

Leicester City Council Workplace Parking Levy - Leicester UCU survey results and response to consultation

Background

Leicester City Council are currently consulting over the introduction of a Workplace Parking Levy.

Further details are available here:

<https://www.leicester.gov.uk/media/ot0mgnff/leicester-workplace-parking-levy-initial-consultation-june-2021.pdf>

Leicester UCU - one of the three recognized unions at the University of Leicester and representing academic, researcher and professional services staff - surveyed its members between 11th February and 1st March 2022. This was to gain an understanding of their views on the scheme and to provide feedback to Leicester City Council via their consultation process.

The survey included an potential motion (question 2) which was drawn from discussions involving the Leicester & District Trades Union Council

Summary of findings

90 Leicester UCU members responded to the survey.

44% of Leicester UCU members who responded supported the introduction of the parking levy, with 35% against (Question 1).

However, 47% also supported the motion (Question 2) mandating Leicester UCU to work with other city-based unions to challenge the scheme whilst also recognizing actions needs to be taken to address environmental issues in the city.

The next two sections provided an opportunity for a wide range of concerns to be captured which reflected the findings of question 1 and 2 - namely that, environmental challenges notwithstanding, the cost of living crisis and the lack of alternative transport methods for many in the meantime are highly concerning.

Detailed findings

Question 1

Do you think Leicester UCU should respond to Leicester City Council's consultation to support the introduction of the Workplace Parking Levy?		
Answer	Count	Gross percentage
Not sure / Don't Know (A)	2	2.22%
No, the levy should not be supported (N)	35	38.89%
Yes, the levy should be supported (Y)	40	44.44%
No answer	13	14.44%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%
Total(gross)	90	100.00%

Question 2

Do you agree to Leicester UCU supporting the sentiment of the following motion: "We agree that there is a climate emergency and that we need all politicians to take decisive action to halt the destruction of the environment. However, we believe that the promotion of a Workplace Parking Levy in Leicester, which in reality is just a regressive tax on workers, will only serve to under-mine efforts to promote any form of inclusive environmental action. We therefore commit to organize between all different trade unions within our city to do our best to oppose this new tax on workers and do what we can to actively support the type of progressive environmental initiatives that can act to unite all members of our city."

Answer	Count	Gross percentage
Not sure / Don't know (D)	2	2.22%
No (N)	32	35.56%
Yes (Y)	43	47.78%
No answer	13	14.44%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%
Total(gross)	90	100.00%

Question 3

Please indicate the reasons behind your thoughts on the proposal: 'Negative - Cost' might refer to the amount of the levy in the proposal'Negative - Timing' might refer to the proposal now at a time of increased costs of living'Negative - Fairness' might refer to a single cost irrespective of income'Negative - Consistency' might refer to some employees potentially being charged the levy if their happen to work in the city, whilst others not being charged if they work in the county'Positive - Funding' might refer to the levy raising funds for a greener public transport network'Positive - Environmental' might refer to an improvement in Leicester's air quality'Positive - Climate' might refer to helping the City reach its aim to become carbon neutral by 2030'Positive - Health' might refer to the levy increasing exercise and healthy activity

Answer	Count	Gross percentage
Negative - Cost Browse	35	38.89%
Negative - Timing Browse	24	26.67%
Negative - Fairness Browse	38	42.22%
Negative - Consistency Browse	12	13.33%
Positive - Funding Browse	25	27.78%
Positive - Environmental Browse	30	33.33%
Positive - Climate Browse	26	28.89%
Positive - Health Browse	24	26.67%
Other: Browse	13	14.44%
Not completed or Not displayed	13	14.44%
Total(gross)	240	100.00%

Examples of comments received in this section are:

Negative - Cost	Another £45/month when we are all being hit by increased energy costs and NI rises.
	Many people are already struggling to make ends meet. This is just adding to the burden
	A very expensive levy, essentially a tax on key workers
	I oppose yet another green transport tax on workers. Low paid workers, who cannot afford to buy new environmentally friendly cars, are already slammed by high car and fuel taxes.

Negative - Timing	Very difficult for workers to bear this at a time when cost of living is rising more generally
	Affordable public transport alternative not in place
	The price of living is already high, and with increased pension costs likely it will be soon be impossible to live.
	Energy costs are soaring, it's not fair on low paid workers.
Negative - Fairness	I have concerns about disabled staff members. The initial consultation document says that 100% discounts are being considered for Blue Badge holders; however access to blue badges is itself very difficult and many disabled people are denied them due to punitive gatekeeping measures that exclude certain forms of disability. Only discounting spaces for blue badge holders would immediately disadvantage people with disabilities and chronic illnesses who haven't been able to obtain a blue badge.
	What about people who only drive into Leicester once or twice a week
	Currently we have a graded parking costs system, this will be a flat rate with very few exceptions
	Beyond the obvious poll tax aspects, it also hits county residents who won't benefit from any improved bus service.
Negative - Consistency	Doesn't improve transport links, or give workers an alternative to using their cars
	Any scheme should be consistent irrespective of location in the city/county
Positive - Funding	Public transport is great and should be cheaper. I've long wanted authorities to subsidise transport. If public transport becomes cheaper, it could even become cheaper than £550 a year to commute to work! Anyway, we all have to do our part, and £550 per annum seem a fair price to pay
	Another manner of funding green transportation is needed. Fuel taxes for example. And ban diesel vehicles.
	I think that 'taxing' drivers to raise funds for green improvements is a reasonable step.
	Leicester desperately needs more cleaner and cheaper public transport.
Positive - Environmental	Fewer internal combustion engines on the road means less exhaust gas and thus cleaner air
	Yes, agree it has a significant environmental effect if less people used cars to commute to work
	This is likely to have a real impact on the numbers of people who unnecessarily commute to work, where they might instead walk or take public transport.
	Leicester is in the top 10 worse cities in the UK for air quality.

	Cars are the main cause of this.
Positive - Climate	In my opinion, global warming is the #1 challenge in the 21st century. These choices affect not just workers in Leicester, but people (and ecosystems) all over the world including in much less privileged positions that even those university workers in precarious positions
	fewer cars on the road is an all-round positive
	City centre is heavily polluted. All reductions in motor transport should be supported
Positive - Health	Less air pollution means better public health which means my money to the NHS is spent on more effective things. Traffic collisions are the largest cause of injury-related deaths in the UK.
	I agree that the levy will encourage cycling and walking for many.
	Car use has largely negative consequences for individual and public health and should be discouraged
	health benefits all round from reduced use of cars
Other	I would support discounts to volunteers, students, and workers who earn <£11,000 pounds per year through their university employment. I would also support an exemption for electric cars

Question 4

This was a free-text comment box. Some examples of the comments received were:

There is a societal benefit to fewer workers driving to work: less money spend maintaining roads, less traffic congestion, less air pollution, and greater public health (and more effectively spend money by the NHS). If this scheme subsidises public transport, then it will help workers personally too: vehicles cost money to buy, finance, repair, maintain, fuel, and insure, not to mention road tax and MOTs. Anyway, cars famously depreciate in value. I would argue that a scheme that makes public transport a more competitive option makes things better, and not costlier, for workers

The new bus line proposals all assume that everyone works in the city centre. Most bus routes do not pass the university. How do I get from the university campus to the Space Park without a car? How do school teachers get to work? Unless you are very lucky most trips to work will involve one bus into the city centre, change, and another bus out to the school. Note the NHS exemptions are time limited, so eventually hospital staff working shifts will be hit. Fancy working a 12 hour night shift and then having to find a bus home, or no bus at all on a Sunday morning at 6am? In the longer term it is going to drive employers to set up in the county, worsening an al ready declining city.

There will shortly be an increasing anti-net zero campaign from the hard right, acting through their many agents in the predominantly right wing press and the Tory party. They will garner public support in the same ways, both legitimate and nefarious, as they did for Brexit and for opposing Covid safety measures. This scheme will only drive more of the public into their arms, and will not help with support for net-zero among the more moderate.

All life on Earth is threatened by the climate crisis. I think the fee on parking is an excellent idea if it discourages driving and supports car share schemes and use of public transport. I agree with using the money to invest in public transport.

If you want people to stop travelling to Leicester, this is definitely the way to go ! The city centre will simply become more deserted than it is already.

Using the weight of a workers Union to oppose a fundamentally progressive city planning move which aims to remove cars from the streets is a poor move. I believe our collective environmental responsibilities here outweigh inconvenience to individual members, providing appropriate exemptions are in place for disabled staff and students. Change starts at home folks!

This is an attack and tax grab on rural residents of Leicestershire and Rutland who have no say on City policies. There are no viable public transport alternatives for us. We are already crippled by too much tax on fuel and vehicles. If this happens I will simply stop coming to Leicester for anything other than absolutely essential visits.

Big businesses need to be taxed effectively, not loading more costs onto workers who already have to choose between heat and food.

The transition away from private car use needs to happen but could be painful for households that have home, work, school, etc locations such that the use of alternatives is impractical or impossible

The university is almost guaranteed to pass on additional employer costs to employees - as it will be a massive bill for the organisation. For many people (myself included) have caring responsibilities and have school/after-school provision pick ups - the bus service would need to be massively improved in terms of

<p>closeness of bus stops, frequency of buses and bus journey times to make taking public transport viable - and I don't think this will be achievable. Therefore, I would be very unlikely to move to public transport.</p>
<p>if we are serious about climate change then we should 100% be behind this scheme not against it!</p>
<p>Anything that reduces car use and encourages green options should be supported. Fewer cars means safer roads, and the more people who cycle, the better for everyone.</p>
<p>Though I can agree that reducing the reliance on cars is a fine long term goal. Imposing a levy does not seem like a sensible idea at this time, given the likely hardship people are to suffer over the coming few years. I would urge the City to look at alternatives and to try and minimise the pollution caused by the current traffic</p>
<p>It is hugely disappointing that such charges have to be made. However, I am more concerned about these affecting hospital workers than university staff. It seems such separation would not be possible, so overall I'd probably be against. But it's hard to justify the usage of personal cars.</p>
<p>Individual motor transport is one of the most significant causes of environmental damage. The massive increase in use of cars in Leicester over the last three decades has blighted every aspect of life in the city. I support every possible measure to reduce car use.</p>
<p>We should support this proposal and oppose the costs being pushed onto employees. Costs should be absorbed by the employer.</p>
<p>Properly fix public transport before introducing punitive measures to discourage cars.</p>
<p>If the cost were spread on a daily/weekly/monthly basis dependant upon use of a car park that's not so bad and would be affordable. An upfront payment of £550 is out of the question.</p>
<p>The provision of transport from/to Leicestershire villages is poor and really needs to be addressed and improved before trying to encourage employees to use other modes of transport. Most people do not these days live near their places of work to make it possible to walk or cycle.</p>
<p>What are the city's plans to provide more carbon neutral public transport?</p>
<p>I live in a Leicestershire village which has no public transport provision. There was one bus a day to Leicester when I moved here in 2014 but owing to cuts that service was cancelled in 2015. I have no choice but to drive to work. Funding better public transport - including buses which service the countless new housing developments in the county - would be better than levying this tax on workers who have no choice but to use cars to get to their workplace.</p>
<p>Leicester City Council have under-invested in greener energy for its public transport system for years and years and now want to pass on the costs to commuters. Their diesel bus system is a disgrace and many many times it has been shown in academic studies that they needed to sort it out. Now they want to make those that live in the surrounding countryside who moved out of the city because of its appalling pollution levels to pay for their dereliction of public health and high child asthma levels. This is a tax-saving policy by the council dressed up as a climate change initiative - how they think local people in the county cannot see what this really is - a financial gain to their pockets - is an insult to our intelligence. The fee proposed will penalised the poorest the most.</p>