sainsburys or Talke Retail – all of which offer free parking, and all of which in normal times are busy centres with high business occupancy.

b) Congleton Town Council would like to see ‘Season Tickets’ introduced so that, for example, a Congleton resident can park all year for up to 4 hours at a time in any Congleton car park for a single annual payment. If possible, we would like to see this parking ticket linked to free bus use, to encourage car users to take the bus occasionally.

c) Possibility of seeing if rather than a town-wide season ticket, Cheshire East could introduce a borough-wide ticket allow parking across Cheshire East car parks.

d) Advertising/sponsorship of parking tickets with local shopping discounts

e) Opportunity to provide passes for e.g., shop workers and others who are driving the local economy. Note many shop workers may work 16 hours a week, across several shifts so the current options for parking passes do not work for them.

Harmonisation of Car Parking Charges

4. How Strongly do you agree that there should be harmonisation of car parking charges across Cheshire East with all town paying for car parking?

a) Congleton Town Council does not agree with harmonisation of parking charges as each Cheshire East town has very different characteristics, offers and needs. Where demand outstrips supply of spaces for parking, it may be possible to charge more, but this needs to be considered on a town-by-town basis.

b) It would seem fairer if parking were charged in all towns across Cheshire East Borough and not just the seven towns that currently have charges. When car parking charges were introduced in Congleton in 2011 as part of ‘harmonisation’ across the former three boroughs the understanding was the parking charges would be introduced in the other towns ‘as soon as possible’. There is a cost to car parks, and it seems unfair that the charging towns are subsidising the costs for the non-paying towns.

5. Should all Car Parks in Cheshire East with Car Parking Charges be charging the same?

a) The offers of the various towns are quite different. Users may be willing to pay more where there is a strong offer. Where a town needs support to attract more users, increasing charges is likely to have the opposite effect and discourage customers. Congleton believes at the current time and post COVID-19 we need help and incentives to drive our local economy.

b) Congleton will be the town likely to be most affected if Cheshire East were to harmonisation of charges across all paying car parks. If the harmonisation aimed to maintain the same overall income, it could see prices on Congleton car parks almost doubling. If Cheshire East offers other towns the same price structure as

Congleton, we would not object, but believe that raising our costs at this time will have a detrimental impact on our town centre.

6. Chance for other comments on Harmonisation of Car Parking

It is noted that Cheshire East Council has received or allocated major funding for regeneration in both Macclesfield and Crewe and that the vast majority of regeneration resource is focused on these two towns. Congleton town centre like many of the other towns has no focused resource for regeneration, aligned to the fact that key development sites in the town, some owned by Cheshire East Council, have no plans for development. Congleton, and other key service towns should not be viewed in the same way as Crewe and Macclesfield when it comes to car parking charges.

7. How much should be charged for one-hour parking.

Congleton Town Council believes that Cheshire East should be giving one hour – and ideally two hours – free of charge to encourage people into our Town Centres.

8. How much should be charged for 6 hours to 10 hours parking?

- a) Congleton Town Council was disappointed to see that scale starts at £3.50 - £4.00 when the current charge in Congleton is £1.60.
- b) Congleton Town Council believes that if there were two hours free parking then the longer-stay parking of 6 – 10 hours could increase by a maximum of 25% eg £2 for 6-10 hours.

9. How much do you agree that CEC should charge for car parking in the car parks that it owns? Would car parking charges encourage you to change your mode of transport

a) Congleton Town Council accepts that there is a real cost to managing car parks and understand that CEC needs to cover this cost, however pricing needs to be strategic. Ease of parking and parking charges affect where people choose to shop and their dwell time in the town centre. Many town centre shops rely on people browsing. The future of towns is a social place where people can meet. When people are paying to park, they will be more focussed on what they must get done and the opportunity to browse and socialise is reduced.

b) Currently there is very little option to choose a different form of transport when coming into Congleton town so parking charges are unlikely to affect mode of transport.

10. Views on General Principles of Parking

- a) Congleton Town Council would like to see two hours free parking to encourage use of the town centre businesses.
- b) We do not believe it is possible to encourage a modal shift to bus use by charging more for car parks. First there is a need to introduce regular and reliable bus services
- c) We need to be aware of the needs and demographics of our population as well as the physical features of the town. Car Park charges is not the only factor in deciding whether to drive into town. However, car parking charges may help to determine where a person chooses to drive to. Once a person is in a car, in many cases it is as easy to drive 20 minutes as it is 10 minutes – you are probably most likely to travel to a destination where there is a good chance that you can achieve what you are setting out to do.
- d) Consider parking in proportion to spend. If you are popping into town for a paper, you will not pay 80p to purchase a 70p paper - you will go to somewhere where you can park for free. This is an opportunity lost to other shops that the person picking up their weekly paper may have also spent money with.

11. Are there areas where on-street parking enforcement could be better. a) Yes

12. – 14 asked for sites to be listed a) Cross Lane / around Congleton Station area. Commuters should park at the station not on the road. Station parking should be easier and more affordable

b) Swan Bank – parking on double yellow lines

c) Lawton Street – overstay, especially near the traffic lights at Park Lane

d) Sandy Lane – Astbury Mere

e) West Street - near to Top Nosh – overstaying the 30-minute limit.

15. This question was about experience when visiting other towns and not appropriate for the Town Council to answer as a body.

16. Views on Parking in residential areas and how the parking pressures could be managed.

a) More use of Parking Enforcement Officers in residential areas.

This would be welcomed particularly in areas around the train station and roads adjacent to town centres, especially if visitors could park for two hours free of charge in CEC Car Parks.

b) Pay and Display at Business Parks

Not sure this would be possible in Congleton; Business Parks are not owned by CEC and are largely out of town and self-managing. Encouragement of car sharing schemes could be worth exploring as mentioned in the Transport Plan Delivery actions

c) Pay and Display on residential streets

This would need to be considered on a case-by-case basis and is likely to have a big impact on town centre residents without private parking spaces. Not appropriate in Congleton

d) Park and Stride near Schools

This sounds like an excellent scheme that could help with safety, congestion and pollution around schools if adequate space can be found. Consultation would need to be carried out with parents. Questionable if parents would be prepared to pay to park when walking their child for the last part of the journey.

17. Comments on suggested options for CEC Car Parks

a) Congleton Town Council welcomes opportunities to encourage greener use of transport and would welcome cheaper parking for low emission cars.

b) Congleton Town Council disagrees with Sunday and night-time parking charges. However, if the choice were between two free hours of parking or free Sunday parking the preference would be for two free hours parking.

c) Congleton Town Council believes charging for evening parking could affect our evening economy in a negative way and result in more people parking on side roads. Currently we understand the main usage of the car parks in the evenings is from people living in the town centre who have no parking space near their house

18. Which suggestions would we most like to see introduced in Cheshire East Car Parks

a) Season ticket for residents to purchase a year's parking with a Congleton Travel Ticket (which could also include bus use)

b) Congleton Car Park tickets being transferrable across all Congleton Car Parks Consider use across other Cheshire East Towns

c) More electric charging points, cycle parking and cash-free payment.

d) More secure parking / lockers for cycles

e) Premium spaces for large vehicles

f) Congleton Town Council does not agree that cash free parking is acceptable as the only alternative to pay for parking. We believe this discriminates against the elderly and anyone who struggles with accessing technology.

If you have any queries about the responses given on behalf of Congleton Town Council, please do contact Jackie MacArthur on 07535 269812 or Jackie.macarthur@congleton-tc.gov.uk