

Council – 12 January 2015

Petitions - Parking charges

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report is in response to two petitions received in opposition to the draft budget proposal - reference 96: Introduction of District Centre pay and display car parking charges, as approved by Cabinet 29 October 2014 for public consultation.
- 1.2. The 2,000 signature petition, “say no to parking charges in Willenhall”, was presented by Councillor Smith to the Council meeting on 17 November 2014 on behalf of the Willenhall Ay We.co.uk Action Group. The petition was worded as follows:
- 1.3. *‘We the undersigned are residents, visitors or have places of work within Willenhall. We would encourage the council to reject the proposed parking charges being brought against the 5 car parks within our town. We believe that if parking charges are introduced this will have an adverse effect on businesses in Willenhall, possibly leading to their closure. We feel we should be trying to attract people to come to our town which in itself will bring in more revenue and attract more businesses to start up rather than close’.*
- 1.4. The 1,500 signature petition ‘Stop Labour’s car parking charge in Bloxwich and Brownhills town centres’ was submitted to the Cabinet meeting on 17 December 2014 by Mr M Follows on behalf of Bloxwich and Brownhills Conservatives. The petition was worded as follows:
- 1.5. *‘We the undersigned strongly oppose the Walsall Labour Policy to impose car parking charges on council car parks in Bloxwich/Brownhills Town Centres. Imposing these charges is an attack on Bloxwich/Brownhills and will stop people using Bloxwich/Brownhills shops, it will badly effect businesses and jobs. Bloxwich/Brownhills has been affected by the recession caused by Labour and we call on Walsall Labour to stop these charges’.*
- 1.6. The Council’s petition scheme provides that:
- 1.7. *‘If a petition contains at least 1,500 signatures it will be debated at a meeting of the Council. This means that the issues raised in the petition will be discussed at a meeting to which all Councillors can attend and speak. The Council will endeavour to consider the petition at its next meeting although on some occasions this may not be possible and consideration will then take place at the following meeting. The petition organiser will be given 5 minutes to present the petition at the meeting and the petition will then be discussed by Councillors for a maximum of 15 minutes. The Council will decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting.*

- 1.8. *They may decide to take the action that the petition requests; not to take the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate, or to ask for further information. Where the issue is one where the Cabinet are required to make the final decision the Council will decide to make recommendations to the Cabinet. The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of this decision and this will be published on our website’.*

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That the content of the petitions be noted.
- 2.2. That Council note the decision of Cabinet on 17 December 2014 in relation to changes to the draft budget and capital programme:
- 2.3. *(3) That Cabinet note and agree the changes to the 2015/16 proposed capital programme and approve the changes to the revenue savings proposals as outlined in section 3.1.*
- 2.4. *3.1 - The first draft revenue budget proposals and draft capital programme 2015/16 to 2018/19 were reported to Cabinet on 29 October 2014. There are two proposed changes to the revenue budget and two changes to the draft capital programme as follows:*
- 2.5. *Revenue:*
- 2.6. *a. The proposed saving of £100k in 2015/16 for the introduction of district centre car parking charges to be withdrawn following extensive consultation (saving number 96 in the Environment & Transport portfolio plan at Appendix 1d of the budget report to Cabinet on 29 October).*
- 2.7. *Cabinet have listened to feedback that the vast majority of respondents do not support this proposal. The main reason for this is due to the perceived impact on businesses, employees and shoppers to district centres leading to concerns for the demise of district shopping centres.*

3. Background Information

- 3.1. Currently, the Council applies pay and display parking charges in 17 Walsall town centre car parks. Income generated from these parking charges is used to contribute toward their operational costs and those of a further 30 car parks borough wide where no pay and display income is generated.
- 3.2. As part of the draft budget for 2015/16 a proposal for the introduction of pay and display car parking charges in Council-operated off-street car parks located in the district centres of Aldridge, Bloxwich Brownhills, Darlaston and Willenhall was approved for consultation.
- 3.3. Parking charges were proposed to be set at £1 per 4-hour parking period.

- 3.4 The proposal was that the projected £100k annual income would be used to offset the costs of maintaining and operating all car parks and so help to assist with the regeneration and development of those district centres.
- 3.5 Implementation of this proposal would have provided a revenue stream to support the ongoing provision of car parking spaces in the district centres where local businesses rely upon them to grow and provide employment for local people.
- 3.6 From the response to the Council's consultation on the draft revenue budget proposals approved by Cabinet on 29 October 2014, it is clear that a large majority do not support the option of introducing charges for Council-owned district centre car parks. As a consequence, Cabinet agreed at its meeting on 17 December 2014 to withdraw it.

Jamie Morris
Executive Director (Neighbourhood Services)
19 December 2014