

<b>DECISION-MAKER:</b>	CABINET
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	ITCHEN BRIDGE TOLL INCREASE AND REMOVAL OF ELECTRIC VEHICLE CONCESSION
<b>DATE OF DECISION:</b>	21 FEBRUARY 2023
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>COUNCILLOR KEOGH CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT AND DISTRICT REGENERATION</b>

<b><u>CONTACT DETAILS</u></b>			
<b>Executive Director</b>	<b>Title</b>	Executive Director for Growth	
	<b>Name:</b>	Adam Wilkinson	Tel: 023 8254 5853
	<b>E-mail</b>	<a href="mailto:adam.wilkinson@southampton.gov.uk">adam.wilkinson@southampton.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Author:</b>	<b>Title</b>	Service Manager for Parking and Itchen Bridge	
	<b>Name:</b>	Richard Alderson	Tel: 023 8083 2725
	<b>E-mail</b>	<a href="mailto:richard.alderson@southampton.gov.uk">richard.alderson@southampton.gov.uk</a>	

<b>STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY</b>	
N/A	
<b>BRIEF SUMMARY</b>	
<p>The Council has proposed a) an increase in the Itchen Bridge Toll for Class 2 vehicles from £0.80 to £1.00 (peak) and from £0.70 to £0.80 (off peak) and b) to remove the Electric Vehicle concession. This purpose of the proposals is to ensure that the toll continues to be effective at managing vehicle crossings following increases in inflation. The Council has not proposed increasing the discounted toll rate that is only available to Southampton residents via use of a Smart Cities Card. This is to be maintained at £0.40 during peak periods and £0.30 in off peak periods and reflects the local nature of the traffic the concession is designed to support. The Council has carried out a consultation on the proposals. 169 responses were received, of which 137 were registered as objections to the proposals. Officers do not consider that any overriding reasons were submitted for not implementing the changes.</p>	
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS:</b>	
	(i) To implement the proposed Itchen Bridge toll increase for Class 2 vehicles from £0.80 to £1.00 during peak periods and £0.70 to £0.80 during off peak periods.
	(ii) To remove the Electric Vehicle concession.
<b>REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	
1.	To ensure that the toll prompts drivers to make a meaningful decision about using the Itchen Bridge crossing following increases in inflation, so as to manage congestion along the A3025 and to further safeguard the financial position and future prospects of the bridge including maintenance and enhancements.

2.	To ensure that crossings by Electric Vehicles are now managed in the same way as other traffic, so as to manage congestion along the A3025 and to further safeguard the financial position and future prospects of the bridge.
<b>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED</b>	
3.	Not increasing the Toll could see increased use of the bridge to the detriment of traffic flow along the A3025.
4.	Not removing the electric vehicle concession which could see use of the bridge increase to the detriment of traffic flow along the A3025 and decreased revenue for future bridge maintenance as more drivers move across to electric vehicles.
<b>DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)</b>	
5.	<p>The Itchen Bridge first opened in June 1977 and since that date, a toll has been maintained on the crossing. The reasons for maintaining the toll as outlined in Section 22 of the Hampshire Act 1983 (see Appendix 1) are to secure the financial and future prospects of the bridge and the need to control the composition and flow of traffic over the bridge so as to avoid causing traffic congestion in areas adjacent to the bridge and so as to preserve the character and amenities of those areas.</p> <p>It is unusual for a local authority to have sole financial responsibility for a bridge of this size and structure. The national government has not provided funding for the construction, maintenance or upkeep. As it does not serve a key strategic transport route, it is unlikely that the national government would agree to underwrite the bridge as it has done for the Severn River crossing.</p> <p>The bridge provides a crossing of the River Itchen for the A3025 (or Portsmouth Road). Of the six main radial routes into Southampton City Centre, the A3025 is the only one where both of the following factors apply;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The route has a direct link to a motorway route and,</li> <li>b) The route is constrained by being single carriageway along it's entire length.</li> </ul> <p>There is no scope to widen the A3025 in any meaningful way, due to the number of properties that directly abut the public highway along it's route.</p> <p>For these reasons, it would be challenging for the Council to remove the toll or maintain it at a set level for sustained periods of time.</p>
6.	<p>Due to the recent increases in inflation, the Council has therefore determined to propose an increase in the toll for Class 2 vehicles from £0.80 to £1.00 during peak periods and from £0.70 to £0.80 during off peak periods, to ensure that the toll continues to prompt drivers to make a meaningful decision about using that route. The toll was last increased for Class 2 vehicles in 2019 from a rate of £0.60 (peak) and £0.50 (off peak).</p> <p>The proposed toll increase is broadly in line with inflation since 2019, with items/services costing £0.80 in that year increasing to £0.97 in 2023 and items/services costing £0.70 increasing to £0.85.</p>

