

Communications and Engagement Plan



Parking Review - MTFs Initiatives

July 2023

Client: Tom Moody, Director of Highways and Infrastructure	Service / Team: Strategic Transport & Parking – Parking Services
	Contact Officer: Lorraine Rushton, Parking Manager
Elected Members	
Councillor Craig Browne	Chair of Highways Committee
Councillor Laura Crane	Deputy Chair of Highways Committee
Members of Highways and Transport Committee	
<i>Add additional rows as required</i>	
Approvals:	
Name	Role / notes
Highways & Transport Committee	Approving Committee
CEC “Big Board” / CLT / Policy Briefing	Oversight of all MTFs initiatives
Place Directorate SMT / DMT	Senior Management oversight
Tom Moody	Director of Highways and Infrastructure
Richard Hibbert	Head of Strategic Transport and Parking
<i>Add additional rows as required</i>	

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Comms Plan personnel:			
Name	Email	Phone	Role
Trevor Green (TG)	trevor.green@cheshireeast.gov.uk		Communications Lead
Rhiannon Hilton (RH)	rhiannon.hilton@cheshireeast.gov.uk		Contributor (CEC communications manager)
<i>Add additional rows as required</i>			

Background:

Cheshire East Council is responsible for the operation, management and civil enforcement of on-street and off-street parking regulations across Cheshire East. On-street responsibilities include Pay & Display parking spaces, loading bays, waiting restrictions and Blue Badge (disabled driver) schemes. Off-street responsibilities cover 111 Council-operated car parks included in the Cheshire East Consolidated Car Parks Order, of these, 64 car parks are Pay & Display and 47 car parks are free to use.

There are significant differences in the location of charged and free car parks, because of the legacy arrangements inherited by the Council. There are several towns and key service centres where car parking remains free of charge, including Alsager, Bollington, Handforth, Holmes Chapel, Middlewich, Poynton, Prestbury and Sandbach.

Before the pandemic, the Council's parking service had annual revenues of circa £5million and operating costs of circa £4m per year. The surplus income raised from parking charges supports wider highways and transport functions, contributing £1.1 million in the 2021/22 financial year. Following the pandemic, the Council has to respond to evident structural changes in the demand for parking, especially a loss of long-stay parking activity arising from behaviour changes such as home-working. This review of parking is an opportunity to understand current and emerging trends in parking demands.

When adopting the MTFS and its budgets for 2023/24, the council included a High-Level Business Case (HLBC) for a review of parking charges. Proposals are currently being developed for measures set out in the HLBC.

To provide a modern, responsive and equitable parking service, parking provision and charges are being reviewed on a place-by-place (town-by-town) basis. This approach further develops the proposals considered at Highways & Transport Committee in September 2021, ensuring that future proposals:

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- align operational arrangements and parking tariffs with corporate priority outcomes for fairness and transparency;
- support our Town Centres to continue to recover after the pandemic;
- reflect parking provision in each town, any significant changes in the supply of parking places and the nature of local parking demands; and
- take account of inflationary pressures on the costs of the parking service e.g., operational and maintenance costs.

The wider impact of transport and parking is also recognised in the councils' ambitions to reduce its carbon footprint. In May 2019, the council committed to its operations becoming carbon neutral by 2025 and, in January 2022, made a further pledge to make Cheshire East a carbon neutral borough by 2045. Adopting proposals for revised parking tariffs will be an integral element of the wider strategy to reduce transport-related carbon emissions.

The council adopted bespoke Town Centre Vitality Plans in January 2023. Whilst each locality has its own priorities, a series of common themes was established, which were: enhancing public realm, improving connections; and encouraging walking and cycling. Well managed off-street and on-street parking can have a positive environmental effect through making towns attractive and supporting thriving businesses, access to services and active social lives.

