



ALSAGER TOWN COUNCIL

To: All Members of CEC Highways & Transport Committee

Cc: Councillor Sam Corcoran, Fiona Bruce MP, Dr Kieran Mullen MP, Alsager Chronicle

Dear Councillor,

Alsager Town Council has extreme concerns about the validity and accuracy of the recent car park consultation. This letter is seeking your support to review and defer the decision at the Highways and Transport Committee on parking charges to enable a more informed decision to be made.

Alsager Town Council's reason for this is:

Further examination from our review has shown that the consultation has not followed principles outlined by HM Government (Consultation Principles 2018 [Consultation principles: guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/consultation-principles) nor The Local Government Association guidance [Section 4: Consulting residents | Local Government Association](#)

The Government principles state:

- A. Consultations should be clear and concise.** The consultation did not explain any implementation, and there was no ability to answer specific questions.
- B. Consultations should have a purpose.** There was no purpose to the consultation other than provide information on how charges would be levied. There was no opportunity to provide alternatives or question the data.
- C. Consultations should be informative.** The consultation did not give any detail on implementation timescales or method of collecting payments.
- F. Consultations should be targeted.** There were no targeted consultations town by town. The Town Council had to request a meeting with officers. Schools, businesses and residents were not aware of the consultation until the Town Council had advertised and alerted them. Fairview carpark is used primarily by ASDA as a shoppers car park and Highfields primary school

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as a drop off and collection point; neither were consulted. The consultation was not inclusive as demonstrated by a local business driving to the allotted collection point at Delamere House, Crewe to be greeted by staff who were unaware and unwilling to receive responses. The Town Council is reviewing its position should a decision be made at Highways and Transport Committee to legally challenge a decision based on the consultation it undertook.

The pre consultation request made by CEC in August did not inform the main Parking Strategy.

Data - Freedom of Information Request

Alsager Town Council continue to challenge the data in the Strategy (August 2023). Following our request for information under the Freedom of Information Act, it is abundantly clear that CEC does not have a clear plan nor accurate financial figures to allow CEC councillor's to make an informed decision at the Committee.

Attempts to obtain detailed information via the FOI to aid our budget setting and understand the CEC plan for implementation has not been provided as evidenced in the attached FOI responses. The answers to the majority of questions were poor and provided no information. Therefore, there is concern that the figures quoted in the Alsager Parking Strategy are inflated figures to enhance the CEC budget to ensure the Council can approve a balanced budget as no evidence has been provided to counteract this.

Alsager Town Council examined figures for some CEC car parks e.g. Crewe Victoria centre to compare with the projections CEC are making for Alsager. Cheshire East Council is projecting that Fairview Car Park will make a net income of £439,981 per annum. Based on Cheshire East Council's own figures for 2022-23, the highest income generated from any single car park was Crewe Victoria Centre at £275,878. Crewe Victoria Centre has 482 spaces to Alsager Fairview's 288. The Strategy suggests that Alsager's Fairview car park, which is just over half the size is going to produce just under double the income of Cheshire East's highest income-generating car park Crewe Victoria Street. Even projecting a 20% increase or a change of Crewe Victoria Street to the same proposed charging tier as Alsager Fairview, Victoria Street would still be generating £100,000 less than Fairview is projected.

There is evidence that there is no plan and no projections for when the return of investment will be achieved. Currently we have seen no evidence of a fully costed business case, with a detailed implementation plan, the projected return of investment plan and impact assessments. If there is such a document, then this should have been included as part of the consultation documentation.

In our requested liaison meeting with CEC officers, the officer Richard Hibbert informed the council that implementation will be at least 6 months into the new financial year and therefore it is unlikely the projected income which CEC is quoting will not be achieved. The officer also stated that car park charges are purely a revenue raising initiative. What we don't want is for the highways budget to be overspent this time next year because the anticipated net revenues,

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that are contained in the budget, have not been achieved. Furthermore, we question is there availability in the CEC capital budget for the purchase of appropriate equipment and installation? Has assurance been given to members that the purchase of the assets for running the car park charges have been included in the capital budget and the interest for borrowing the capital to support the investment, is included in the revenue budget, and is cost effective. Alsager Town Council challenges the necessary capital investment to install machines will not equal appropriate return on investment.

