

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL
COMMUNITY & RESOURCES MEETING

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Monday, 13 July 2020 - 4.00 pm

PRESENT Councillor R Hicks (Chair)
 Councillor D McGeough (Vice-Chair)

Councillors D Brenton, C Bright, D Bushby, P Christie, A Dart,
J Hutchings, K James, N Laws and R Lock

ALSO PRESENT	S Hearse	- Interim Head of Paid Service
	S Dorey	- Senior Solicitor
	S Kearney	- Planning & Economy Manager
	D Heyes	- Interim s151 Officer
	S Cawsey	- Democratic Services Officer

14. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

15. PUBLIC CONTRIBUTIONS

The Interim Head of Paid Service advised that seven representation statements had been received, all relating to the Notice of Motion re free car parking. These were read to the meeting. Below is a brief summary of each of the statements:

1. Bryn & Jane Ralph supported the proposal to suspend the parking charges in Torrridge. Their statement detailed reasons as to why they felt suspending parking charges would increase the footfall in Gt Torrington.

2. The Gt. Torrington Town Council gave their support to the proposal of free parking. Their statement included the following comments:

“In the interests of promoting increased footfall and spend in our town centre, thus helping the myriad of small businesses to get up and running following an enforced shut down, the Town Council fully supports the motion to continue with free parking in Sydney House and Barley Grove car parks for a further two months”.

3. Hartland Forest Golf Club – the Statement was submitted by Mr Alan Cartwright. He acknowledged the disastrous impact Covid-19 had had on many people and businesses, but expressed concerns with regard to the financial impact on TDC who, he said should safeguard its own income in order to serve the whole populace, but in particular the less fortunate members of society, the aged and infirm.
4. Janeen Downes submitted a statement proposing an alternative to free parking, namely, to charge £1 for two hours parking. She outlined the thinking behind this suggestion, commenting that if the car parks were to be opened for free they would fill with cars belonging to residents who would get free parking all day leaving very little room for shoppers and visitors.
5. Ange Wilson-Duffy submitted a statement signed by the Gt. Torrington Pannier Market Traders supporting the Notice of Motion for free car parking.
6. C Wapshott, Chair of Gt. Torrington Chamber of Trade, supported the Notice of motion. She mentioned that although it was unclear from the motion whether free parking was all day, one hour or two hours, free parking at any level would be appreciated. She thanked TDC for bringing this issue to the fore at this time.
7. E Wapshott supported the motion for free car parking. The statement submitted detailed the benefits to both the traders and the public and included the following comment:

“Free parking will take the time pressure off and people can then visit when and where they want”.

16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of interest were made when the specific agenda items to which they related were under discussion.

17. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA BETWEEN PARTS I AND II

There were no Part II items.

18. URGENT MATTERS OF INFORMATION TO BE BROUGHT FORWARD WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE CHAIR AND THE COMMITTEE

There were no urgent matters brought forward.

19. NOTICE OF MOTION - FREE CAR PARKING

Councillor Hutchings declared a personal interest – the owner of a business in Holsworthy.

Councillor McGeough presented his following Notice of Motion which had been referred to this Committee by Full Council on 22 June 2020:

“Given the recent pandemic and huge financial strain it has put on our local business owners, I would like to see TDC support our businesses to encourage footfall back to their premises in the town centres. We can help towards this by continuing free parking for two months, thus given them a small support cushion through this enabling phase of opening business back up.”

When presenting this item, the Planning & Economy Manager referred Members to the tables within the report, which summarised the car park takings in 2019/20 and reflected the loss of income to the Council should Members be minded to approve free car parking.

The Committee were made aware of a Petition received for two months free parking. The results of this meeting to be sent to the Petitioner.

This matter had been debated at length, during which the following suggestions/concerns were raised:

Members expressed strong support for local businesses but had concerns as to the benefits they would receive from proposed free parking - residents would use the car parks.

Those without cars would not benefit.

To look at two hours free parking in the main towns. Councillor McGeough stated he had asked for this option to be included in the recommendations but had been advised by the Senior Solicitor that the Notice of Motion had been approved by Full Council and therefore could not be amended. In accordance with the Constitution any amendments would need to be voted upon at Full Council.

Duration of free car parking – various suggestions were put forward such as – two months, six months to start and then to review the situation, for the duration of the term of the present Councillors and forever.

To increase the tariffs for longer stay parking – the Planning & Economy Manager explained the process involved in changes to the Street Parking Orders.

To delay free parking until October to December which would then tie in with Bideford Town Council who subsidise free parking during the weekends of December. Also the community lacks confidence at the present time re going out – it will be mainly tourists using the car parks.

Two hours free parking from 4pm.

It became evident during the debate that most Members were in support of two hours free parking, but the Notice of Motion did not stipulate times or duration, therefore, as advised, cannot be amended.

Councillor Christie referred to when all day free parking had been tried previously, and when the Chamber of Commerce had acknowledged that car parks were full with traders and employees. He also mentioned the additional loss of income to the Authority and the issue with only the main towns benefitting.

The Interim Head of Paid Service advised that should Members be minded to approve the Notice of Motion, it would need Full Council approval to change the budget.

It was proposed by Councillor Hutchings, seconded by Councillor Dart that two hours free parking for two months be agreed. In line with legal advice given, no vote was taken.

During the debate it was reiterated by the Senior Solicitor and the Interim Head of Paid Service that should Members wish to amend the Notice of Motion; Full Council approval would be required. Reference was made to the Constitution which sets out the procedures to be followed.

If Members rejected this Notice of Motion, a revised Notice could be submitted and presented to the Extraordinary Full Council meeting scheduled for 27 July - Members will at that meeting decide if the Motion goes forward to Community & Resources Committee. If agreed a report would then be prepared based on the revised Motion. The Chair of Community & Resources Committee and the Chair of Council agreed to Special meetings being held for this item.

The Interim Head of Paid Service highlighted the importance of having accurate wording in a revised Notice of Motion.

It was proposed by Councillor McGeough, seconded by Councillor Bushby that the Notice of Motion be approved.

A recorded vote was taken.

COUNCILLOR	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
Brenton, D	X		
Bright, C	X		
Bushby, D	X		
Christie, P		X	
Dart, A		X	
Hicks, R		X	
Hutchings, J	X		
James, K		X	
Laws, N		X	

Lock, R		X	
McGeough, D	X		
Wiseman, R			

(Vote: for 5, Against 6)

The Motion was lost.

RESOLVED:

That the Notice of Motion be rejected.

The meeting commenced at 16.00 and closed at 17.58

Chair:

Date: