
NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

24 January 2023

Cabinet

Title: Petitions: Proposed Car Parking Charges: Kilwinning, Irvine and Saltcoats

Purpose: To advise Cabinet of the outcome of consideration by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee of three petitions in relation to proposed car parking charges in Kilwinning, Irvine and Saltcoats.

Recommendation: That the Cabinet considers the recommendation by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee to note the content of the three petitions when considering the related report on the level of car parking charges.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 At its meeting on 15 November 2022, the Audit and Scrutiny Committee considered reports by the Chief Executive on petitions that had been received requesting that the Council maintain free parking in Kilwinning, Irvine and Saltcoats. The Executive Director (Place) provided a briefing note on the background to the proposed car parking charges and this was appended to the reports.

2. Background

2.1 Petition 1 – Oxenward East and Almswall Road Car Parks, Kilwinning

The principal spokespersons, Tom Biondi and Graham Milliken, outlined the objections to the proposed car parking charges from shopkeepers and local residents and highlighted various matters, including the following:-

- the total number of signatures having risen to more than 2,900 written and 1,933 online;
- North Ayrshire's Fair for All vision in terms of working together, engaging and supporting local communities;
- the Town Centre Parking Strategy 2014-2020, which stated that parking would be free;
- the lack of consultation on the introduction of parking charges;
- the creation of inequality, with parking charges not applicable for all towns in North Ayrshire;
- the impact on local business income in Kilwinning;

- that Kilwinning and its surrounding areas were identified as a significant area of deprivation within the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation;
- the ongoing struggle of local businesses and residents in terms of the cost-of-living crisis and recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic; and
- existing customers having stated they would shop elsewhere if charges were to be introduced.

The spokespersons also gave examples of how local residents would be affected by the introduction of parking charges.

2.2 Petition 2 – East Road, Kirkgate and West Road, Irvine

The principal spokesperson, William Frew, outlined the objections to the proposed car parking charges from shopkeepers and local residents and highlighted various matters, including the following:-

- the ongoing struggle for small local businesses in the area;
- the disruption and lost business arising from the recent regeneration of the high street area;
- the slow recovery for businesses following the Covid-19 pandemic;
- hardship in relation to the cost-of-living crisis;
- the increase in overheads for businesses;
- the unfair advantage to larger shops with free parking areas if charges were introduced elsewhere in the town;
- the demise of the Kilmarnock and Ayr Town Centres following the introduction of pay-and-display parking charges; and
- the lack of consultation with regard to the introduction of the parking charges.

2.3 Petition 3 – Saltcoats Town Centre and Surrounding Areas

The principal spokesperson, Gerard Houston, outlined the objections to the proposed car parking charges from shopkeepers and local residents and highlighted various matters, including the following:-

- the total number of written signatures having risen to more than 4000;
- the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis on local businesses;
- that access to short stay parking/pick ups would be essential to keep small businesses running;
- that independent family-run businesses would be affected by the parking charges and not larger businesses;
- the reliance on the car parks for staff parking, when staff were also struggling with cost-of-living rises;
- the potential for encouraging parking in residential areas, which would cause additional difficulties in the town;
- existing restrictions in Dockhead Street, Saltcoats and the extension of the restricted vehicular access between 10am and 4pm, which already affected footfall for local businesses; and
- the lack of consultation with local traders and the general public.

- 2.4 The Head of Service (Commerical) referred to the Briefing Note on Decriminalised Parking Enforcement (DPE) and the proposed introduction of car parking charges, a key outcome of which would be improved regulation of traffic in town centres by directing long-stay patrons to free parking slightly further out while providing chargeable and short-stay parking close to retail and other town centre services. The proposals would also encourage alternative more active and sustainable modes of transport and aimed to reduce the volume of traffic travelling through town centres by facilitating the use of public transport. Information was also provided in relation to movement within car parks, where parking charges would help with vehicle turnover, use of disabled parking bays, and the ban on pavement parking to be introduced in late 2023.
- 2.5 Members asked questions of all spokespersons and received responses in relation to:-
- the initial proposal approved in 2019 which was delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic;
 - the number of car parks in the local areas which were already short-stay and time-limited; and
 - whether petitioners considered that penalties should be imposed on those who parked all day in short stay car parks or whether there should be no limitation on any car park.
- 2.6 Spokesperson responses additionally mentioned Kirkgate, Irvine parking being utilised for school pickups, the use of the East Road car park, Irvine, for the Portal and the view that the College in Kilwinning should have more adequate parking provision for their specific use on campus.
- 2.7 Members asked questions of the Head of Service (Neighbourhood Services) in relation to:-
- previous methods of consultation with Elected Members on charges to be applied;
 - the location of the one-hour free parking in Kilwinning where a response would be provided to Members;
 - monitoring of car park usage where charges were to be applied;
 - Elected Member engagement sessions which would include information on resident parking permit requirements;
 - the feasibility study model and assumptions around fines and collection rates;
 - the estimated costs in connection with Wardens (in the region of £120,000);
 - a post pandemic review of town centre footfall which indicated more normal parking behaviours;
 - reports on all the car parks in terms of usage and capacity; and
 - the current position regarding on street parking charges.
- 2.8 The Audit and Scrutiny Committee agreed to accept the three petitions and ask Cabinet to note their content when considering the report on the level of car parking charges at their meeting on 24 January 2023.

3. Proposals

- 3.1 The Cabinet is invited to note the content of the three petitions when considering their report on the level of car parking charges at their meeting on 24 January 2023.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

4.1 There is £440k income per year forecast from this initiative across North Ayrshire. If the initiative does not go ahead it would need to be replaced with an alternative proposal(s) to plug the budget gap ie. other income opportunities to raise £440k or £440k of new savings.

Human Resources

4.2 None arising from this report.

Legal

4.3 None arising from this report.

Equality/Socio-economic

4.4 None arising from this report.

Climate Change and Carbon

4.5 None arising from this report.

Key Priorities

4.6 None arising from this report.

Community Wealth Building

4.7 None arising from this report.

5. Consultation

5.1 The Head of Service (Neighbourhood Services) was made aware of the terms of the petitions and provided a briefing note to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee which is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

Aileen Craig
Head of Service (Democratic)

For further information please contact **Diane McCaw, Committee Services Officer**, on **01294 324132**

Background Papers

N/A

Briefing Note: DPE and Car Parking Charges

Background

On 11 June 2019 Cabinet recommended that DPE be introduced across North Ayrshire and that car park charges should apply in Irvine, Kilwinning, Saltcoats, Largs and Brodick.

Charges were set at:

Proposed Tariff	
Time (Mins)	Short Stay
60	£1.00
120	£1.50
240	£3.00
All Day	Not Permitted

However, following a call in to Audit and Scrutiny the matter was referred back to Cabinet to reconsider the previous decision in relation to the introduction of car parking charges in Brodick and in the inclusion of Arran in DPE.

On 25 September 2019 full Council backed DPE for the entire Council area but not to implement car parking charges on Arran.

In 2020, a global pandemic emerged, and the introduction of the proposals was put on hold due to this.

On 2 March 2022, at its budget setting meeting full Council approved an increase in charges, as follows.

Proposed Tariff	
Time (Mins)	Short stay
60	£1.50
120	£2.00
240	£3.50
All Day	Not permitted

A motion was proposed at the Full Council Meeting on 21 September 2022 that in view of the pandemic and the cost of living crisis, the introduction of these measures should be paused and a further review of the impact of these measures on residents and local businesses should be undertaken.

However, following a division and a roll call vote, Council agreed that, 'in light of the deepening financial crisis, a proposal be brought to Cabinet to reconsider the level of charges proposed in the 2022/23 budget.'

Key Outcomes of DPE

Traffic Management

A key desired outcome of introducing DPE and parking charges is an improved regulation of traffic in our town centres, by directing long stay patrons to free parking slightly further out whilst providing chargeable and short stay parking close to retail and other town centre services.