Alongside measures to support walking, cycling, bus, rail, and road traffic, the LTP sets out how parking measures should be considered as part of an integrated transport strategy. It establishes how parking provision supports accessibility for residents, businesses, shoppers, workers and commuters.

To deliver a policy response to the challenge defined in the MTFS, the Council is to develop proposals for 4 initiatives related to car parking, as follows:

- To develop proposals for implementing Pay & Display parking charging on a more consistent basis across the borough, considering the specific nature of each centre, the demands for car parking, alternative options available and the need for a package of mitigation measures to control displacement of car parking.
- To review parking tariffs at council-operated car parks to develop proposals to adjust for inflation, since the previous adjustment to tariffs in 2018.
- To review the Council's use of staff and member parking permits to develop an approach that better aligns with the Corporate Travel Plan and reduces costs.
- To pilot a system of Demand Responsive Parking Charges at the new Royal Arcade car park in Crewe, to assess whether such an approach has wider applications across the parking service.

The committee report for July 2023 requests for a delegated approval to start consultation. Public consultation and stakeholder engagement will inform a future decision on any changes to parking provision across the borough.

Key dates/timeline: (dates are provisional / subject to change)

Transport Committee	20 July 2023
Pre-consultation engagement with ward councillors	3 August 2023 – 1 September
Engagement with Town / Parish Councils	3 August 2023 – 1 September
Engagement with key stakeholders/businesses	3 August 2023 – 1 September
Statutory Public Consultation – Start date	8 September 2023

Statutory Public Consultation – End date	20 October 2023
Analysis of consultation responses	October – November 2024
Transport Committee Decision Report	January 2024
Implementation Programme Start	February 2024
Implementation Programme Complete	June 2024 (estimated)

Budget

The budget for communications / engagement is provided within existing service budgets including staff time.

Communications objectives/outcomes:

Aim: To build general public and specific stakeholder awareness about the consultation and proposed changes

Aim: To build understanding about the context and the potentially unpopular decisions that may be required

Aim: To promote the perception of the council as a ‘open, fair and green organisation’

Aim: To promote perceptions that CEC is working to secure future jobs, investment and growth in the borough

Aim: To promote perceptions that the council is working to encourage more-sustainable transport

Aim: to encourage constructive responses and interaction with our outline proposals to build a picture of public perception about the process and specific proposals

Aim: To mitigate criticism and secure public support for the process and proposals under consultation

Stakeholders / audiences:

Stakeholder	Notes
Local residents / General Public/service users i.e. motorists	<i>Media & comms cascade</i>
Cheshire East Council (CEC) members	<i>Media & comms cascade</i>
Town and parish councils	<i>Media & comms cascade, briefing meetings</i>

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Local MPs	<i>Media & comms cascade</i>
Cheshire East Council staff	<i>Centranet & Team Voice</i>
Schools	<i>Parking service direct engagement</i>
Local businesses	<i>Parking service direct engagement</i>
Business groups/chambers of commerce	<i>Parking service direct engagement</i>
Emergency services (police, fire, ambulance)	<i>Parking service direct engagement</i>
Network Rail & rail companies	<i>Parking service direct engagement</i>

Risks / opportunities:

RISK: Failure to follow best practice, be transparent and follow statutory consultation

RISK: Failure to deliver the agreed proposals in a timely manner or introduce by March 2024 target

RISK: Lack of clarity on messaging could raise a perception/concerns among residents and elected members around fairness and support for our local businesses and communities

RISK: Failure to be seen to be co-operating and consulting with partner councils and other key stakeholders

RISK: Perceived failure to adequately consult with residents and other stakeholders – leading to challenge

RISK: Perceived lack of consistency across the borough's parking provision

OPPORTUNITY: To show that Cheshire East Council is a 'open, fair and green organisation'

OPPORTUNITY: Reassert the strength of, and commitment to, partnership and stakeholder working

OPPORTUNITY: Improve highways and traffic management

OPPORTUNITY: Positively position the council as pro more-sustainable methods of transport