Consultation

The pre-consultation information the Town Council provided was not used by CEC in the formal consultation despite the promise that this would be a town by town consultation. The consultation document contains no information on how the responses will be analysed and relayed to the town councils. Alsager Town Council is currently in the dark as to how it should now proceed and how CEC will communicate to councils prior to a decision being made by the Highways Committee on 25 January 2024. Communication from CEC would be appreciated prior to the Christmas break so that Alsager can take appropriate actions it makes have to take.

There is general concern amongst town and parish councils that CEC are carrying out consultations and making decisions at inappropriate times when local councils have already set their precepts. Alsager Town Council does not want to be in the same position next year. Is there a plan to cover the financial implications of delayed implementation in the short term. It is the intention that Alsager Town Council and their Ward Councillors will be attending the Highways and Transport Committee meeting on 25 January 2024 to speak. The Town Council therefore requests that there should be sufficient time for elected members and residents to speak at the meeting to ensure everyone gets a fair time to represent their community.

The Town Council should be grateful for confirmation that the letter has been received (by email to admin@alsagertowncouncil.gov.uk) and careful thought has been given before any decisions are made at the Highways and Transport Committee meeting.

Yours sincerely

Jane Hearne

Cllr Jane Hearne
Mayor of Alsager
On behalf of Alsager Town Council

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Mrs Nicola Clarke
Alsager Town Council 3 Lawton Road
Alsager
CW97SS

Telephone: 0300 123 5500
lorraine.rushton@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Date: 20 November 2023
Our Reference: 22942513
Your reference: SR2873806

Dear Mrs Clarke

Information Request - 22942513 - Car park RingGo machines

I am responding to your request for information, which has been considered under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) and logged as case 22942513.

Your request is as follows:

- 1. How much does Cheshire East Council receive from the car park charge provider i.e. a transaction fee percentage or a fixed fee from income derived from the car park charging machines at Cheshire East Council owned car parks and the amount for each method of transaction. i.e. cash, card or app.*
- 2. To provide the income CEC receive from the provider broken down by banding, for example, a £1 payment by a car park user - how much is retained by the provider and how much does CEC receive.*

I can confirm that Cheshire East Council holds the information you have requested. I have detailed below the information that is being released to you.

The Council does not operate RingGo machines. The machine supplier is Metric. If you are referring to the mobile payment app supplier then this is nothing to do with the machines and our incumbent supplier is PayByPhone.

The Council does not receive a transaction fee percentage from the car park charging machines. The Council receives the parking fee from the mobile payment app should the motorist wish to use this payment option. The mobile payment app is card payment only.

Should you so wish, we can provide the number of mobile app payment transaction and the value, but this is the parking fee.

Please quote the reference number 22942513 in any future communications.

An anonymised copy of this response may be published in the Council's Disclosure Log, which is available online at the following address: www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/foi

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your request or if you are not happy with the way your request has been handled, you can request an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within 20 working days of our response by emailing informationrequests@cheshireeast.gov.uk or in writing to the Information Rights Team, Cheshire East Council, 1st Floor, Westfields, c/o Municipal Buildings, Earle Street, Crewe, CW1 2BJ.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint>, or Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. The Information Commissioner will not normally investigate your case until the Council's internal review process has been completed.

Yours sincerely

Lorraine Rushton
Parking Services Manager
Cheshire East Council

C&CR FOI Investigation Team

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informationrequests@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Mrs Nicola Clarke
Alsager Town Council 3 Lawton Road
Alsager
CW97SS

Date: 23 November 2023
Our Reference: 22839293

Dear Mrs Clarke

Information Request - 22839293 - Information relating to the CEC proposals to charge at car parks

I am responding to your request for information, which has been considered under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) and logged as case 22839293.

I can confirm that Cheshire East Council holds some of the information you have requested. Please see below the information being released to you, which has been provided by our Parking Services Team.

1. Time scales and technology for implementation in Alsager

a) What is the implementation timeframe?

This information is not held, as a decision on any final proposals has not been made. The decision will be made in the Highways and Transport Committee in January 2024.

b) Is it town by town or a blanket CEC plan. Please provide time periods from start to finish.

This information is not held, as a decision on any final proposals has not been made. The decision will be made in the Highways and Transport Committee in January 2024.

c) What will be the date that CEC will start to receive revenue from car parking charges in Alsager.

This information is not held, as a decision on any final proposals has not been made. The decision will be made in the Highways and Transport Committee in January 2024.

d) What technology, that is Wi-Fi, 3G, 4G, 5G etc. is being used to collect the revenue and what is its functionality.

