



## Report to Leader (Logistics portfolio)

**Decision Date:** 22 June 2020

**Reference number:** L06.20

**Title:** Coronavirus Parking Recovery Plan

**Relevant councillor(s):** Councillor David Martin

**Responsible Officer:** Rob Smith (Director of Highways & Technical Services)

**Author and/or contact officer:** Julie Rushton (Parking Manager - Chiltern and South Bucks Off Street)

**Ward(s) affected:** All

### Recommendations:

1. **Resume off street parking enforcement and recommence debt recovery for previously issued Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs). Proposed date 22 June 2020.**
2. **Delay reinstating on and off street parking charges until 01 August 2020 to encourage visits to town and village centres and to support business recovery.**
3. **Continue to support free parking for health workers, social care workers and NHS volunteers, until such time that the Government guidelines change in this regard.**
4. **Social distancing:**
  - a. **Undertake a review of the multi-storey car parks to assess the feasibility of introducing social distancing measures (e.g. one - way systems) for pedestrians and implement as appropriate.**
  - b. **General social distancing measures for the multi-storey car parks to be incorporated into the wider social distancing plan for council buildings. Guidance signage for lift use in multi-story car parks to be installed.**

**Reason for decision:** As Government releases the next stage of the roadmap to ease lockdown restrictions the emphasis starts to focus on resuming normal services. This includes businesses, retail outlets, schools etc. re-opening, all of which has an impact on travel to/from a destination and on parking upon arrival. This places a requirement on the Council to review the temporary measures that were put in place when lockdown was first initiated.

## 1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To provide a parking recovery plan that incorporates safety, parking enforcement, parking charges, and social distancing measures to support the community as we ease out of lockdown.
- 1.2 The options and timelines provided in this report align with the Government's roadmap for easing lockdown restrictions, whilst giving consideration specifically to traffic flow, supporting NHS/carers, and aiding local businesses and residents in Buckinghamshire.

## 2. Content of report

### 2.1 Background

- 2.1.1 Following the announcement of lockdown measures, the Council suspended all parking charges (on and off street) and lifted on street restrictions including parking on single yellow lines and in limited waiting areas. Parking enforcement was also suspended with the exception of patrolling main routes to deal with any obstructions to traffic flow for emergency services, key workers, essential food deliveries, and supporting parking for disabled badge holders. These temporary measures came into effect on 27/3/20.
- 2.1.2 A broad comparison of average car park usage figures between April and February; February being the first full month before lock down took effect, is provided in Table 1 which illustrates the significant impact of the lockdown measures on car park utilisation.

Table 1

Car Parks	Average Usage	
	February	April
Aylesbury	77%	11%
Chiltern	76%	11%
South Bucks	68%	13%
Wycombe	70%	12%

### 2.2 Parking charges and enforcement

- 2.2.1 The Government is regularly reviewing the lockdown restrictions with the first easement taking place on 13 May with those who cannot work from home being permitted to go to work (if their place of work is open) and relaxation of exercising away from home and sitting/playing sports in local parks. Since then there has been an increase in the volume of traffic on the roads and use of the parking facilities (on and off street) has slightly increased.
- 2.2.2 The Government has announced further easing of restrictions as follows:
  - 01 June Primary Schools starting to reopen.
  - 01 June Outdoor markets and car showrooms allowed to open.
  - 15 June Non-essential retailers and secondary schools permitted to open.
  - 04 July Pubs/restaurants and libraries could start to re-open.

The above list is not exhaustive. The points provided are ones which link to traffic flow, supporting public transport, and maintaining parking supply and demand.

