

Poynton Town Council have considered the car parking consultation and have serious concerns about the proposals as set out below:

Firstly, it is disappointing that the only methods of consulting are via email or letter. It would have been beneficial if a consultation similar to the form used during planning applications which allows members of the public to comment directly on the application without having to email, would have made responding to the consultation easier.

Why it would be inappropriate to introduce charges in Poynton.

Cost to Cheshire East

As set out in the Poynton Parking Strategy the annual net revenue for the car park is £31,258.33. A Freedom of Information Act request from the Town Council to Cheshire East indicated that current expenses are circa £20K. To enforce the car park, Cheshire East will incur additional expenses in excess of the £11,258 remainder. These expenses would include ticket machines (or RingGo) and associated costs and infrastructure, administration costs from the collection of charges, enforcement, and additional signage. The Town Council believes that there is no business case to commence charges at the Civic Hall Car Park and the imposition of charges is likely to lead to a loss of income rather than income generation. Businesses needing to close or move out of Poynton leaving empty premises as a result of car park charges, will reduce the Community Charge income received by Cheshire East.

Poynton is thriving because of free parking unlike many other towns where parking is charged and who are struggling.

Poynton is fortunate that despite the cost-of-living crisis the Town has remained a vibrant and attractive place to visit. We know anecdotally that residents and visitors appreciate and make use of the free parking available in the Town.

Over the last year a number of businesses have reported difficulties as a result of the current difficult economic situation. Some have had to close, and others have continued to express their concerns around the introduction of car parking charges.

The Town Council is concerned that the imposition of car parking charges has serious implications for businesses who fear that less people will visit or not stay for as long in the Town. The free parking offered by local nearby shopping areas including Handforth Dean will prove more attractive to residents and visitors and lead to a reduction in footfall in the Town which offer free parking rather than pay to park in the Town.

Cheshire East Town Centre Vitality Plan

In support of the introduction of charges, the Poynton Parking Strategy states that Cheshire East Council recognised the differing needs of communities and commissioned an expert team to produce a bespoke Town Centre Vitality Plan. However, the Town Centre Vitality Plan was clear that car parking was beyond its scope. "However, any proposals to review or modernise car parking provision and

management will be considered on a town-by-town basis as part of the Council's approach to travel demand management. Therefore, the delivery of any car parking proposals is outside the scope of the TCVPs".

It is clear that there has been no review or research done to work out what role free car parking or the introduction of charges might play in impacting a Town Centre's vitality. However, page 64 of the Vitality Plan does identify free parking as a Town strength in Poynton and that the introduction of charges was identified as a threat to the vitality of the Town.

Elderly Population and lack of public transport

Poynton has one of the oldest populations in Cheshire East and these residents are likely to be car dependent, especially given the limited bus service in Poynton. In a recent survey conducted by the Town Council which received 512 responses. 34% of respondents were over 65 and 23% of respondents had either a disability or mobility issues. Only 23% had a bus stop within **their** walking distance. It should be noted that Poynton has a higher proportion (than the rest of Cheshire East) of elderly persons and for the Civic Centre car park this is magnified by the fact that the town's medical centre is located in the car park. This group of people often do not have or are not adept in the use of cell phones and any proposal to have phone only payment must be avoided. If Cheshire East is considering not having a cash or credit card payment option such as RingGo to administer car parking the Town Council would strongly urge Cheshire East to carry out a full Equalities Impact Assessment on the proposal particularly in a location such as Poynton due to its population demographic and the usage at this car park.

There is only a limited daytime service (every 90 minutes) and no evening or Sunday service. For elderly residents journeys by car, even within the village, are essential. Due to the limited bus service available in the Town, at present residents would struggle to use public transport to access community services such as the GP, library, and Connected Community Hub at the Civic Hall.

Active Travel and the Local Transport Plan

The Town Council notes that the Poynton Parking Strategy states that it aims to align with the framework set out within the Local Transport Plan and High-Level Parking Strategy including creating an integrated transport network, encouraging users to consider alternative sustainable and active modes of transport. It should be noted that apart from improvements to cycle parking at Poynton Railway Station (POY28 in the Poynton Local Transport Development Plan) none of the active travel proposals set out in the plan for Poynton have been delivered, the vast majority are at concept stage only and no funding has been allocated. The parking review is unlikely to achieve its aims of encouraging active travel if parking charges are implemented before the active travel schemes are put in place.

Parking for essential services

There are currently not enough long-stay spaces to meet the needs of the Town. The Civic Centre car park has been a community asset for residents using public services in the Town including the Middlewood Partnership including the Priorslegh medical centre, the Civic Hall and the library. It also provides parking for Parklands Care Home, the Methodist Church and Open Hands (a charity providing help for

elderly and vulnerable people to and from medical appointments). The imposition of charges in this car park would have a serious impact on all of these neighbouring organisations, their staff and the users of these services.

