Birmingham City Council

Report to Cabinet

13th May 2025

Title:	**OUTCOME FROM INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS ON PROPOSED PARKING CHARGES IN PARKS AND PROPOSAL TO PROGRESS FORMAL TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS (OFF-STREET PARKING PLACES ORDERS)**
Lead Cabinet Portfolio:	Councillor Majid Mahmood, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport
Relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee:	Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Has this report been shared with the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chair?	Yes
Report Author:	Matt Hageney, Partnership Manager City Operations Directorate matt.hageney@birmingham.gov.uk
Authorised by:	Craig Cooper, Executive Director, City Operations Directorate
Is this a Key Decision?	Yes
If this is a Key Decision, is this decision listed on the Forward Plan?	Yes
Reason(s) why not included on the Forward Plan:	Not Applicable
Is this a Late Report?	No
Reason(s) why Late:	Not Applicable
Is this decision eligible for ‘call in?’	Yes
If not eligible, please provide reason(s):	Not Applicable

Wards:	Sheldon Rubery & Rednal Sutton Trinity Sutton Vesey Sutton Four Oaks

Does this report contain exempt or confidential information?	No

Has this decision been included on the Notification of Intention to consider Matters in Private?	Not Applicable
Reasons why not included on the Notification:	Not Applicable

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The 2024/5 Budget included proposals to introduce charges in three of Birmingham's parks: Lickey Hills Country Park, Sheldon Country Park and Sutton Park.

1.2 This budget assumes delivery in July 2025 and the MTFP includes this budget assumption. The income of £381k for 2025-26 will be achieved through the implementation of these charges.

1.3 The overall approach is to ask Park users to contribute towards the costs of maintaining these parks and green spaces through paying for parking.

1.4 Informal consultations were undertaken between 15th November to 6th December, seeking views of park visitors, residents, stakeholder and ward members. There are proposed changes around tariff structures as a result of this consultation process. The revised financial model assumes a 10% rather than 20% attrition rate, this supports the delivery of the full budgeted income. Cabinet is now asked to consider the informal consultation feedback and provide formal approval to proceed to the next stage of implementation, which is to formally progress Traffic Regulation Orders (Off-street Parking Places Orders) for Sheldon Country Park and Sutton Park. This TRO process will also allow an opportunity for formal objections to be raised, and the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport will be asked to make a final decision, once this formal TRO process is completed.

1.5 As part of the informal consultation feedback, Worcestershire County Council in its capacity as the respective traffic authority, advised it would not assist with the production of the TRO (Lickey Hills Country Park is located within Worcestershire's boundary). As such, an alternative regime for charging and enforcement at the Lickey Hills site is being explored and will be implemented within the original timescale utilising private parking enforcement arrangements rather than powers requiring a Traffic Regulation Order. Further details about how this scheme will be sourced are set out in the Procurement Implications section of this report.

2 COMMISSIONERS' REVIEW

2.1 Commissioners support the recommendations.

3 RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

3.1 Notes the results of the 3 informal consultations (Lickey Hills Country Park, Sheldon Country Park and Sutton Park) undertaken between 15th November and 6th December 2024, a summary of which is attached as Appendix A.

3.2 Approves the proposed changes, taking into account the consultation feedback:

Original Proposed Charges – Sutton Park	Revised Proposed charges – Sutton Park
£2.20 for up to 2 hours, £3.30 for 2 to 4 hours, £5.00 all day	£1 per hour up to 4 hours, £5.00 all day
Cost of annual parking permit price to be determined	£52 per annum
Chargeable hours of 9am to 6pm, 365 days a year	No change to chargeable hours; a 30 minute ‘grace’ period is proposed in addition

Original Proposed Charges – Lickey Hills Country Park	Revised Proposed charges – Lickey Hills Country Park
£2.20 for up to 2 hours, £3.30 for 2 to 4 hours, £5.00 all day	£1 per hour up to 4 hours, £5.00 all day
Cost of annual parking permit price to be determined	£52 per annum
Chargeable hours of 9am to 6pm, 365 days a year	No change to chargeable hours; a 30 minute ‘grace’ period is proposed in addition

Original Proposed Charges – Sheldon Country Park	Revised Proposed charges – Sheldon Country Park
£2.20 for up to 2 hours, £3.30 for 2 to 4 hours, £5.00 all day	£0.75 per hour up to 3 hours, £3.50 all day
Cost of annual parking permit price to be determined	£52 per annum
Chargeable hours of 9am to 6pm, 365 days a year	No change to chargeable hours; a 30 minute ‘grace’ period is proposed in addition

3.3 Approves free parking permits for park volunteers

3.4 Approves the principle of 30 minute ‘grace’ (free parking) period to be introduced for each site.

3.5 Approves use of corporate capital contingency to fund the parking schemes as an Invest to Save. The project is expected to pay back investment in the first 2 full years of being in operation as well as meet its revenue savings targets from year one and beyond.

3.6 Authorises the Assistant Director, Highways to proceed to the next stage of statutory consultation for the Sheldon Country Park and Sutton Park schemes and advertise a Parking Places Order, in accordance with the Council’s normalised approach to introducing Traffic Regulation Orders.

3.7 Delegates to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, the decision to proceed with the Sheldon Country Park and Sutton Park charging schemes following the completion of the formal TRO process.

3.8 Delegates to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, the decision to introduce a scheme for charging and enforcement at the Lickey Hills site utilising private parking arrangements.

3.9 Delegates authority to approve award of contracts to the Director, Commercial and Procurement (or their delegate), the Director of Finance (or their delegate) and Interim City Solicitor (or their delegate).

3.10 Authorises the City Solicitor to enter into any agreements necessary to give effect to the above decision.

4 KEY INFORMATION

Context

4.1 As part of the 2024/5 budget setting process, Council approved the in-principle introduction of parking charges at three of the city's parks. This was set out in budget proposal BDP31 and assumed the following income profile:

Ref	Saving Title	Description	Value 2024/25 £000	Value 2025/26 £000
31	Introduce charging for car parks in parks	Introduce parking charges at Sutton Park, Lickey Hills Country Park and Sheldon Country Park Preparation and capital works to take place in 2024/5 for implementation in 2025/6	-	381

4.2 The implementation of parking charges was assumed to take effect as from July/August 2025 and once the required consultation processes were completed. This report documents the main findings of the initial consultation exercise and as a result, proposes changes to the original proposal.

4.3 To implement charges, this informal consultation process must be followed by the formal process for advertising and considering the introduction of Traffic Regulation Orders (Off-street Parking Places Orders) for the Sheldon Country Park and Sutton Park schemes. Approval is sought from Cabinet to both approve the changes emanating from the informal consultation process and to proceed to the formal TRO making process for the two schemes. This formal process also includes an opportunity for objections to be raised and be considered before a final decision is made.

4.4 The informal consultation process took place between 15th November and 6th December 2024. Emails were sent to the stakeholders and ward members for each scheme with invitations to online engagement sessions, where the project team presented the proposals and then fielded questions from attendees. In addition, standalone meetings were organised with specific stakeholders based on the complexities of their site operation/management. BeHeard online surveys were established and promoted; hard copy questionnaires were produced and circulated to the respective visitor centres and stakeholders; email inboxes were set up, monitored on a daily basis and all emails were responded to. Attached as Appendix B is a copy of the survey/questionnaire.

4.5 The response numbers for each consultation are:

- Lickey Hills Country Park – 1172 responses received
- Sheldon Country Park – 182 responses received
- Sutton Park – 4018 responses received
- Collectively – 5372 responses received

4.6 Of the responses received, a significant proportion were not in favour of the proposed parking charges:

- Lickey Hills Country Park – 919 respondents (78.4% of 1172 received responses) felt access to the park should remain free
- Sheldon Country Park – 120 respondents (65.9% of 182 received responses) felt access to the park should remain free
- Sutton Park – 2741 respondents (68.2% of 4018 received responses) felt access to the park should remain free. It can be noted that 479 respondents (11.9%) felt access to the park should remain free for Sutton residents only.

