

MOTIONS TO COUNCIL – MOTION TEMPLATE

Date of Council Meeting	20 th July 2026
Title of Motion	To increase parking charges for heavy, over-sized vehicles in Cheltenham Borough Council-owned car parks.
Proposer	Councillor Jan Foster
Seconder	Councillor Tabi Joy
Recommendation for Council to vote on	Council requests the Leader and Chief Executive to work with officers and members to develop a scheme where heavier domestic vehicles are charged more for parking in Cheltenham, with an exception made for essential trade vehicles used for work that cannot substitute smaller and lighter alternatives. This would be implemented in borough council-owned car parks as we recognise that street parking is the responsibility of the county council. Weight is the best overall proxy for the harms caused by oversized vehicles. ¹
Context for the motion (i.e. why is the motion being submitted – what is the proposer aiming to achieve)	There are a number of persistent problems associated with heavier vehicles. To decarbonise transport, we need to switch to low carbon vehicles and cut car mileage by at least 20%.² Bigger, heavier cars largely nullify the carbon benefits being achieved from the take-up of electric vehicles ³, require more space and are more dangerous to other road users – making walking and cycling less attractive alternatives. To rebalance our road space, we need policies that discourage the purchase and use of larger vehicles, often called SUVs (sports utility vehicles), and that ensure that the owners of oversized cars pay fairly for their greater negative impacts. <i>Carbon emissions and air pollution:</i> • Bigger, heavier cars use more resources to manufacture, emit more carbon and air pollution, and shed more tyre particulates.⁴ Tyre wear pollution causes lung and circulatory problems.⁵ • In the 2010s SUVs were the second-largest contributor to increases in global CO2 emissions, ⁶ and in 2022 their worldwide emissions reached almost 1 billion tonnes.⁷ • Even electric SUVs require larger batteries and have lower efficiencies than smaller models. <i>Danger to other road users:</i> • Injuries inflicted from SUV collisions tend to be more severe because of the greater height

	and width of the front of the vehicle. A 10cm increase in vehicle front bonnet height can increase pedestrian fatality risk by 22-30%, with women, children and older people most at risk.⁹ A meta-study earlier this year showed that adults hit by an SUV were 44% more likely to be killed than if they were hit by a smaller car while the likelihood for children rose to 82%.⁸ • Over-sized vehicles reduce space for cyclists to manoeuvre and reduce visibility generally for other road users and pedestrians.¹⁰ <i>Damage to our roads</i> • Potholes are a perennial problem on Cheltenham's roads. Although sitting water and ice play a part in the formation of potholes, this year the Institution of Civil Engineers published evidence that the cumulative effect of SUVs exacerbates the problem on urban roads, which are not designed to accommodate increased average weight of traffic.¹¹ • A Cheltenham cyclist on Leckhampton Hill in 2022 suffered broken ribs, a collapsed lung and a broken collar bone when she was thrown over her handlebars after hitting a pothole.¹² <i>Reduction of on-street parking places and threat to the safety of multi-storey car parks</i> • Towns and cities are predicted to lose 8.5–14% of their on-street car parking by 2040 if current trends continue. The average new car is getting 1cm wider and 1cm taller every two years.^{13, 14} • The Institute of Structural Engineers has said that older multi-storey car parks are at risk of collapse due to the increase in heavier cars.¹⁵ <i>Evidence of public and expert support for curbing 'car-spreading'</i> • Action is needed locally, nationally and internationally to curb sales of new Sports Utility Vehicles (SUVs) to reduce their potential harms to health and the environment, according to The British Medical Journal.¹⁶ • More than six out of ten motorists (61%) want to see UK cities follow the lead of Paris and raise parking charges for big, heavy SUVs.¹⁷ • A YouGov survey shows that four times as many UK car owners agree (71%) that more SUVs "will make parking more difficult"
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	compared to those who disagree (15%); and a majority of UK car owners (59%) also agree that SUVs are not necessary in towns and cities, compared to just 20% who disagree. ¹⁸ Increased parking charges for oversized vehicles are in place in many European towns and cities, have recently been introduced in Cardiff, and are under consideration in a range of other UK towns/cities.
Motions must be about matters for which the Council has responsibility or which affect Cheltenham – please confirm how this criterion is met	The Council is responsible for many car parks in the town and has commitments to many goals which the motion aligns with: Climate Emergency Action Plan which targets a reduction in car use, and a review of car parking strategy. Section C9 specifically suggests <i>‘economic nudge mechanisms to help disincentivise car use, particularly for shorter journeys’</i>. Air Quality Action Plan which in its summary prioritises <i>‘a behavioural shift within the population to promote more sustainable and less polluting methods of transport’</i>. Cheltenham Town Centre Road Safety Scheme which aims to reduce casualties and improve road safety.
Which Corporate Priority does the Motion support? Key priority 2: Quality homes, safe and strong communities Key priority 3: Reducing carbon, achieving council net zero, creating biodiversity Key priority 4: Reducing inequalities, supporting better outcomes Key priority 5: Taking care of your money	
Does the motion have potential financial implications for the council? If yes, advise what these might be - Parking metering systems would need to be overhauled to identify and appropriately charge heavier vehicles. This could be done through Automatic Number Plate Recognition linking with the DVLA database. This initial cost would be offset through the increased charges, and over time there is a strong likelihood of other associated costs being alleviated, including health impacts related to air quality and traffic collision injuries, as well as highway maintenance. - It would be important to allocate resources towards measuring the progress of the programme in order to identify both successes and limitations of the scheme, for full transparency.	
Does the motion have potential legal or constitutional implications for the council? If yes, advise what these might be The council would have to act within Road Traffic and Parking Regulations and take care that any profits were not used inappropriately.	