OPPORTUNITY: Reassert the council's commitment to planning for the longer-term prosperity of the borough

Approach / Strategy:

Messaging and engagement must be:

- Clearly articulated
- Evidence based

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- Link to previous narratives ([Corporate Plan](#), [MTFS](#), CEC [Economic Plan](#), [Local Transport Plan](#) and [Environment Strategy](#))
- Focussed on long-term benefits/outcomes (links with public transport, active travel initiatives)
- Clearly branded as Cheshire East - to build consistency around comms and engagement activity

We aim to

1. Inform and engage around the consultation and adoption of proposals process:
 - a. Articulate and explain what is being proposed and consulted upon and why.
 - b. To encourage active involvement in taking part on the consultation on proposals
 - c. The need to ensure people's views are heard and any concerns addressed
 - d. Reinforce key messages around proposals under consultation
 - e. Explain the stages /timeline in the process of consideration and adoption of proposals and implementation
 - f. Manage expectations and be transparent

We will do this by:

- Creating/applying a confident and consistent factual tone of voice and communications
- Media releases at key moments in the consultation and decision-making process
- Social media posts signposting to website, consultation pages and media release content
- Build engagement and understanding of key messages via social media activity (following the principles of engaging social media as described in CEC's Social Media Vision). This may include:
 - Visualisation / infographics
 - Informing process interaction
 - Did you know...?
- Signpost other general interest stakeholders to media release content /online consultation.
- Internal staff communications (Team Voice and Centranet)
- Being prepared with confident, evidence-based statements / responses to media/stakeholder enquiries.

All Town and Parish Council engagement will be based on a presentation of:

- The rationale for introducing/ increasing parking charges – sighting corporate policies, the MTFS and Local Transport Plan – tie in with public transport etc.
- Our evidence base using the occupancy analysis and review of alternative parking availability in the town. This would be completed using excel spreadsheets and mapping that has been prepared to inform the parking review;
- Tariffs proposed for each car park, linking to the evidence base analysis;

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- The level of displacement (low, medium, high) and the parameters used to reach this conclusion.
- The proposed/ potential mitigations, where applicable, using the displacement mapping. In towns where no mitigations are proposed, we would explain why we do not think they are required.
- Opportunity for the Town or Parish to provide comments in addition to any response to the statutory consultation.

Key messages:

- Delivering equality and greater fairness;
- Taking into account each towns own characteristics and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Links to wider corporate transformation programmes incl. office estate and zero carbon.
- CEC incurs costs to maintain and operate free car parks and extra revenue is needed to be able to continue the upkeep and investment in car parks;
- Revenues generated will help to protect budgets for other services (such as adult social care, cared for children and waste collection) and also provide another funding stream for local transport schemes;
- Tariffs and charges are fair and transparent for all users;
- Encouraging people to use more-sustainable modes of transport, such as cycling, walking, scooting, public transport – to reduce pollution and congestion and improve health and wellbeing.

Consultation platform

Consultation material will be made available in our libraries and customer contact centres, however, we expect most feedback will be captured mainly via emails to the consultations teams as well as in writing.

Notice of proposals, orders, statement of reasons and plans will be hosted on the council website's consultation page. Notice of proposals will also be posted on lamp columns on site.

Action Plan/Tasks (see sheet below): Subject to regular review as part of project board meetings

