# Milton Keynes council's free parking proposal sparks controversy



Milton Keynes City Council is at the centre of controversy following its proposal to eliminate all remaining free parking spaces in the city centre. This initiative, which could significantly alter the landscape of local parking, comes just four months after the council raised minimum stay charges for parking.

Should the proposal be accepted, all free and limited-waiting parking bays, including both standard tariff (purple) and premium tariff (red) bays, will undergo a transition to paid parking. The Labour-led council initiated a public consultation process on April 4, inviting residents of the Buckinghamshire city to express their views before any final decision is made. The consultation is open until April 24.

The plan has drawn criticism from opposition councillors, with Cllr Shazna Muzammil, leader of the Conservative Party in Milton Keynes, describing it as "another potentially devastating blow" for the city. She warned that the changes could adversely affect various groups, including market traders, students, residents, and small business owners.

Council documentation explaining the rationale for the changes cites the Strategic Review of Parking, a citywide initiative aiming to evaluate parking pressures and determine where enhanced controls may help alleviate them. The proposed alterations intend to manage parking availability and usage more effectively for the benefit of residents, businesses, and visitors alike, as reported by the Mirror.

Currently, the city's standard tariff bays charge £1 per hour for the first two hours, dropping to 50p per hour thereafter, while premium bays have rates of £2.50 for the first hour, followed by £2.00 per hour, making them financially unviable for many. Free parking spaces are frequently utilised for quick errands, pick-ups, and local appointments, serving as a crucial resource for many commuters trying to mitigate rising transport and living costs.

There is significant concern that the proposed measures could render the city centre less accessible, particularly for those with limited budgets. Local businesses have already voiced apprehensions that increased parking fees could deter potential shoppers. One independent shop owner situated near the market stated, “We rely on people being able to park easily and affordably.”

Cllr Peter Marland, the Labour leader of Milton Keynes City Council, defended the proposal, asserting that the consultation focuses on aligning some two-hour free parking spaces with the charging structure of other city centre parking options. He highlighted that Milton Keynes is a prominent shopping destination, attracting over 20 million visits last year.

Marland further commented on the financial pressures facing the council, indicating that it must find at least £34 million in savings over the coming years. He underscored that the anticipated additional income from parking charges would assist the council in funding essential repairs, such as fixing potholes, bolstering public transport, and maintaining subsidised bus fares for youth and those in training or education. Importantly, he noted that there are no plans to implement charges for disabled parking spaces.

Residents wishing to participate in the consultation can submit their comments in writing or via email to the council’s Traffic Regulation Order Team, with specific details provided for submission methods.

This proposal reflects broader concerns regarding parking management and city centre accessibility amidst ongoing financial challenges faced by local governments. The decision on this contentious proposal will be determined following the conclusion of the public consultation period.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.miltonkeynes.co.uk/news/people/all-free-parking-to-be-scrapped-in-central-milton-keynes-under-new-council-proposal-5077300> - This article confirms the proposal by Milton Keynes City Council to eliminate all free parking spaces in the city centre and replace them with paid options. It also highlights the opposition from Conservative councillors, who view the move as detrimental to shoppers and small businesses.
* <https://www.miltonkeynesconservatives.co.uk/news/labours-war-hardworking-people-final-nail-coffin-free-parking-cmk> - This site supports the claim of opposition from the Conservative Party, with Cllr Shazna Muzammil expressing concerns about the impact on various groups, including market traders and small business owners.
* <http://www.mkfm.com/news/local-news/parking-restriction-changes-proposed-in-milton-keynes/> - This article explains the proposed changes in parking restrictions, including the removal of free and limited waiting parking spaces in Central Milton Keynes.
* <https://www.gbnews.com/lifestyle/cars/drivers-warned-free-parking-disappear-milton-keynes> - This piece warns drivers that all remaining free parking spaces in Milton Keynes city centre could be scrapped, corroborating the proposed changes by the council.
* <https://www.miltonkeynes.co.uk/news/people/milton-keynes-cannot-be-treated-like-a-cash-machine-anger-over-plans-to-remove-free-and-limited-waiting-parking-spaces-5071892> - The article discusses public and political backlash against the plans to remove free parking spaces, with concerns that Milton Keynes is being treated as a revenue source rather than a community.