Sustainable Transport/Climate Change

The introduction of these measures also aligns with National Transport Policy by encouraging more active and sustainable modes of transport. The Scottish Government has a target to reduce car usage by 20% by 2030 and car parking charges will help contribute to this target by shifting people towards using alternative and sustainable modes of transport.

The introduction of DPE and car parking charges aims to support sustainable and active travel and reduce the impact of transport on our communities. This also aims to reduce the volume of traffic travelling through our towns and to facilitate public transport to support a shift towards more sustainable travel behaviour. This aligns with the Council's agreed Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy and furthermore, it aligns with the Council's commitment to reduce carbon emissions through our declaration of a Climate Emergency and will contribute to the ambition to achieve net zero by 2030.

The Town Centre Parking Strategy 2014-20, referred to by the petitioner did state that parking would be free, at the time of publishing the report in 2014, however the new Local Transport Strategy will cover this. Since 2014 much change has taken place particularly around Climate Change and the declaration of a Climate Emergency.

DPE powers and charges

Process to enact DPE

To obtain DPE powers an application has been submitted to Scottish Government to transfer the enforcement powers from Police Scotland to North Ayrshire Council and the statutory process is underway with implementation now expected on 1 July 2023.

DPE powers are currently held by 21 Local Authorities including all our neighbouring local authorities.

Charges

It is important to note that Decriminalised Parking is not sustainable without the income generated from parking charges.

Transport Scotland recommends that DPE should be financially sustainable as far as possible. It states, 'if a strong financial case cannot be made the Local Authority needs to explain how it would meet any shortfall before Transport Scotland could make a decision on the application.'

It is recommended that when considering taking on DPE powers a robust Business Case outlining how DPE will be funded is required. North Ayrshire Council commissioned robust Feasibility Studies in 2019 which helped inform the Car Parking charges model.

A Financial Assessment was submitted as part of the application to the Scottish Ministers.

Parking for disabled badge holders/poor parking behaviour

Disabled badge holders will be able to park free of charge in the car parks where charges apply.

A significant problem is that disabled parking bays are being abused with able bodied drivers parking in them preventing disabled badge holders from parking.

There are also issues with inconsiderate drivers parking on double yellow lines, bus stops, 'keep clear' areas near schools etc and DPE powers will help us act on this.

Pavement Parking Ban

The Scottish Government is introducing a ban on pavement parking in late 2023 and without car park wardens we will be unable to enforce this legislation.

Car parks where charges will apply

- Irvine – Kirkgate, West Road and East Road
- Kilwinning – Almswell Road and Oxenward
- Saltcoats – Vernon Street, Bradshaw Street, Windmill Street and Kirkgate.
- Largs – Gateside Street.

There is already charging in place at Bellmans Close in Largs.

North Ayrshire Council currently has 55 car parks and 44 will remain free of charge to use, the exceptions being the 10 named above plus Bellman's Close, Largs.

There is free parking available nearby the locations where charges will apply.

In Kilwinning, the Woodwynd Car Park will remain free of charge and there is also on street free parking.

Implementation Plan

Ongoing engagement

Engagement sessions have been arranged with local elected members and will take place between 5 and 8 December 2022.

These engagement sessions offer the opportunity to discuss concerns and issues around the proposals.

Residents parking permits

The Service are considering the introduction of resident parking bays to address resident's concerns.

Level of Charges

In accordance with the Council's decision on 21 September 2022, a report will be submitted to the Cabinet meeting on 24 January 2023 on charges.

Financial Implications

Car Parking charges were agreed as part of the Council's budget setting process and an income of £440,000 per annum is included in the budget.

Any proposal to review or abolish car parking charges will require details on how the £440,000 funding gap will be met through increased charges/income or new savings.

There is also a cost in providing and maintaining car parks and in the current financial climate this is difficult to sustain without some sort of charge.