We are aware that the Middlewood Partnership, who run Priorslegh have already raised significant concerns with Cheshire East in relation to the car parking situation at the Civic Centre and have previously issued the following statement:

The Middlewood Partnership, which runs GP and NHS services from Priorslegh Medical Centre at the Civic Centre in Poynton, wishes to express its significant concerns about any changes to the current parking arrangements at the Civic Centre Car Park.

The GP practice, which is part of the fabric of Poynton, and has played a major part in the delivery of NHS services for decades, requires easy and suitable access for all patients, staff and clinicians during the day. The surgery itself has minimal parking. However, the surgery was built and operating long before the only nearby car park became a potential income generating asset for the council or commercial neighbour. Before this, it has always been a community asset for those using public services based in the practice, library and civic hall. The recent vaccine programme, and the ability for many volunteers and patients to park nearby clearly illustrates the importance of a public infrastructure that promotes community, wellbeing and service over profit. Had restrictions been in place during the last 6 months of our successful vaccine programme, we suspect many volunteers and staff would not have been able to help in such an amazing way.

As a practice, we encourage those staff who don't need nearby access to their car to visit patients, as well as non-clinical staff, to use long term and other parking if they cannot use public transport, car-share, cycle or walk.

However, the practice has hundreds of patients using our services every week, and the practice is a base for NHS community services. This means that numerous NHS and care staff visit from, and meet at, this facility daily, including district and Macmillan nurses, therapists, matrons, paramedics and visiting doctors and clinicians. Together as an NHS team, we visit hundreds of Poynton's most vulnerable and critically ill housebound patients each month and require ready and convenient access to the surgery base as we go about our vitally important duties every day.

GPs, nurses and other clinicians cannot cycle, walk or use public transport to visit patients. They need their own cars, parked nearby. We are concerned that there are simply not enough long-term car park places for these essential staff. Enforcing the car park rules will severely impact a clinician's ability to rapidly visit patients in need. Members of the team will need to park further away, and we feel these proposed changes will adversely affect patient safety and cause harm to the most vulnerable in our community, delaying our response time for urgent home visits, and reducing our efficiency by adding interruption to the daily routine of all visiting clinicians reducing the number of people seen. The proposals will create a level of disruption to the local NHS to provide safe care

and will likely cause harm due to clinicians at the surgery not having ready access to their cars. In addition, elderly and frail patients who need to attend the surgery need to be considered in these proposals.

The importance of the car park for the users of the NHS and local council services cannot be overstated and as a minimum the Town Council would encourage Cheshire East to consider providing an allocation of car parking spaces for NHS staff.

Limited Parking

Parking in Poynton is extremely limited. Within the Town Centre there are five car parks available to the public. Only one car park is a “public” car park, all the others are privately owned. Three of the car parks, Morrisons at Queensway, Well Pharmacy and Aldi are short stay for their customers only. There are a small number of car parking spaces at Poynton Railway Station. There are no long stay alternative car parks in Poynton.

The Town Council believes that there is no business case for the imposition of car parking charges to the long stay section of the Civic Centre Car Park. We believe that charges will not generate income for Cheshire East but is likely to result in a loss due to the additional expenditure that will be required to impose charges. In addition, parking charges are likely to have a significant impact on the vitality of the Town and lead to business losing income and potentially having to close.

Increases in “on street” illegal and inconsiderate parking.

Attached is a map showing current restrictions including double yellow lines or restricted time parking. The areas highlighted in red are where the Town already experiences significant problems with on street parking. The areas impacted by on street parking are likely to significantly increase if charges are introduced in the Civic Centre car park. The lack of visits by enforcement staff are unlikely to prevent an increase in such parking. Also attached are photographs showing current problem on street parking within the Town.

Statistics from Cheshire East Budget Consultation 2023 - 2027

It should also be noted that the following public consultation, the statistics from Cheshire East budget consultation 2023 -2027 meeting states that only 32% of respondents supported parking charges where not imposed currently. We would suggest that this demonstrates a lack of support for the proposal.

Income Generated by Poynton Town Council for Cheshire East

Poynton Town Council raises monies at our own expense by issuing parking charge notices for illegal car parking in the Town, which more that covers the income generated by the imposition of car parking charges.

Demise of towns where people pay to park

In Macclesfield where people pay to park, stores have moved out of the town to complexes where parking is free and this has killed off this once lovely place to shop. A member visited Macclesfield shopping area last Saturday and then went straight to Poynton afterwards. Macclesfield centre was “dead” and Poynton’s centre was thriving. The argument “They pay in Macclesfield, so why shouldn’t Poynton” is equivalent to saying, “Macclesfield town centre has been run into the ground, so Poynton’s should be too”.