	<p>The Council has not proposed increasing the discounted toll rate that is only available to Southampton residents via use of a Smart Cities Card. This is to be maintained at £0.40 during peak periods and £0.30 in off peak periods and reflects the local nature of the traffic the concession is designed to support.</p> <p>It is recommended that the Toll Increase is implemented on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023.</p>
7.	<p>The Council has also determined to propose removing the Electric Vehicle concession which enables electric vehicles to make the crossing without charge. The Council introduced concessions for electric vehicles crossing the Toll Bridge in 2018 for the purpose of promoting early uptake of electric vehicle use as part of an overall package to improve air quality within the boundary of Southampton. The concession enables drivers of electric vehicles to cross the Itchen Bridge for free, provided that the user lives within the boundary of Southampton or the Regional Concession Zone (formed of the following Local Authority boundaries - New Forest, Test Valley, Eastleigh, Winchester, Fareham, Gosport, Havant and Portsmouth) and that the vehicle was registered/leased to the property in question. Businesses in the Local Concession Zone (formed of the Woolston Ward) are also permitted to apply for an electric vehicle concession provided that the vehicle is again registered to a property within that zone.</p> <p>The Electric Vehicle concession was not intended to be in place indefinitely. This has been highlighted on the Council's website and application forms since the concession was introduced. In February 2022, there were 153 electric vehicle concessions in circulation. This has now increased to 210. Removing the concession at this stage will ensure that crossings made by electric vehicles are managed in the same way as other vehicles and encourage drivers to make a meaningful decision about using that route.</p> <p>It is recommended that the option to apply for an electric vehicle is removed on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023. It is recommended that existing Electric Vehicle concessions which are valid for one year be allowed to expire at the 12 month date given when the application was made. This would honour the policy which may have prompted some drivers to invest in an electric vehicle within the last 12 months, for a reasonable period.</p>
8.	<p>These proposals were advertised on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2022.</p> <p>During the consultation period, the Council received a total of 169 responses. 137 of these were registered as an objection to the proposals. 19 were registered as being as in support of the proposals. 13 were registered as comments.</p> <p>A summary of the objections and the officer response is attached as Appendix 2. Officers are of the view that there were no objections that constituted an overriding consideration to the proposals.</p>

9.	The primary purpose of increasing the toll is to ensure that it continues to prompt drivers to make a meaningful decision about using the A3025 route and manage congestion and impact on amenity on the approaches to the bridge. A toll increase will nonetheless have an impact on the revenue generated by the toll and the projected budget impact is outlined in resource implications.
<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>	
<b><u>Capital/Revenue</u></b>	
10.	Toll revenue arising from the proposed Toll Increases is projected to generate an additional £0.4M per annum which will commence in 2023/24 financial year.
11.	Toll revenue arising from the removal of the Electric Vehicle concession is projected to generate £0.014M per annum. Because the existing EV concessions would be allowed to expire within the timeframe from the original customer application, the amount expected for 2023/24 is £0.01M.
12.	<p>Surplus revenue generated by the toll contributes to maintenance of the bridge, the highway and the maintenance of the toll plaza equipment. While the Council may not have direct cause to use the surplus for maintenance in any given year, there are associated costs (Highways contract, Street lighting contract) that are drawn from the general fund.</p> <p>The Council has scheduled works in 2024/25 costing £4.5M to replace drainage, reconstruct the footways, provide new surfacing across the whole bridge and to install safety measures. Some of this will create a borrowing cost in the general fund for capital financing to which the revenue from the Itchen Bridge will contribute funding.</p>
<b><u>Property/Other</u></b>	
13.	N/A
<b>LEGAL IMPLICATIONS</b>	
<b><u>Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:</u></b>	
14.	The statutory powers to manage the Itchen Bridge crossing by means of Toll payment are set out in Section 22 of the Hampshire Act 1983.
<b><u>Other Legal Implications:</u></b>	
15.	In reaching a decision on increasing toll charges, or removing concessions the Council has had regard to its legal duties under the Equalities Act 2010 and Crime & Disorder Act 1998 together with other relevant pervasive legislation. No adverse equality impact has been identified that cannot be addressed through existing mitigation measures relating to tolls and class of vehicle usage already in effect for the bridge.
<b>RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS</b>	
16.	The proposals carry a low risk of Financial impact as they will likely result in a revenue increase. The proposals carry a low impact to Service Delivery as

	there is no direct impact to other Council projects. While the increase in revenue will assist in financing works to the bridge in 2024/25, the finance for this project will come from borrowing. The proposals carry a moderate impact to Reputation given local interest in the Itchen Bridge Toll. However, the overall response to the consultation was not significant relative to the population of Southampton, and Southampton residents will continue to benefit from a reduced toll via the Smart Cities Card.
<b>POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS</b>	
17.	The proposals are in accordance with the Southampton City Council's Local Transport Plan – Connected Southampton Transport Strategy 2040, specifically the Sustainable Growth section of the plan, which looks to reduce growth in the amount of traffic coming into Southampton and ensuring the transport asset is in a good condition and can accommodate the demands placed upon it.
18.	The proposals are also in accordance with the Southampton City Strategy 2015-2025 and the Southampton Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Policy 2019-2021

<b>KEY DECISION?</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<u><b>SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION</b></u>	
<b>Appendices</b>	
1.	Section 22 of the Hampshire Act 1983
2.	Summary of Consultation Feedback and Officer Response
3.	Delegated Decision Notice
4.	ESIA
5.	Public Notice

#### **Documents In Members' Rooms**

1.	
2.	

#### **Equality Impact Assessment**

<b>Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA) to be carried out.</b>	<b>Yes</b>
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#### **Data Protection Impact Assessment**

<b>Do the implications/subject of the report require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) to be carried out.</b>	<b>No</b>
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#### **Other Background Documents**

**Other Background documents available for inspection at:**

<b>Title of Background Paper(s)</b>	<b>Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules /</b>
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		Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)
1.		
2.		