4.7 The introduction of parking charges is often controversial and unpopular as users are asked to pay for something that has previously been free. However, the projected income from parking charges still falls short of the cost of maintaining the 3 parks in question and therefore it is deemed reasonable to ask park users to contribute financially to the upkeep and maintenance of these parks. Despite the introduction of parking charges, there will still be a requirement for financial support from the Council’s General Fund to maintain and manage these parks.

4.8 Parking charges across destination sites throughout the UK has become common practice and in the vast majority of cases parking charges for these sites have been in place for several years. Introducing charges on Birmingham’s sites will be in line with national best practice to offset the cost of maintaining these destination sites.

4.9 Of those respondents that suggested alternative parking charges, recurring feedback from the 3 consultations showed support for reduced parking charges as follows:

- Lickey Hills Country Park – 6 respondents agreed with the consulted charges; 220 respondents suggested alternative reduced parking charges

- Sheldon Country Park – No respondents agreed with the consulted charges; 60 respondents suggested alternative reduced parking charges
- Sutton Park – 2 respondents agreed with the consulted charges; 1230 respondents suggested alternative reduced parking charges
- Collectively – 8 respondents agreed with the consulted charges; 1510 respondents (28.1%) suggested alternative reduced parking charges

4.10 The preferred alternative suggested parking charges by scheme is as follows:

- Lickey Hills Country Park – 230 respondents suggested an alternative charge, for which £1 flat fee (17.0%) was the preferred choice followed by followed by £1 per hour (10.9% of respondents)
- Sheldon Country Park – 60 respondents suggested an alternative charge, for which a nominal fee e.g. less than £1 per hour (31.7% of respondents) was the preferred choice, followed by £1 per hour (10.0% of respondents)
- Sutton Park – 678 respondents suggested an alternative charge, for which a £1 flat fee (22.9% of respondents) was the preferred choice, followed by £2 flat fee (18.1% of respondents).

4.11 This support for reduced parking charges was echoed by the feedback from park stakeholders who argued if the introduced parking charges are lower (than the consulted charges) it will minimise the negative impact on the trade of businesses within the parks. In addition, lower parking charges may have the added benefit of reducing the likelihood of displacement parking, which is a concern amongst respondents and stakeholders.

4.12 Reduced charges are more popular amongst consultees and whilst that would imply an income deficit, we expect the visitor numbers to increase (with less displacement parking) at such levels as to mitigate the impact. Hence, we expect no reduction in income versus the original BDP income figures.

4.13 The option of an annual parking permit was not popular amongst the majority of respondents:

- Lickey Hills Country Park – 92.5% (1084 of 1172 respondents) were not interested
- Sheldon Country Park – 86.8% (158 of 182 respondents) were not interested
- Sutton Park – 82.3% (3305 of 4018 respondents) were not interested
- Collectively – 4547 of 5372 respondents (84.6%) were not interested in the option of an annual parking permit.

4.14 Of those respondents that suggested a price for an annual parking permit:

- Lickey Hills Country Park – 84.1% (190 of 226 respondents) suggested a price of £52 per annum or lower

- Sheldon Country Park – 81.6% (40 of 49 respondents) suggested a price of £52 per annum or lower
- Sutton Park – 76.1% (691 of 907 respondents) suggested a price of £52 per annum or lower
- Collectively – 921 of 1182 (77.9%) respondents who suggested a price would prefer the annual season ticket price to be £52 per annum or lower.

4.15 It is felt that the rejection of an annual parking permit was reflective of wider feedback opposed to the principle of parking charges. Once charges are implemented, the uptake of annual parking permits is expected to become commonplace. It is proposed the cost of annual parking permit will be £52 per annum, for each of the 3 schemes which is comparable with other core cities.

4.16 There was a repeated call across the 3 consultations for park volunteers to receive free parking permits. It is proposed the Parks' Rangers Service administer free parking permits to registered volunteers for the 3 parks. The administration of parking permits to registered volunteers will be strictly controlled to prevent abuse.

