

Report to Leader of the Council

Subject: Council Service Changes Due to COVID-19 – Closure of Car Parks serving parks and open spaces

Date: 25 March 2020

Author: Acting Chief Executive

Wards Affected

All

Purpose

For the Leader of the Council to authorise, until further notice:

The temporary closure of Council car parks which serve Council parks and open spaces, from close of business on 26^h March 2020. Such restriction not to be applied to people with disabilities that require parking within those car parks provided a valid disabled parking permit is displayed.

Key Decision

This is a key decision as it is likely to have significant impact on residents living in two or more wards.

Recommendations

That the Leader of the Council, until further notice:

- 1) From close of business on 26th March 2020, authorises the closure to the public, save for those requiring disabled parking in line with this report, of the following Council car parks, serving Council parks and open spaces:

Arnot Hill Park, Breckhill Road, Burton Road, Carlton Hill Recreation ground, Church Lane Recreation ground, Colwick Rectory, Conway Road Recreation ground, Killisick Recreation ground, Lambley Lane recreation ground, Oakdale Road recreation ground, Thackery's Lane Recreation ground, Gedling Country Park, Bestwood Country Park.

1 Background

- 1.1 Following on from the recent measures introduced by government on 23rd March 2020 in relation to isolation and reduced social contact during the Covid -19 pandemic, and following the closure of children's play areas and play facilities in the Council's parks, it has become necessary to further review the operation of Council facilities to protect residents.
- 1.2 Since measures announced by the government on 23rd March 2020 which prevent people from leaving their households other than for work, essential shopping and exercise, there has been an uptake in the use of the Council's parks and open spaces. Whilst the requirement to keep exercising is essential to the health and safety of residents, this needs to be undertaken in a way that does not result in an increased risk of infection. Currently, the car parks serving the Council's parks and open spaces are busier than ever. This is creating a situation where the public are gathering in close proximity to each other in Council car parks. Whilst outdoor exercise is important, it is not always necessary to drive to locations to carry out that exercise, as that is not in the spirit of government measures aimed to keep people in their homes as much as possible.
- 1.2 The Council needs to protect residents and take whatever steps are necessary to support guidance on social distancing to reduce the risk of Covid-19 spreading further. As such, it is considered necessary to close to the public, car parks facilitating the Council's parks and open spaces during the covid-19 pandemic. This restriction has to be balanced with the needs of some of the borough's more vulnerable residents. Those with disabilities may still need vehicular access to the Council's parks and open spaces. As such, it is considered appropriate to permit continued use of the car parks by those with a disability, provided valid disabled parking permits are displayed.
- 1.3 It is recognised that other car parks in the Borough serving our town centres and shops will need to remain open to enable residents to access essential supplies. At present therefore it is not proposed to close all Council car parks, only those serving parks and open spaces as listed in the recommendation.

2 Proposal

- 2.1 It is proposed that from close of business on 26^h March 2020, until further notice, the car parks, serving Council parks and open spaces listed in the recommendation be closed to the public. This is to reduce social contact and the resulting risk of infection from Covid-19 and is consistent with

government and public health guidance and measures on social distancing. It is proposed that this closure however will not apply to disabled members of the public who require vehicular access to park car parks, provided a valid disabled parking permit is displayed.

- 2.3 Whilst it is proposed that these measures are approved until further notice, the Council will of course keep this situation and government and Public Health England advice under review and will ensure that normal services resume as soon as it is safe to do so.

3 Alternative Options

- 3.1 An alternative option is for operations to continue as at present and the above mentioned car parks remain open. Government guidance is clear that social distancing measures are necessary to protect the public. The Council has a responsibility to its residents to ensure that they remain healthy and safe. These measures, are considered absolutely necessary at the current time to reduce social contact in our car parks which are currently seeing an increase in use whilst balancing the needs of more vulnerable residents who may still require vehicular access to those car parks. These measures will be kept under review.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 Income associated from parking comes from several sources, which includes parking penalties, pay & display income and parking permits. Closures of the car parks will affect all of these income streams. The financial impact of closures will be in the region of £28,000 per month.

5 Equality Impact

- 5.1 There will potentially be negative impacts on a range of service users who fall within the protected characteristics of disability and potentially age due to the reduced opportunity to access parks by car and participate in activities. By permitting access to those with disabilities who have valid permits to park, this will have a positive impact on a proportion of those within the protected characteristic of disability. Other than the equality impacts identified the equality impacts are neutral. No further actions are recommended as a result of this equality impact review.

6 Appendices

- 6.1 None

6 Background Papers

- 6.1 No specific background papers have been identified but government

guidance at <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response> has been relied on.

7 Reasons for Recommendations

- 7.1 To take proportionate action in relation to the current COVID-19 pandemic aimed at protecting the residents of the Borough and to ensure that measures in respect of social distancing are supported in our car parks, parks and open spaces.