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ACTIVITY	CHANNEL(S)	AUDIENCE(S)	RESOURCES	DATE /TIMESCALE	AIMS / MESSAGES	RISKS / NOTES	ACTION – WHO	COMPLETE
Transport Committee	Meeting	Members Public Media	Committee time	22/07/2023	Cheshire East Council has consulted with the public on general parking principles		Democratic services	
Social media support	Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn	Residents, town and parish councils + wider stakeholders	Staff time	July 2023	Share thanks for responses and link to consultation response		Comms team	
Website pages created for MTFS parking charges proposals consultation Hard copies prepared for libraries and CSPs – Covid restrictions permitting	CEC website	Residents town and parish councils + wider stakeholders	Staff time	July 2023 Pages live by consultation start Sept 23	Inform residents and stakeholders about proposed changes to parking charges, the purpose and process etc		BB / web team	
MTFS parking proposals consul CEC Commstation	Website/hard copies in libraries (Covid rules permitting)	Residents town and parish councils + wider stakeholders		Sept – Oct 23	Consultation: Inform residents and share key messages about changes to parking charges, the purpose and process etc		Parking services with support from other teams	

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Media Release	Press release issued to all media	Residents, town and parish councils + wider stakeholders	Staff time	By July 23	Launch of consultation. inform residents and share key messages about changes to parking charges, the purpose and process etc		CEC Comms	
Social media support	Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn	Residents, town and parish councils + wider stakeholders	Staff time	By 04/08/23 onwards	Launch of consultation. inform residents and share key messages about changes to parking charges, the purpose and process etc		CEC Comms	
Media Release	Press release issued to all media	Residents, town and parish councils + wider stakeholders	Staff time	September 2023	'Have your say' reminder to residents and stakeholders re consultation. Share key messages, explain purpose and process etc		CEC Comms	
Social media support CEC Comms	Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn	Residents, town and parish councils + wider stakeholders	Staff time	Late August 2021	'Have your say' reminder to residents and stakeholders re consultation. Share key messages, explain purpose and process etc		CEC Comms	

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Media Release	Press release issued to all media	Residents, town and parish councils + wider stakeholders	Staff time	End of first week of September 2021	'Don't miss out - have your say' reminder to residents and stakeholders re consultation. Share key messages, explain purpose and process etc		CEC Comms	
Social media support	Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn	Residents, town and parish councils + wider stakeholders	Staff time	End of first week of September 2021	'Don't miss out - have your say' reminder to residents and stakeholders re consultation. Share key messages, explain purpose and process etc		CEC Comms	
Media Release	Press release issued to all media	Residents, town and parish councils + wider stakeholders	Staff time	W/C 20/09/21	End of consultation period. Thank people for sharing feedback/views. Explain next steps		CEC Comms	
Social media support	Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn	Residents, town and parish councils + wider stakeholders	Staff time	W/C 20/09/21	End of consultation period. Thank people for sharing feedback/views. Explain next steps		CEC Comms	
Media Release	Press release issued to all media	Residents, town and parish councils + wider stakeholders	Staff time	November 2021	Details of finalised recommended proposals re parking charging. Key messages. Explain next steps		CEC Comms	

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Social media support	Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn	Residents, town and parish councils + wider stakeholders	Staff time	January 24	Details of finalised recommended proposals re parking charging. Key messages. Explain next steps		CEC Comms	
Transport Committee	Meeting	Members Public Media		January 24	Decision on proposals		Democr atic services	
Media Release	Press release issued to all media	Residents, town and parish councils + wider stakeholders	Staff time	After Transport Committee decision – January 2024	Promotion of the decisions taken, Key Messages and date of implementation		CEC Comms	
Social media support	Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn	Residents, town and parish councils + wider stakeholders	Staff time	After Transport Committee decision January 2024	Promotion of the decisions taken, Key Messages and date of implementation		CEC Comms	
Media Release/Information Bulletin	Press release issued to all media	Residents, town and parish councils + wider stakeholders	Staff time	March 2024	Reminder of parking charge changes due to be implemented on 1 March 2022		CEC Comms	
Social media support	Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn	Residents, town and parish councils + wider stakeholders	Staff time	March 2024	Reminder of parking charge changes due to be implemented on 1 March 2022		CEC Comms	
Social media support	Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn	Residents, town and parish councils + wider stakeholders	Staff time	1 March 2024	Reminder of parking charge changes coming into effect from this day		CEC Comms	

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