

Report to Leader of the Council

Subject: Council Service Changes Due to COVID-19 – Temporary suspension of parking charges and ticket displays

Date: 27th March 2020

Author: Acting Chief Executive

Wards Affected

All

Purpose

For the Leader of the Council to authorise, during the Covid-19 pandemic:

The temporary suspension of parking charges and ticketing requirements at the Council's car parks.

Key Decision

This is not a key decision

Recommendations

That the Leader of the Council, during the Covid-19 pandemic:

- 1) Authorises, with immediate effect, the temporary suspension of car park charges and the requirement to display parking tickets during the Covid-19 pandemic; and
- 2) Delegates authority to the Assistant Director responsible for Property Services to deal with all operational decisions and actions resulting from this decision.

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 a number of Council car parks serving parks and open spaces, it has become necessary to further

review the operation of Council car parks and in particular the current pay and display requirements associated with parking.

- 1.2 Whilst isolation measures have generally meant that the use of Council Car Parks has reduced, many of the car parks in town centres are still being used by individuals when they are visiting shops to get essential supplies. It is for this reason that the majority of Council car parks serving town centres remain open.
- 1.3 The Council needs to protect staff and residents and take whatever steps are necessary to ensure critical services can be delivered wherever possible. The resource currently deployed by the Council to manage car parks has reduced due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the shift of resources onto delivery of critical functions. As such, it has become increasingly difficult to maintain current enforcement and charging on our car parks. In addition the practice of obtaining a ticket to park from car park ticket machines in the current climate could pose a risk of infection as there are insufficient staff to continually clean all ticket machines in the borough.
- 1.4 Our current Gedling Borough Council car Park order, requires the public to comply with any instructions displayed at our car parks in terms of payment and displaying tickets. It is recognised in the Order that the Council may from time to time vary the notices on site in respect of charges etc. Any decision to suspend parking charges would need to be demonstrated wherever possible by signage at the car parks.

2 Proposal

- 2.1 It is proposed that with immediate effect and until further notice, parking charges and the requirement to display tickets at Council car parks be suspended. This is to reduce the risk of infection by members of the public using the machines and to ensure resources utilised in car park management can focus on critical service delivery.
- 2.2 It is proposed that any operational decisions and issues resulting from this decision be delegated to the Assistant Director responsible for Property Services, for example approving appropriate wording for signage and directing where and how car parks should be signed.
- 2.3 It is proposed that these measures be kept under review and that as soon as parking measures can return to normal they should do so.

3 Alternative Options

- 3.1 An alternative option is for operations to continue as at present, and car park charges and ticketing requirements remain. It is not considered safe for members of the public and staff to have to continue to use ticket

machines which may increase the risk of infection. In addition, staffing needs to be focused on critical functions and car park usage is likely to be significantly lower during isolation.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 Income associated from parking comes from several sources, which includes parking penalties, pay & display income and parking permits. Suspension of parking charges and removal of ticketing requirements 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 By removing ticketing requirements, this will have a positive impact on a proportion of those within the protected characteristic of disability and age including employees within those categories, as these measures reduce their risk of exposure to infection. 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 staff can be deployed in critical areas.