Are there any Environmental or Climate Change Implications that the Council should be aware of? If yes, advise what these might be

There are positive implications in that smaller petrol and diesel vehicles contribute less greenhouse gases and shed fewer particulates from their tyres. Smaller electric cars require smaller batteries which use a smaller amount of minerals, having a knock-on effect on environmental degradation and child labour at source.

Are there any equalities impacts associated with the motion? If yes, an equalities impact assessment will be required.

Some mobility aid users require larger mobility equipment, but special permits could easily be issued where this required a larger vehicle.

Larger vehicles exacerbate social inequality. The risk and damage from heavy vehicles is transferred from those who can afford them to those who are less able to. In collisions, the occupants of the smaller car are more likely to be injured. The impact of emissions is felt more keenly in poorer neighbourhoods and the damage they do to roads is subsidised by other road users less able to pay.

Does the motion require further background information to enable the Council to make a decision? If yes, advise what might be required

Council might be interested in the following references.

- ¹ <https://www.transportforqualityoflife.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/SUV-Toolkit-for-Cities-FINAL-v1.0.pdf>
- ² <https://transportforqualityoflife.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/211214-the-last-chance-saloon-to-cut-car-mileage.pdf>
- ³ <https://www.iea.org/commentaries/suvs-are-setting-new-sales-records-each-year-and-so-are-their-emissions>
- ⁴ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2590162121000216>
- ⁵ <https://www.emissionsanalytics.com/news/pollution-tyre-wear-worse-exhaust-emissions>
- ⁶ <https://www.iea.org/commentaries/growing-preference-for-suvs-challenges-emissions-reductions-in-passenger-car-market>
- ⁷ <https://www.iea.org/commentaries/as-their-sales-continue-to-rise-suvs-global-co2-emissions-are-nearing-1-billion-tonnes>
- ⁸ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/40300846/>
- ⁹ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S2212012224000017>
- ¹⁰ <https://injuryprevention.bmj.com/content/32/1/16>
- ¹¹ <https://www.ice.org.uk/news-views-insights/inside-infrastructure/potholes-what-causes-them-and-how-to-fix-them>
- ¹² <https://www.gloucestershirelive.co.uk/news/cheltenham-news/gloucestershire-roads-branded-disgrace-cyclist-7552982>
- ¹³ https://uploads.transportenvironment.org/production/files/2024_01_Width_limit_for_light_duty_vehicles_final_2024-04-29-155013_zacs.pdf
- ¹⁴ <https://www.walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk/media/12439/why-are-cars-getting-bigger-a-deep-dive-into-how-uk-regulations-are-enabling-car-size-growth.pdf>
- ¹⁵ <https://www.rac.co.uk/drive/news/motoring-news/calls-for-changes-to-uk-car-parks-to-deal-with-weight-of-modern-cars/>
- ¹⁶ <https://bmjgroup.com/curb-sales-of-suvs-to-reduce-harms-to-health-and-the-environment-say-experts/>
- ¹⁷ <https://startlinemotorfinance.com/news/six-of-ten-suv-parking-charges-tripled/>
- ¹⁸ <https://cleancitiescampaign.org/rise-of-carspreading-uk/>

OFFICER IMPLICATIONS

Officer Name	Mark Lawson/ Jayne Gilpin
Officer Title	Climate & Decarbonisation Manager/Head of Revenues and Benefits
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Has the Council or is the Council doing any work at the current time in relation to this motion or any associated issues? If yes, please add details	
Yes, CBC's Climate Emergency Action Plan includes measures intended to support modal shift towards walking, cycling, greater use of public transport and seeks to reduce transport related emissions. The council has undertaken work relating to parking strategy, air quality and sustainable transport. Transport emissions within Cheltenham are predominantly outside the council's operational carbon footprint and are influenced by wider transport, planning and highway decisions, many of which fall within GCC's responsibilities.	
Does the motion support any of the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan?	
Potentially yes. The motion aligns most closely with: • Key priority 2 – Quality homes, safe and strong communities • Key priority 3 – Reducing carbon, achieving council net zero, creating biodiversity • Key priority 4 – Reducing inequalities, supporting better outcomes • Key priority 5 – Taking care of your money- it would take some considerable time for the additional fees charged to exceed the implementation and higher on-going costs Alignment is indirect and would depend on the final scheme design and evidence of behavioural impact.	
Does the motion have potential financial implications for the Council? If yes, advise what these might be and confirm whether budget is available	
Potential financial implications have not been assessed from a climate and decarbonisation perspective. Implementation costs, revenue impacts, enforcement requirements and system changes would require assessment by the relevant service areas. From a parking perspective -there are potential financial implications-the cost of installing equipment to weigh vehicles as they enter our car parks would be substantial and this option would not be suitable or possible in all car parks Charging higher parking charges based on vehicle weight would need to rely on the customer knowing their vehicle weight and paying the appropriate fee. Associated costs would be: System costs • Initial inquiries with our Pay and Display machine provider suggest that existing machines would need to be replaced. Currently there are 32 machines across 14 pay and display car parks. The cost of a new pay and display machine is	

