

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director (Commercial Services) (Introduced by the Executive Member Resource)	Executive Member Decision	April 2020

## SUSPENSION OF CAR PARK CHARGES FOR COVID-19

### PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To approve the suspension of car park charges and enforcement due to the Covid-19 Government restrictions on business openings and recommendations on social distancing from Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020.

### RECOMMENDATION(S)

2. To approve the suspension of all car park charges made on council operated sites until such time as Government restrictions on retail & leisure businesses are lifted.
3. To approve the suspension of parking enforcement on all council operated sites until such time as Government restrictions on retail & leisure businesses are lifted.
4. To note that people with active parking permits may request refunds for any full outstanding months left unused in their term and permits are unlikely to be renewed.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

5. The Government response to Covid-19 included measures to restrict people's movement and encourage social distancing. From Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> March all businesses selling non-essential goods or services were instructed to close.
6. The impact on usage of council car parks became immediate and, as the crisis continued, charging and enforcement would serve little purpose in churning vehicles.
7. The Pay & Display machines, required to take payment for parking or obtain a time of arrival ticket, are frequent touchpoints and recommendations for stopping the spread of the virus are to avoid contact with other people or touched hard surfaces wherever possible. To continue to use the machines for their intended purpose would prove difficult to maintain.
8. The financial impact of suspending charges and enforcement would be an estimated loss in revenue of £120k per quarter.
9. The cost of enforcement with NSL continues at a cost of ~£6k per month.

<b>Confidential report</b> Please bold as appropriate	Yes	No
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<b>Key Decision?</b> Please bold as appropriate	Yes	No
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Reason Please bold as appropriate	1, a change in service provision that impacts upon the service revenue budget by £100,000 or more	2, a contract worth £100,000 or more
	3, a new or unprogrammed capital scheme of £100,000 or more	4, Significant impact in environmental, social or physical terms in two or more wards

## REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

### (If the recommendations are accepted)

10. Due to the Covid-19 crisis and Government led guidance, the proposal to suspend car park charges and enforcement action is supportive of Chorley residents in accessing their essential goods without additional financial burden whilst also supportive of the town centre businesses selling such essential goods and services.

## ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

11. To continue to enforce on the Flat Iron car park to ensure the food retailers it serves maintained a churn of vehicles. This was deemed unnecessary in the short term but would remain under review if it became congested with workers vehicles.
12. To continue with charges and enforcement. This was rejected as not being helpful in supporting government guidelines on social distancing and supporting businesses selling essential goods or residents accessing them.

## CORPORATE PRIORITIES

13. This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Involving residents in improving their local area and equality of access for all		A strong local economy	X
Clean, safe and healthy homes and communities		An ambitious council that does more to meet the needs of residents and the local area	

## BACKGROUND

14. Due to the Government response to Covid-19 there has been a severe and immediate impact on the commercial sectors within Chorley town centre.
15. The Government guidance and instructions on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 were that all businesses selling non-essential goods / services should close immediately. The demand for parking in the town centre dropped immediately from lack of workers and shoppers.
16. The Pay & Display machines, required to take payment for parking or obtain a time of arrival ticket, are frequent touchpoints and recommendations for stopping the spread of the virus are to avoid contact with other people or touched hard surfaces wherever possible. To continue to use the machines for their intended purpose would prove difficult to maintain.
17. The financial impact of suspending charges and enforcement would be an estimated loss in revenue of £120k per quarter.
18. The cost of enforcement with NSL continues at a cost of ~£6k per month.

19. The Table below shows the net impact of the recommended measures if taken:

No charges CP for 3 months	100,000
No car park enforcement for 3 months	20,000
Cost of NSL contract during suspension	18,000
	<b>140,000</b>

20. Car Park charging and enforcement can be re-introduced at very short notice, however, as the public continuing to use the facilities become familiar with not requiring to pay, a phased approach to re-introducing enforcement of fee related offences would be recommended.

**IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT**

- 21. It is probable that forecast income from parking will not meet the budget set for 2020/21 and it is not clear when Government restrictions on retail and leisure establishments will be lifted in order for charges to be re-introduced.
- 22. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Directors’ comments are included:

Finance	X	Customer Services	
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	
Legal		Integrated Impact Assessment required?	
No significant implications in this area		Policy and Communications	

**COMMENTS OF THE STATUTORY FINANCE OFFICER**

- 23. The shortfall in parking income outlined in this report is based on the council not enforcing parking charges or parking fines for 3 months. The income shortfall is estimated at £120k however could be higher depending on seasonal variations e.g. the lost income being potentially higher during the Easter shopping period.
- 24. The income shortfall makes no assumption regarding the number of requests for permit refunds or the number of non-renewals. Annual income from permits is approximately £60k.
- 25. The shortfall in income will be met through the £1m Covid-19 Response budget set up by Council on 30/03/20, this budget was created to support businesses and residents.

**COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER**

26. As a key decision, this would generally be made by Cabinet. Given the urgency it is appropriate for it to be made by Executive Member Decision as it is a consequence of other decisions made and national guidance.

MARK LESTER  
DIRECTOR OF COMMERCIAL SERVICES

<b>Report Author</b>	<b>Ext</b>	<b>Date</b>
Conrad Heald	5507	06/04/2020

Following careful consideration and assessment of the contents of this report, I approve the recommendation(s) contained in Paragraph 2 of the report in accordance with my delegated power to make executive decisions.



\_\_\_\_\_ Dated 08.04.20 \_\_\_\_\_

**Councillor Peter Wilson**  
Executive Member (Resource)