



## **Congleton Town Council urges residents and workers to reject Car Parking Proposals**

Congleton Town Council unanimously agreed to object to Cheshire East Council's proposed car parking changes for Congleton in the strongest possible terms. Now it is urging local residents, businesses and anyone with opinions on the proposals to make sure Cheshire East Council (CEC) is aware of their concerns and suggested solutions by November 1<sup>st</sup>.

Cheshire East Council is proposing changes across all the towns, including introducing charges in towns that previously enjoyed free parking. The proposed changes for Congleton are:

- Increasing the charged time from 9am – 5pm to 8am – 6pm.
- Removing long stay day tickets from Chapel Street and Princess Street car parks.
- Introducing parking charges on Roe Street car park (Lawton House Surgery).
- Reducing all town centre on-street parking to 30 minutes.
- A 109% - 169% increase in parking charges – with one-hour parking introduced at 60p, 2-hour parking increased from 60p to £1.60, and 4-hour plus car parking increased from £1.60 to £3 for 4-6 hours and £3.40- £4.30 for more than 6 hours.
- The price of Quarterly and Annual parking permits have more than doubled.
- A three-tier consolidated car park fees approach has been proposed with all CEC town car parks being allocated one of the set fees, all of which are considerably more expensive than Congleton's current charges.

Congleton Town Council, whilst appreciating that Cheshire East Council has funding issues, and needs to raise money, believes these are ill-thought-out proposals. The Town Council believes that the changes will have a devastating impact on town centre businesses, town centre workers, town centre residents, patients needing regular support and ultimately Cheshire East Council as the huge hike in prices will result in far more than the predicted 5% of people choosing to change their parking habits.

Cllr Rob Moreton, Congleton Town Mayor, said: "We are seriously concerned about the devastating impact that we believe these proposals will have on our town. It will have a bad impact on town centre workers and people living in the town centre. Most town centre jobs are low paid. Town centre workers are as essential as creating footfall. We anticipate that the price hike will deter people from using the car parks, losing CEC valuable income, and instead will clog up residential streets near the town centre creating health and safety issues. It is a repeat of what happened at the Congleton Railway Station when higher charges were introduced."

“We are disappointed that Cheshire East Council has turned its back on considering the unique position of each town in favour of a harmonisation approach. The demand for town centre parking varies across the borough. We have no demand issues in Congleton and our offer is not as great as some of the other towns in the borough to justify such high charges. We also have two privately managed shopping centres – Barn Road and West Heath, offering free parking as an alternative to the town centre. Comparing Congleton’s charges to those in Trafford and Chester is like comparing chalk and cheese. How about considering our neighbouring town of Biddulph in Staffordshire Moorlands, which offers the first hour free of charge and up to 2 hours for 60p.”

The Town Council would like to see:

- Cheshire East drop the harmonisation approach and instead recognise the unique offer of each town. The current three-tier approach is not fit for all and the lowest option is too high for the towns in the south of the borough.
- If the three-tier approach remains, as a minimum Congleton should be on the lowest tier and the four hour plus option reworked to respect town centre workers.
- For safety and convenience of workers, long-stay day ticket options should continue to be offered on Princess Street and Chapel Street.
- A different approach should be taken for long stay (workers) car parking – possible pre-purchase a book of tickets allowing all-day parking on set car parks for £2 a day – the user adds the date and number plate. (this works for residents in Brighton). Recognise that the pattern of work has changed. Many office workers work a mix of home and office. Many shop workers work 16-hour contracts or part time.
- Parking timing should remain as 9am – 5pm. There is no demand for parking outside of these times. The change will affect parents, particularly at Marfields School, who use West Street Car Park to operate a park and stride, walking the last stretch to school. If the time can’t be changed to 9am then parents at the school should be offered a free pass until 9am on school days.
- All the parking machines should be programmed to allow one hour of free parking and 1-2 hours for £1. We believe this will encourage residents to use their town centre as their key service centre in line with Cheshire East’s Town Centre First Policy.
- Make Rope Walk Car Park a resident-only car park – possibly working with a housing association which has flats there.
- Longer term introduce low-cost safe and reliable transport alternatives so that residents are not reliant on their cars to get into town.

It has been in the local press that Cheshire East Council already makes over a £1 million surplus on car parking across the borough, plus almost £900,000 from penalty fines and more than £370,000 from residents and car park permits. It believes that by considering the needs of individual towns, plus adding reasonable costs within towns that currently enjoy free car parking Cheshire East can increase its revenue on car parking whilst still supporting town centres.

The Town Council is asking all those who have thoughts about the car parks proposals to take the time to email Cheshire East before the 1<sup>st</sup> November [carparksreview2023@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:carparksreview2023@cheshireeast.gov.uk) giving their views and solutions.

Congleton Town Council's full response and the reference materials to the Cheshire East Car Parking Review can be seen at [www.congleton-tc.gov.uk/carparksreview](http://www.congleton-tc.gov.uk/carparksreview)

**ENDS**

**For more information please contact Jackie MacArthur at Congleton Town Council on: 07535 269812**