4.17 Feedback from Sutton Park stakeholders indicate a strong preference for a "grace period" of free parking, to accommodate parents dropping children off at various groups within the park. The findings from the informal consultation echo this point with 50 respondents requesting a "grace period". For parity, the "grace period" to apply to the Lickey Hills and Sheldon schemes too. Combined with the reduced parking rates, the 30 minute "grace period" will minimise instances of displacement parking and fundamentally support those visitors who are local. The financial modelling considers a decrease in visitor numbers as a result of the implementation of charging. The BDP presented to Council assumed a 20% reduction in car park usage, given the proposed changes to the tariff structure this assumption has been reduced to 10%. This mitigates the financial impact of reduced charges.

4.18 The consultations asked for respondents' views on the proposed chargeable hours i.e. 9am to 6pm:

- Lickey Hills Country Park – The majority of respondents who provided chargeable hour suggestions (117 of 259 (45.1%)) agreed with the consulted hours
- Sheldon Country Park – The majority of respondents who provided chargeable hour suggestions (27 of 61 (44.2%)) agreed with the consulted hours
- Sutton Park – The majority of respondents who provided chargeable hour suggestions (355 of 1057 (33.5%)) agreed with the consulted hours.

4.19 It is therefore proposed the chargeable hours will be 9am to 6pm for the 3 schemes.

4.20 Whilst parking charges are often controversial, the Council needs to identify means of both maintaining and improving these parks and to support the investment priorities as and when funding allows. Consultees were asked to identify improvement suggestions. These improvement suggestions are detailed below:

- Lickey Hills Country Park – Whilst 134 respondents (11.4%) felt no improvements were needed, a similar number of respondents called for the café to be reopened (11.3%), and improvements made to the carriageway and car parks (12%)
- Sheldon Country Park – 8.8% of respondents felt no improvements were needed, however 14.8% requested more site maintenance/litter picking and 12.1% felt improvements were needed to site security
- Sutton Park – 460 respondents (11.4%) felt no improvements were needed. However, 21.8% requested improvements to the car parks and carriageways and 12.9% felt improvements to facilities (play areas, toilets etc) were required.

4.21 As per the Full Business case, once the capital investment has been repaid i.e. 2028/29 onwards, surplus car park revenue, over and above any agreed savings, will be used for site improvements (including car park and carriageway works).

Proposal and Reasons for Recommendations

4.22 Financial modelling has been completed on the reduced proposed parking rates and indicates the budgeted savings target will be achieved.

4.23 Feedback from the Capital Board is that parking charges reflect the demographics of the local area, a point reflected in the consultation responses for the Sheldon scheme for example. It is recommended the parking charges for Sheldon Country Park are lower than those for the Lickey Hills Country Park and Sutton Park schemes. The proposed parking rates for Sheldon are recommended to be £0.75 per hour (for up to 3 hours), £3.50 all day, with an annual parking permit available at £52.

4.24 Consultation feedback also highlights the significance of free parking permits for registered volunteers to the 3 parks, and this option is recommended as volunteers provide invaluable assistance to the Service.

4.25 It is also recommended a “grace period” of free parking is accommodated into the parking scheme for Sutton Park to accommodate parents dropping children off at the various groups within the park. For parity, the “grace period” to apply to the Lickey Hills and Sheldon schemes too.

Other Options Considered

4.26 To do nothing is not a viable option as a budgeted savings target of £381k per annum is assumed within the MTFP.

4.27 Donation boxes have been considered as an alternative funding model, but their introduction would need to consider existing security/ASB issues for each park, cash handling concerns and linked expenditure i.e. cash collection. In addition, feedback from other local authorities who have introduced donation boxes indicates that after an initial spike in donations upon introduction, income from donation boxes significantly drops as regular visitors feel they have already donated. Donation boxes do not provide a sustainable funding model, therefore.