This information is not held, as a decision on any final proposals has not been made. The decision will be made in the Highways and Transport Committee in January 2024.

- e) **Will the machine have ANPR capability. Will the machines operate with a back office facility to provide key data.**

This information is not held, as a decision on any final proposals has not been made. The decision will be made in the Highways and Transport Committee in January 2024.

- f) **What is the lifespan of the proposed equipment, and will they be leased or purchased outright and who will manage them.**

The general lifespan of the machines we currently have is approximately 10 years although in the past, machines have lasted anything up to 17 + years.

- g) **What will be the impact of changing technology and will the car park charging machines become obsolete.**

This information is not held, as a decision on any final proposals has not been made. The decision will be made in the Highways and Transport Committee in January 2024.

- h) **What level of parking enforcement is currently allocated to Alsager.**

Alsager is on the beat patrols of the enforcement officers; we do not provide specific dates or times and this is subject to resources and competing priorities.

- i) **What level of additional parking enforcement will be put in place in Alsager as a result of charging implantation.**

As the decision has not yet been made as to any final proposals, we are unable to answer this question.

2. Return on investment for meters implementation.

- a) **What is the expected term of return of investment period for each car park (how many years) – Fairview carpark, Well Lane, Station Road and Fanny's Croft.**

We do not hold this information. If the proposals are supported, this is when revenue exceeds implementation costs.

- b) **Please provide the data on which the profit calculations have been assessed.**

They are not profit calculations - they are projected revenue, and this information is not held by the council.

3. Displacement parking for residents

- a) **How many cars will be displaced at each Alsager car park assuming 20% displacement, Fairview, Well Lane, Station Road and Fanny's Croft.**

This information is not held. Elasticity figures are in the report, and displacement can only be gleaned and monitored if the proposals are progressed. This is still subject to consideration of representations and approval by committee on any final proposals.

- b) **Which roads have you assessed as being impacted by and what is the capacity of those roads.**

The displacement/heat maps are in the public reports.

c) When will the consultation take place regarding yellow line implementation.

Consultation will take place after the decision has been made in the Highways and Transport Committee in January 2024. Displacement will be monitored. Traffic Regulation Orders are required for yellow line implementation, and all of these are subject to statutory consultation.

4. Resident parking permits (assigned parking bays)

a) When will consultation be undertaken regarding any residents parking permits?

This information is not held, and is subject to point 3 c.

b) What will be the cost to residents be of any resident parking permits.

This will be the same costs as already outlined on our web pages.

c) How with CEC identify roads which will be subject to resident parking permits.

The eligibility criteria is on our web pages. Generally, we get requests from local ward members who have identified a request for a scheme.

d) How will the parking permit enforcement be undertaken?

In the same as it is currently - by civil enforcement officers who check for the presence of the permit and its validity.

e) What is the expected cost associated with resident parking permit enforcement.

This information is not held. Final proposals are not yet or approved.

5. Inclusivity to include cash payments

a) Will there be a consultation process be undertaken regarding the introduction of cashless parking charges?

This will be subject to Highways and Transport Committee consideration.

b) What are the implantation timeframes for cashless charging?

This information is not held.

c) Will the proposed machines be activated to take cash from day one of the charging.

This information is not held.

6. Reduction in car use.

a) Please provide all data associated with Alsager used to identify a shift to alternative modes of transport, broken down by each mode of transport.

This information is not held.

7. Car usage at car parks income projections

a) Please provide the data that has informed the net income/profit projections for the year 2024-25, 2025-26, 2026-27, 2027-28, 2028-2029) defined by each Alsager car park, Fairview, Well Lane, Station Road and Fanny's Croft.

The data that is held for 2024/25 is already in the published reports. The remaining information is not held.

8. Fairview Car Park

- a) **Please provide evidence that CEC can legally charge for each of the 288 car parking spaces quoted in the Strategy for Fairview car park Monday to Friday 8.00 – 6.00 p.m. taking into account any other covenants, lease, license or rights of access for car parking spaces.**

This is currently subject to a legal exercise, and the outcomes will be detailed in any final proposals of that exercise.

9. Review

- a) **What are the proposals for a full financial review of the proposed implementation and when will this be undertaken.**

This will take place if/when approval is given to implement any finally agreed proposals.

Please quote the reference number 22839293 in any future communications.

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Yours sincerely

Beverley Murphy
Information Rights Team Leader
Cheshire East Council