- 2.2.3 As we move through the Government's roadmap for easing lockdown, the volume of traffic will further increase on the roads and so too will usage of the car parks. This is further enhanced by the Government encouraging people not to use public transport, if at all possible. Issues around parking enforcement have been particularly prevalent around Country Parks and 'beauty spots' over the past few weeks and this trend is expected to continue as further easing of the restrictions is implemented.
- 2.2.4 To ensure we can effectively maintain safety on the highway and to adhere to our network management duty BAU 'on street' parking enforcement was reinstated on 15 June. For on street parking charges, it is recommended these are reinstated at the same time as the off street parking charges, as per recommendations in this report.
- 2.2.5 As car park usage increases so too will the need to maintain safety in the car parks and reduce inconvenience to car park users. As we move further along the roadmap with more businesses re-opening there will be a requirement to manage the supply and demand to support the local economy. This is typically achieved by use of the tariff structures.
- 2.2.6 Delaying the reintroduction of the agreed parking charges will help to encourage visits to town and village centres as businesses begin to reopen and help to support business recovery.

### 2.3 Parking for NHS and Care Staff

- 2.3.1 The above is with the exception of charging for parking for health workers, social care workers and NHS volunteers. These groups are currently exempt from on and off street parking charges<sup>1</sup>  
To effectively manage parking for NHS and care staff and ensure a PCN is not incorrectly issued, a parking scheme is being introduced and will accommodate applications from health professionals in these areas. The scheme is to run on a three monthly renewal basis with successful application being in the most basic form, such as presentation of a relevant ID card. It is recommended to align with any proposed changes issued by Government in respect of duration of the scheme.

### 2.4 PCN debt recovery

- 2.4.1 Once a PCN has been issued there are a number of stages set in statute that a PCN can pass through as part of the debt recovery process. In addition, there is a three stage appeal process where motorists can contest the charge should they wish to do so.
- 2.4.2 Case progression for PCNs has been temporarily suspended to help ease financial pressure for recipients of a PCN brought about by the pandemic and current lockdown measures.
- 2.4.3 Placing cases on hold does not cancel a PCN. It is recommended that case progression resumes on 22 June to align with the Government's roadmap for further easing lockdown measures. Adhering to our duty to collect debt helps provide a deterrent for motorists parking illegally, thus assisting us in maintaining safety on the highway and effectively managing the parking provision.

### 2.5 Reinstatement of parking enforcement arrangements

- 2.5.1 Given the issues noted in the sections above, on street enforcement resumed on 15 June 2020 (*previously only blue badge bays, pedestrian crossings, and enforcement relating to obstruction was taking place*). A press release was issued on 9 June 2020 to inform members of the public and information is displayed on the Council's website.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-to-provide-free-car-parking-for-nhs-and-social-care-staff>

2.5.2 On 22 June 2020, the proposal is to resume off street parking enforcement and recommence debt recovery for previously issued PCNs that have temporarily been placed on hold.

2.5.3 Resuming enforcement enables the specific user bays such as, blue badge and electric vehicle parking to be protected, and helps maintain safety in the car parks, particularly on the access routes.

## 2.6 Social distancing and managing assets

2.6.1 There are 84 car parks across the County including eight multi-storey car parks. It is essential that these assets are able to contribute to the wider transport infrastructure, support local economy, and protect customers from the spread of the virus as much as possible.

2.6.2 The Government has reiterated the need to maintain social distancing and keep two metres apart throughout the roadmap approach for easing lockdown over the coming months. As such, there is a requirement to implement social distancing measures in the car parks.

2.6.3 For the surface car parks and on street pay and display areas, measures to include marking out social distancing points around the pay and display machines and maintaining current cleaning regimes, which includes the machines being wiped when a Civil Enforcement Officer is present at the location.

2.6.4 A priority is to introduce 'RingGo' in Aylesbury Vale car parks once the lockdown is lifted and the supplier is available. Pay by Phone was the previous mobile payment provider, however the contract ended in March and was not renewed due to the agreement to move to RingGo. In the meantime, customers are able to use the payment machines.

2.6.5 For the multi-storey car parks the recommendation is to undertake a review of the car parks and implement effective social distancing measures. This is to include:

- Signage and ground markings at the payment machines and around the car park promoting social distancing and keeping two meters apart.
- Signage and ground markings at the lifts to limit the number of persons in the lift at any one time and to encourage the use of the stairs where possible.
- Assessment of the individual car park structures to determine if stairwells can be changed to one way i.e. different stairwells for pedestrians entering the car park to those that are exiting.
- Assessment of the car parks to review the safe walking routes and determine if one way measures are required/can be put into place.