5 RISK MANAGEMENT

5.1 There is a risk that the usage of the car parks may reduce as a result of the proposed implementation of charging. This is mitigated through an effective enforcement scheme and suitable restrictions on surrounding roads for each of the schemes, as well as the introduction of annual parking permits and differential pricing across the schemes. The projected financial modelling for the 3 schemes considers a possible 10% decrease in people parking. Experience from the Cannon Hill car parking project has shown no obvious decrease in visitor numbers as result of the implementation of parking charges.

5.2 There is a risk that the proposed introduction of parking charges could have a negative impact on the local neighbourhood by displacing cars on to roads around the parks. This will be mitigated by completing a phased approach to traffic restrictions i.e. traffic restrictions on selected roads.

5.3 There is a risk that the income levels anticipated within the business case will not be achieved, which will impact on the benefits realised. This will be mitigated through the introduction of annual parking permits and differential pricing across the schemes. The projected financial modelling for the 3 schemes considers a possible 10% decrease in visitor numbers.

6 CONSULTATION

6.1 This report outlines the findings of the informal consultations for the 3 schemes. Subject to approval of this report, the next stage of consultations will begin. This will be undertaken over a 4 week period and include provision for objections to the proposals to be recorded and included within a formal objections report to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport for approval.

6.2 Traffic restrictions introduced as part of the proposed schemes will be subject to separate statutory consultations, and follow the process set out above i.e. formal objection report to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport for approval.

7 MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

Ward Councillor(s)

7.1 Respective ward members were consulted as part of the informal consultations and their views sought. Councillors Green and Tilsley (Sheldon ward), Councillor Delaney (Rubery & Rednal), Councillors Clancy and Storer (Longbridge & West Heath) and Councillor Pears (Sutton Trinity), Councillor Cornish (Sutton Four Oaks) and Councillors Pocock and Scott (Sutton Vesey) were written to on 14th November notifying them of the informal consultation. The ward members were also invited to the respective online stakeholder engagement session for the schemes, where the proposals were presented and questions fielded.

7.2 Councillor Green attended the Sheldon stakeholder engagement session and shared his concerns regarding displacement parking and offered suggestions for roads to introduce traffic restrictions.

7.3 For the Lickeys scheme, Councillor Delaney attended the Lickey stakeholder engagement session and also lodged his opposition to the proposed parking charges via the consultation email inbox, citing the issues of displacement parking, business rates and reduced park usage if the charging scheme went ahead. Councillor Huxtable (Hall Green South ward) also contacted the consultation email inbox sharing the concerns of the local Bromsgrove councillor (Councillor Dale) around displacement parking and road safety issues.

7.4 For the Sutton scheme, Councillor Pears voiced his concerns over enforcement via the consultation email inbox, invited members of the project team to a public meeting, and also requested further details of the finances behind the scheme (implementation costs and forecasted income), formal consultation dates and process. At the online stakeholder engagement session, Councillor Cornish shared her concerns that volunteers would be expected to pay for parking and requested free volunteer parking permits. Councillor Cornish also raised concerns that the proposed parking charges would negatively impact elderly Sutton residents and made the point that the car park repairs/improvements should be completed prior to the implementation of charging.

7.5 Subject to approval of this report, the respective ward members will be given advance notice of the upcoming consultations and consulted again.

8 IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS

Finance

8.1 The car parking schemes are being delivered under an Invest to Save model. The initial capital investment is recommended to be funded from the corporate contingency capital budget, with a payback period of two years beginning in 2026/27—the first full operational year of the schemes. The general contingency budget of £6m for 2024/25 has been largely unused and thus this project can be funded from this unused budget without impacting on the in-year contingency budget. The prudential borrowing costs of this contingency are already factored into the revenue budgets so their use will not increase MTFP costs. A short payback period will help ensure the capital programme contingency is replenished in a timely manner.

8.2 The capital costs associated with infrastructure installation—i.e pay machines, signage, road layouts, and supporting technology—have been estimated by the Greenspace Development Service. They have been calculated against existing scheduled rates in the Landscape Construction Framework 2024-28 and professional estimates based on current market value for a small number of non-standard items. 10% contingency has been built in per scheme. All schemes can be delivered within projected costs and any potential risks have been included in the Project Risk Register (appendix E). None of the risks require provisions at this stage.