approximately £5,000.00, plus installation costs, making the total cost in the region of £200,000.

- Our cashless parking provider (payment by phone or app) could provide a solution to allow for different fees based on vehicle weight. This would involve bespoke work and are unable to give an estimate of cost without more specific details.
- Additional software would be needed for our back-office system and hand-held devices, used by enforcement officers, to allow vehicle weight to be checked and penalty charge notices to be issued. Again, it has not been possible to obtain an estimate without more specific details. Annual license fees would also increase to reflect the additional software

Other costs include

- Amending the Parking Orders which incurs consultation and publishing costs
- Replacing all signage in 14 pay and display car parks
- Advertising costs for media campaign to publicise the changes
- Staff training of any new systems

Staffing costs

- Additional enforcement officer resource due to the increased time to patrol each car park and check vehicle weights
- Additional administration officer resource to deal with additional queries, challenges and complaints

Other potential financial implications

Additional charges may encourage customers to use on street or private parking provision, resulting in a drop in parking income.

The initiative is not suitable for Regent Arcade multi storey car park due to the pay on foot barrier system in operation

Does the motion have potential legal or constitutional implications for the Council? If yes, advise what these might be

Issues that may benefit from further consideration could include:

- Proportionality and justification of different charging structures
- Treatment of blue badge holders and disabled vehicle users (who may require larger vehicles for accessibility)
- Availability of data and accuracy in determining vehicle weight categories

Penalty charge notices could be successfully challenged. It is not known what stance the Adjudicator will take regarding the customer being expected to know the weight of their vehicle.

Also, any exemption for trade vehicles would need to be very clear and specific to avoid abuse.

Are there any Environmental or Climate Change Implications that the Council should be aware of? If yes, advise what these might be

Overall, the environmental and climate implications are potentially positive but remain uncertain. Potential benefits could include supporting the wider transition to lower-carbon

transport in the borough through tiered parking charges, reducing material use and embodied emissions associated with larger vehicles, and contributing indirectly to improved air quality through lower particulate emissions.

However, several important limitations of the motion as currently worded should be noted:

- The carbon impact has not been modelled. Further assessment would be required to understand likely behavioural change and any unintended consequences. For example, a weight-based tariff could apply to some battery electric vehicles, which are often heavier than equivalent petrol or diesel vehicles, potentially weakening incentives to switch to lower-emission vehicles.
- Behavioural responses are uncertain.
- Transport emissions are predominantly wide-area emissions rather than council operational emissions.
- Any emissions reduction achieved would depend on drivers changing vehicle choice, travel behaviour or mode of transport.
- In terms of parking, enforcement of the first penalty charge notice (PCN) issued to a customer may not be possible. For the first offence the adjudicator is very likely to take the view that it is not reasonable to expect the average customer to know the weight of their vehicle. This is regardless of signage etc.
- Also, any exemption for trade vehicles would need to be very clear and specific to avoid abuse.

Should an equality impact assessment be completed before the deliberation of this motion?

Yes, a differential parking charge based on vehicle weight or size could have unequal impacts that would benefit from assessment. Not all heavier vehicles are SUVs or similar, and an equality impact assessment would identify potential impacts on:

- Older or Disabled residents/visitors requiring larger adapted vehicles
- People with limited mobility
- Families with specific accessibility requirements
- Residents or visitors with caring, medical or accessibility needs
- Tradespeople who need larger vehicles for work
- Rural residents with limited travel alternatives
- Women and other groups for whom personal safety may affect transport choice
- Lower income households owning older, heavier vehicles.

Does the motion require further background information to be carried out to enable the Council to make a decision? If so, advise what might be required

Yes, the following information, if available, could be beneficial to strengthen decision making:

- Benchmarking of schemes introduced elsewhere
- Estimated carbon reductions vs alternative charging scenarios
- Assessment of potential unintended consequences, including displacement to on-street parking.

- Consideration of whether vehicle weight, vehicle dimensions, emissions rating or another metric would be beneficial to take into account in designing the cost structure.
- Availability of data

END