

Proposed new parking policy

FAQs for UNISON members

The Chief Executive of West Sussex County Council (WSCC) has issued a draft parking policy for consultation over the period Wednesday 12th – Wednesday 26th July. This Frequently Asked Questions document attempts to answer questions you may have about what is proposed, and how this policy position was arrived at by WSCC.

These FAQs are necessarily a long document but are essential reading.

UNISON is encouraging its members – and non-members on this occasion – to submit feedback to UNISON so we may make a formal, collective response to Nathan Elvery on 26th July.

Because we anticipate a large volume of returns, please use the online survey to submit your comments.

Thank you

The UNISON West Sussex Team

1. Was UNISON involved in establishing this policy?

UNISON has been involved in parking negotiations for many years and was instrumental in gaining the £60,000 investment in Piries Place parking places in Horsham. But we know the current system is still not working at the Horsham pinch point. This is in part due to lack of enforcement by WSCC of what should have been an operational system. Outside of Horsham the issues are not of the same severity and in many WSCC sites there are no problems. UNISON does not believe that charging staff is a fair or equitable way forward.

Nathan Elvery responded to continuing staff concerns about parking (largely though not exclusively at Horsham) by establishing a 'Parking Forum' which included staff volunteers who had expressed an interest on 'The Big Conversation' forum. UNISON was to be excluded from this but we argued strongly for a place on the forum, which was agreed.

The remit of this Parking Forum then expanded to include staff travel in its entirety. These are your terms and conditions: what you are paid and how you are paid for travelling on behalf of WSCC. This meant that UNISON had to be more involved because there is a requirement on the council to negotiate with us on changes to terms and conditions. Strictly speaking, parking is not a term and condition in the same way.

Our understanding is that the Staff Parking and Travel Forum did not agree that charging staff to park was the best way forward. The Staff Parking and Travel

Forum was subsequently disbanded by the council, and its members have received an email to confirm that. The Staff Parking and Travel Forum did not see the final proposed parking policy before it was issued.

The Culture Board did see the parking policy before it was issued. It is a matter of regret and concern that the Culture Board did not recognise that the proposed policy was not fair and equitable, nor ready for the purpose for consultation given its lack of clarity on key matters.

UNISON has serious concerns about this way of developing policy, as it has the potential to bypass the trade union. Staff volunteers who play this role are not representative of staff in the way that elected UNISON reps are; nor are they accountable; nor are they trained for the purpose; nor do they have access to the wider support available in the UK's largest trade union of 1.3million members.

UNISON would normally have seen draft proposals in advance. This has not happened this time. Parking has at a late stage been 'split off' from changes to Staff Travel and our understanding from feedback from members who attended the Chief Executive's staff briefings is that he has written the policy himself. We saw the policy at the same time as you. We knew what was likely to be proposed, and lobbied for substantial amendment to that (see 2, below). But we did not see the final proposals before they were issued, and they appear to take little account of our concerns that have been raised.

2. What principles did UNISON put forward to the Council?

UNISON's position has been communicated verbally to senior county management in meetings and in writing. It is in summary, that:

- Available places after priority user needs have been met should be allocated by lot. There should not be a charge for these places. Charging will impact on recruitment and retention, and is effectively a pay cut for some staff. It will impact on the lowest-paid staff disproportionately and so offends principles of equity. Not enough work has been done on the potential impact on staff behaviours and choices if charging is introduced (particularly the lowest-paid staff).
- The investment in additional Piries Place spaces in Horsham should continue.
- The scheme needs to be properly policed and managed (the absence of this was a significant weakness of the previous scheme).
- The continuation of free parking for councillors and visitors offends principles of equity and will concern staff.

- Charging in all hubs will lead to a significant impact on residents around some hubs in particular, which will impact on WSCC reputation, staff safety and incidents of vandalism.
- Staff are able to claim for parking if not at their work base, and the policy should state this.

3. What does UNISON think of the policy as it has been released?

- A. What has been set out has insufficient detail. It is not possible to know exactly what is planned. The difference between Priority 1 and Priority 2 users is unclear.
- B. The policy refers to staff for whom it is "essential to drive to fulfil your role and responsibility to our customers". This is not helpful language to use as it is confusing. WSCC has no 'essential' car users since it abolished the essential car user allowance (which gave staff a cash lump sum as well as mileage expenses). WSCC only has 'casual' car users. If you do not wish to use your own private vehicle for county business you are not obliged to. You can use a pool car or public transport. The policy does not state this. It is not accurate to say in most cases that "loss of driving licence will result in the inability to fulfil your role and responsibilities". Staff may use public transport as they are not essential car users. It would be potentially discriminatory to staff who were not medically permitted to drive.
- C. It is not clear at this stage who therefore is likely to be in a Priority 1 role category or how it will be determined.
- D. It is not clear who would be in the Priority 2 role category at this stage due to the unclear description offered.
- E. It is not clear how quickly someone whose job role changed could be re-designated into a different category.
- F. There is no information on when staff will be told of their category designation, nor of the appeal process they might use to challenge that designation if they feel they have to.
- G. The anticipated start date is unclear, as is the mechanism for the council to receive payment.
- H. It is unclear if staff visiting council buildings which are not their main workplace will be charged (for all Priority categories).
- I. There is no mention made of pro-rata charges for part-time staff.