8.3 Following informal consultation, the original business case has been revised to reflect lower parking charges. These reduced charges were better received by consultees and are expected to encourage higher visitor numbers compared to the original model. This adjustment is projected to lessen the risk of displacement parking and support a more consistent income stream.

8.4 Visitor number projections have been developed collaboratively with park managers, using a combination of local observational data and historical usage patterns. These have been further validated with test data from the previous parking charge trial at Sutton Park (Sundays and Bank Holidays up to 2019), and benchmarked against existing paid parking data from Cannon Hill Park.

8.5 The scheme is forecast to generate budgeted income of:

• £381,000 in 2025/26 (partial operational year),

• £345,000 in 2026/27 – 2027/28 (after payment of investment)

• £881,000 annually from 2028 onwards.

These figures incorporate agreed savings targets as per revenue table below. Any income generated over and above the savings targets will be reinvested to improve car parking facilities and enhance wider park infrastructure and amenities.

8.6 Parking enforcement for the Sheldon Country Park and Sutton schemes will be managed by the Highways service, including the administration and any associated income from Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs). Enforcement at Lickey Hills car park will be subject to the agreement with the private parking operator. Notably, PCN income has not been included in the financial business case for any of the sites.

8.7 While some risk remains around visitor behaviour and potential initial resistance, the lower charge structure, revised conservative visitor forecasting, and demonstrated success at comparator sites help mitigate these uncertainties.

8.8 Capital

	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	2028/29 £000
Capital expenditure	60.0	917.6	4.3		
Capital funding	60.0	917.6	4.3		

Revenue

	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	2028/29 £000
Income	0	(450.0)	(1,061.3)	(1,061.3)	(1,061.3)
Operational expenditure	0	69.5	173.7	173.7	173.7
Investment payback	0	0.0	536.7	536.7	0.0
Net revenue	0	(382.7)	(350.9)	(350.9)	(887.6)
Savings target	*0*	*(381.0)*	*(326.0)*	*(321.0)*	*(321.0)*

No increase in fees and charges or inflation changes have been included in the above assumptions. These changes will be dealt with as part of MTFP and will be reflected in the future years' savings target if applicable.

Legal

8.9 The statutory process set out in the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (and supporting regulations) will need to be followed in respect of the schemes to be introduced at Sutton Park and Sheldon Country Park. The legal implications for the Lickey Hills scheme will need to be assessed once the details are known.

Equalities

8.10 Equality Impact Assessments have been completed for Lickey Hills Country Park (EIA00295), Sheldon Country Park (EIA00296) and Sutton Park (EIA00294). The EIAs did not highlight any issues with the proposals.

Procurement

8.11 This requirement for these schemes will be sourced utilising the NHS SBS Sustainable Transport and Infrastructure framework agreement (ref: SBS 10235) in accordance with the framework protocol with a view to entering into a call-off contract with the successful provider for a period of 5 years.

The procurement process will secure a single provider for the supply and maintenance of machines only at the Sheldon and Sutton Park sites and machine supply, installation, maintenance and ongoing management and enforcement of the scheme at the Lickey Hills site given the parks location within the Worcestershire Council boundary. The enforcement of the Sutton and Sheldon schemes will be undertaken by the Council's approved enforcement agent.

People Services

8.12 There are no HR implications with this report.

Climate Change, Nature and Net Zero

8.13 There are no Climate Change, Nature or Net Zero implications with this report.

Corporate Parenting

8.14 There are no Corporate Parenting implications with this report.

9 APPENDICES

9.1 Appendix A – Consultation results

9.2 Appendix B – Consultation questionnaires

9.3 Appendix C – Stakeholders lists for schemes

9.4 Appendix D – Environmental Sustainability Assessment

9.5 Appendix E – Equality Impact Assessments

9.6 Appendix F – Full Business Case

10 BACKGROUND PAPERS

N/A