

DECISION-MAKER:	CABINET		
SUBJECT:	THE CITY OF SOUTHAMPTON (ITCHEN BRIDGE TOLLS) ORDER 2012		
DATE OF DECISION:	29 JANUARY 2013		
REPORT OF:	CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT		
<u>CONTACT DETAILS</u>			
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STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY			
Not applicable			

BRIEF SUMMARY

Cabinet is asked to consider the objections to The City of Southampton (Itchen Bridge Tolls) Order 2012 and to determine whether or not to proceed with the proposals as set out in Appendix 2. The requirement to review and update the Tolls Order follows the introduction of the new scheme previously approved by Cabinet allowing automation of the bridge tolls and the use of the Southampton Smartcard to pay for the tolls. The Order and some of the definitions have been altered. Whilst there is delegated authority for these matters to be decided by officers, it has been deemed appropriate for the issues to be considered by Cabinet.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (i) To consider the objections to 'The City of Southampton (Itchen Bridge Tolls) Order 2012' and determine whether or not to approve the Order as set out in Appendix 2.

REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To fulfil the Council's obligation to consult upon proposals and consider objections prior to any decision to amend the Tolls Order.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

2. The original business case for changes to the collection of tolls included options for doing nothing, removing the toll and allowing free passage when volumes are low. As none of these options would address the need to significantly reduce operating costs, control traffic flows and provide bridge users with more modern payment options they have been rejected.

DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)

3. Cabinet approved on the 20 December 2010 the implementation of an automated toll collection service for Itchen Bridge. This approval included the delegation of authority to take any necessary action and make changes to the relevant Toll Orders made under the Hampshire Act 1983 (including determination of objections following advertisement of proposed changes).

4. Subsequently, the contract for implementing the new system has been let and these works are well advanced with the system undergoing final testing. The new toll collection arrangements change the vehicle categorisation from gross vehicle weight to vehicle height above the front axle. This system of measurement is common to other toll collection arrangements in the UK. In addition, a Smartcities card option is being introduced as an additional form of payment for crossings and as a replacement for the current token system which allows access to concessions.
5. A consequence of these new arrangements is the requirement to consult on the corresponding changes to the Toll Order. An advertisement was published on Monday 29 October 2012 and by the end of the 28 day consultation period a total of four objections had been received which have been set out in full in Appendix 1.
6. In summary, the objections received following the advertisement of the revised Toll Order relate to the following matters:-
 - Wording of the Toll Order in relation to 'Disabled Drivers'.
 - Uncertainty over the arrangements for drivers with upper arm impairments/arm amputees.
 - Increased queues, pollution and potential adverse impact upon emergency vehicles.
 - Decreased service.
 - No decrease in toll fees to reflect staff reductions.
 - No change provided.
 - Limiting payment options.
 - Continued charging of a peak rate.
 - Discrimination between people living inside and outside the catchment area.
7. Many of these objections do not relate directly to the proposed changes to the Toll Order and are objections to a combination of the principle of automating the toll collections and the delays to traffic flows which have occurred during the implementation period. It is acknowledged that whilst there have been issues relating to the introduction of the new technology, once the technical refinements have been implemented and the public become familiar with the new system it is anticipated that transaction times will be no greater than current manual collection levels.

The first of these objections relates directly to the proposed Toll Order and is being addressed with revised wording, and the second objection has been addressed through confirmation of the management arrangements for the new system.

Although the remaining objections do not relate directly to the changes to the Toll Order, responses have been set out below and in greater detail in Appendix 1.
8. The new system has been designed to deliver transactions that are no longer than the current average levels so once the public become used to the new arrangements there should be no significant impacts upon journey times.

In terms of convenience the introduction of the Smartcities card provides a cash free form of payment whereby the smartcard can be applied for and topped up on line. Where drivers do not have access to online facilities, applications and payments can be made at various Council offices. The Smartcities card will be used by residents to access concessions and replace the less efficient token system. For non residents the Smartcities card provides a convenient form of payment. It is anticipated that the vast majority of drivers will choose to use this form of payment.

9. The provision for issuing change when coins are used had been considered as part of the overall business case for the project, however, the additional equipment costs, maintenance costs and delays to traffic flows made this option unviable. The Smartcities card promotes the convenience of cash free payments which is already being adopted by many organisations in a wide variety of applications. Advance road signing will be put in place informing drivers that no change will be provided and drivers who do not have the exact change will be able to overpay if they choose to on the understanding that no change will be provided.
10. A peak rate charge is not applied to reflect the need for higher staffing levels but is levied as part of the measures to regulate traffic flows as set out in the Hampshire Act. This Act sets out the principle that the bridge was constructed for the benefit of the local community and not as a commuter route. The higher rate is applied to reduce traffic flows through the area at peak times for the convenience of the local community.
11. The reference to discrimination between residents living inside or outside the catchment area relates to the provision of concessions for residents in the City. The Council has chosen to provide a local concession as permitted under the Hampshire Act as it reinforces the principle that the bridge had been constructed as infrastructure for local benefit. As the provision of a local concession is specifically provided by statute and does not amount to unlawful discrimination.
12. In addition to the formal objections set out above, a number of representations have been received from representatives of the taxi trade, particularly in relation to those who operate vehicles adapted for disabled use which may attract a higher toll under the proposed Order. Taking into account the need to ensure that disabled users are not disadvantaged in accessing the bridge and the valuable public transport service provided by taxis to the communities local to the bridge, it has been agreed to amend the proposed Order to include licensed taxis within the class of commercial vehicles which may apply for a concessionary toll (to ensure that no taxi, regardless of size, pays more than the maximum peak fare for a Class 2 vehicle).

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Capital/Revenue

13. There are no direct capital implications and in revenue terms the changes to the toll category have been set to be cost neutral. Due to the introduction of Smartcities cards as a payment option and the easier access this may provide for residents to concessions when compared to tokens, it is possible that revenue levels could be affected. As an example a 50% increase in the

number of crossings receiving a concession would result in a reduction in income to the order of £100,000 over 12 months. There are several other factors that could result in increases or decreases in the revenue levels and the overall situation will be kept under review.

Property/Other

14. There are no property implications.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:

15. The operation of the Itchen Bridge is subject to the provisions of the Hampshire Act 1983. Section 18 of that Act empowers the Council to maintain, alter and renew the bridge, section 19 permits the construction of temporary and permanent subsidiary works, s20 permits the provision of toll collection facilities (including updating or changing those facilities as necessary). Section 22 permits the Council to charge and collect tolls for any class of traffic (defined in accordance with the prevailing Traffic Acts) excluding pedestrians and to agree concessionary tolls for certain specified purposes and section 27 empowers the Council to determine how and when tolls are to be paid. This provision is discretionary and it is therefore possible for the Council to introduce such methods of collection as it sees fit, including cash, prepaid token, electronic payments, invoicing after travel etc. The current Tolls Order (which sets the level of tolls charged under section 22 and the methods of payment provided for under section 27 of the Act) is being updated to reflect new technologies, methods of permitted payment to be introduced upon automation and any permitted changes to classes of vehicle necessary to give effect to automation. Such changes will require notice to be given to the public and consideration of any objections before any changes to the Toll Order may be introduced.

Other Legal Implications:

16. In making changes to the tolls on the bridge, the Council has had regard to its duties under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equalities Act 2010.

POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS

17. The proposed Tolls Order is consistent with and not contrary to the Council's Local Transport Plan.

KEY DECISION? Yes

WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	All
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SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices

1.	Toll Order Objections and Officer Responses
2.	The City of Southampton (Itchen Bridge Tolls) Order 2012

Documents In Members' Rooms

1.	None
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Equality Impact Assessment

Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) to be carried out.	No
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Other Background Documents

Equality Impact Assessment and Other Background documents available for inspection at:

Title of Background Paper(s)

Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)

1.	None	
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