## 3. **Other options considered**

3.1 A number of options were reviewed in respect of on and off street parking charges and it was considered delaying re-instatement of charges until 01 August 2020 helps support the local economy due to the additional free parking time it provides for local businesses from when the shops re-opened on 15 June 2020.

3.2 A number of other options have been considered whilst drafting this recovery plan, these are:

3.2.1 Provide a wider exemption to the parking charges. The Council is keen to follow the Government's position in easing out of lockdown and returning to a state of normality as soon as is reasonably possible. Applying the parking charge exemptions specifically to NHS/carers, as listed by the Government, enables the Council to effectively manage the provision of parking to support the local areas as normality resumes. It is also felt that it will be unlikely that the

Council could reclaim losses of income related to a wider exemption beyond the Government's current directive.

3.2.2 Consideration has been given to turning the lifts off in the multi-storey car parks and preventing them from being used. However, this creates implications for disabled badge holders and residents/visitors with underlying medical issues such as heart conditions being able to park and the general accessibility of the town centres, particularly when usage increases and the ground levels are at full capacity. In addition, there are a number of car parks in Aylesbury (Upper Hundreds and Waterside) with agreements in place with Waitrose, B&Q, et al for trolley storage on various levels of the car parks.

## **4. Legal and financial implications**

### **4.1 Legal**

4.1.1 There are no legal implications to the other recommendations other than to ensure effective communication in terms of re-instating the parking charges and enforcement action. More information on communication is provided in section 6 below.

### **4.2 Finance**

4.2.1 The associated loss of income based on BAU levels for delaying reinstatement of charges until 1 August 2020 is circa £1.8m.

4.2.2 Income received through parking charges contributes towards delivering a number of Council services. The Council therefore needs to take steps to minimise losses and promote financial sustainability whilst aiding recovery for local businesses. Delaying charges and reinstating them on 1 August 2020 helps balance these needs.

## **5. Corporate Implications**

5.1 Appendix A details the Equality Impact Assessment for this parking recovery plan.

5.2 Buckinghamshire Council delivers the parking service to comply with the network management duties set out in the Traffic Management Act 2004. The car parking provision contributes to the Council's medium term aim of planning for a thriving and sustainable County, with vibrant towns and villages.

## **6. Consultation and communication**

### **6.1 Consultation**

6.1.1 The matter of parking was raised during a general meeting with HWBidCo (HWBidCo being in place of town council in Wycombe). Comments relating to parking generally on the subject of Covid 19 were:

- Requirement that on street enforcement is firm and consistent.
- Everywhere needs to be prepared and be 'Covid Safe' doing what we can to ensure that the public is safe and aware that we are working to keep them safe.
- Vital we engage with the public to advise them of any changes and that information is clear and consistent.

## 6.2 Communication

- 6.2.1 Communication is key to updating customers regarding parking restrictions and charges in the County. The proposal is to work with colleagues in Communication to draft statements for issue via the various communication channels; social media, Council website, notices on site, email to permit holders, all staff email, and radio.
- 6.2.2 Preparation in advance draft statements in relation to general enquiries.
- 6.2.3 The PCN warning notices will also form part of the communication plan to educate motorists on parking safely and in accordance with the parking restrictions.

## 7. **Next steps and review**

- 7.1 Subject to the Leader approving the recommendations:
  - 7.1.1 Activate the communication plan to communicate information to local businesses, residents, and the general public.
  - 7.1.2 Launch the parking scheme for the NHS/carers.
  - 7.1.3 Implement actions to re-instate enforcement and parking charges.
  - 7.1.4 Civil Enforcement Officers and TfB colleagues to continue to monitor and feedback traffic flow and car park usage data to enable us to be aware of any shift beyond current expectations.

## 8. **Background papers**

- 8.1 None

## 9. **Your questions and views (for key decisions)**

- 9.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by telephone [01296 382343] or email [democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk)