

28th June 2026

Dear Councillors Richard Davies and Will Cross,

I am writing to raise concerns regarding the council's decision to increase parking charges and remove short-stay options in several car parks. While I appreciate the financial pressures the council faces, I am concerned this approach is both unfair and counterproductive.

According to the Reading Borough Council Parking Services Annual Report 2024/25, parking operations generated a net surplus of £2.174 million from car parks alone in 2024/25. Yet further increases are being introduced just to generate £244,000 a year [[Reading Chronicle, May 2026](#)].

The removal of one-hour parking at key car parks - Queens Road, Broad Street Mall and Civic B - forces drivers to pay for a minimum of two hours, even if they only need one. This increases the cost of visiting the town centre for families already under pressure.

Reading town centre is already facing several challenges. Higher parking charges risk becoming yet another issue which will discourage people from visiting an already struggling high street. Increasing parking costs will reduce footfall, which in turn will lower business rates revenue – potentially offsetting any gain from higher charges. If the council wants to support local businesses, it should make it easier to visit, not harder.

The council's lead councillor for transport admitted the policy was introduced to 'ensure the climate is in a better place by 2030'. [[Reading Chronicle, November 2025](#)]. This suggests ideological commitment to net zero rather than practical consideration of its impact on residents. While I understand the importance of air quality, this policy is not proportionate or fair.

Charging people more to park will not solve climate change. What it will do is make life harder for families who have no choice but to drive - whether because they live in areas poorly served by public transport or simply need a car for work.

Residents are rightly frustrated to see the council demanding more money while its [Chief Executive earns £177,942 - more than the Prime Minister](#). When asking residents to pay more, the council should first ensure it is spending existing money wisely and prioritising core services over non-essential spending. Pricing people out of the town centre is not the answer - especially when the council's own figures show parking services are already generating a significant surplus.

I would therefore urge the council to:

- 1: Reconsider the removal of one-hour parking options - drivers should not be forced to pay for time they do not need.
- 2: Pause further increases until a proper assessment is made of the impact on local businesses and footfall.
- 3: Review non-essential spending to ensure value for money before asking residents to pay more.
- 4: Engage properly with residents - residents deserve a proper debate on such an important matter.

The people of Reading deserve policies that support local businesses and encourage visitors to our town and make their lives easier, not penalise them for political reasons.

I emailed you specifically as you are the Chair of the Traffic Management Sub-Committee and the Chair of the Cleaner Air & Safer Transport and the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committees respectively. I would be happy to liaise or meet with you or other relevant councillors to discuss this further and explore alternatives.

Yours sincerely,

Matthew Reynolds

Deputy Chair, Reform UK Earley and Woodley