- J. The policy exempts Councillors from charging, which does not feel fair as Councillors can be reimbursed for all their parking charges they incur in the course of their duties. It will imply to some staff that they are less important than councillors.
- K. If the parking charges are extended to all council sites (and not just the larger hubs at Worthing, Horsham, Chichester, Bognor and Crawley) this will have an even greater impact on staff than anticipated. The council controls or manages hundreds of sites, and so all staff will be affected and charging would likely be a substantial revenue raiser for the council.
- L. The charge of £300 would mean a substantial pay cut for staff who are already struggling to make ends meet in many cases.
- M. It is not clear that Priority 1a staff (disabled staff) would be prioritised for spaces within their main workplace location. The policy says that staff may be assigned to spaces "close to" their main workplace location if there are insufficient spaces. This is not acceptable for disabled staff.
- N. Charging staff who are temporarily disabled is not appropriate and should be removed.
- O. This policy would create problems in some county buildings where there are none. At Durban House some staff must be at work for 8.00am when there are insufficient public transport options available. This will prompt some staff to take up alternative positions with other local employers, or to park in residential areas which will bring its own problems for local residents and staff.
- P. It is unclear if there will be transitional arrangements so as to phase in any cost.
- Q. It is unclear if current permit holders in Chichester and Horsham will be "put back into the pot", and so be uncertain whether or not they will continue to qualify for a permit after the policy is introduced.
- R. It is unclear if there will be transitional arrangements for staff who lose their current car park permits.
- S. It is unclear how the policy will impact on car-sharers, or if there will be a reduction in cost or other incentive to car sharers.
- T. It is unclear if £300 a year will guarantee staff that a parking place will be available, given the substantial cost.

- U. It is unclear how the income generated will be used.
- V. It is unclear if some staff who are unable to work 'on campus' under the new arrangements, but work late and then need to walk to offsite car parks some distance away at night, will have their health and safety protected.
- W. It is unclear what will happen to the charge if staff are on sickness absence leave (including long-term sickness absence) or on annual leave.

4. Should we be concerned about staff travel?

Yes. Staff travel is part of your terms and conditions. It is about how much you are paid for travelling when on county business and what methodology is used to calculate your claims.

If the mileage rate is reduced and the way of calculating mileage is changed detrimentally, staff could lose out on expenses they have previously been reimbursed for. This can make a huge difference when the cost of living is high and anticipated to get higher.

UNISON's position is that staff should not be asked to contribute to the budget shortfall of the county council. You have already lost around 20% of your real pay since 2010 due to pay freezes or sub-inflation rises.

5. What does UNISON think of the WSCC survey?

We would encourage members to complete the council's survey.

We would also encourage UNISON members to complete the UNISON survey so we can submit a collective response on your behalf.

We have read the draft policy and we currently think:

1. The proposals are NOT easy to understand. What has been set out is incomplete so it is not possible to know exactly what is planned.
2. The proposals are NOT fair and equitable. They target those who have no significant need to travel for their work, and make them pay a high fee to park. Often (but not always) staff with static jobs, like administrators, are lower-paid: so the proposals impact on them disproportionately.
3. The proposals are NOT implementable. As it stands this is an unclear policy, which is unfair and inequitable.
4. We encourage members to submit detailed feedback to both the council (through its survey), and UNISON (through our survey – so we can

compile a collective response). Your views are essential to inform the UNISON position and the Council position. Please take the opportunity.

6. This is going to hit my take-home pay hard. What can I do?

Take part in both surveys during the consultation.

Encourage your colleagues to join UNISON.

Support the UNISON NJC pay claim of 5% for 2018/19:

<http://unisonwestsussex.org.uk/news/njc-pay-claim-18-19/>

Some groups of staff have localised pay bargaining, such as staff in the Capita Contact Centre. UNISON has already increased its current cost of living pay claim by a £300 lump sum to account for this new charge.

Join UNISON and support these pay claims.

We will keep you informed as and when the position becomes clearer during the consultation period. We will also contact you after the consultation when we know what the definitive position of the council is. If this is not favourable, we will ask you what further response UNISON should make.

Thank you. Please now fill in the UNISON survey and WSCC survey.