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Date: 7 September 2020

MEETING OF INTERNAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

On:	Tuesday 15 September 2020	At:	2.00 pm
Venue:	Remote Meeting via Zoom		

NOTICE OF MEETING

Temporary measures during the Coronavirus Pandemic:

Members of the public attending meetings or taking part in the public forum are advised that all Internal Overview & Scrutiny meetings taking place during the Covid-19 Pandemic will be filmed for live or subsequent broadcast via the YouTube channel -

<https://tinyurl.com/TorrigeYouTube>

To:	Councillor P Watson (Chair) Councillor P Hames (Vice-Chair) Councillors: R Boughton, C Cottle-Hunkin, J Gubb, S Langford, J Manley, T Inch and S Newton Non elected Members: Mr S Dengate and Mr I Harper
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Members are requested to turn off their mobile phones for the duration of the meeting

AGENDA

PART I - (OPEN SESSION)

1.	Apologies For Absence
2.	Public Contributions
3.	Declaration Of Interests Members with interests should refer to the agenda item and describe the nature of their interest when the item is considered.

4.	Urgent Matters Brought Forward With The Permission Of The Chair
5.	Agreement of Agenda Items Part I And II
6.	Call-in: Temporary Free Car Parking (Pages 3 - 16) To receive the report of the Planning & Economy Manager.
7.	Exclusion Of The Public The Chairman to move:- That the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting because of the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.
	Meeting Organiser: Mary Richards, tel 01237 428705
	Centre for Public Scrutiny – website http://www.cfps.org.uk/

Agenda Item 6

Agenda Item

REPORT OF Planning and Economy Manager
To: Internal Overview and Scrutiny
Subject: Community and Resources decision to provide 2hrs free parking in October and November in town centre car parks
Date: 15th September 2020 **Reference:**

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To scrutinise the decision of Community and Resources committee on the 17th August 2020 that a two hours free parking at any time during the day in all car parks in Bideford, Holsworthy and Torrington Town Centres for the months of October and November be agreed.

1. INTRODUCTION

On the 17th August Community and Resources Committee considered the report of the Planning and Economy Manager that presented the Councillor McGeough's written Notice of Motion. (Report attached as Appendix 1)

Given the strong feeling from the recent C and R committee combined with petitions from the public and representations from local businesses, I propose that TDC introduce free car parking for the first one or two hours in some or all of the car parks in Bideford, Holsworthy and Torrington town centres for a period of two months in order to further help traders during this pandemic crisis . This measure to be implemented as soon as is possible. How the cost for this will be met is to be decided by members considering - but not limited to - reviewing the capital project and/or rebalancing current car parking tariffs."

This report gave details of the estimated costs/ benefits of 2 hrs free parking and it was debated fully by Community and Resources Committee. (Minutes of the meeting attached as Appendix 2)

2. REPORT

Subsequently a call in request was lodged with the Chief Executive. It was requested that Overview and Scrutiny Internal should consider the decision of Community and Resources to grant free parking (as set out above) with special attention to be given to how that decision might be funded and how affordable it is.

To assist with that debate, now that it is clear which months have been selected to provide 2 hrs free parking, the table below show's potential reductions in takings based on last year's receipts for the same period.



Area	Car Park	October Income	November Income	Total Income
Bideford	Bridge Street	£7,132.30	£6,786.20	£13,918.50
	Clarence Wharf	£602.70	£561.25	£1,163.95
	Riverbank Long Stay	£1,572.70	£1,151.10	£2,723.80
	Riverbank Short Stay	£3,194.45	£2,003.50	£5,197.95
	The Manor	£2,128.00	£1,990.90	£4,118.90
	Honestone Street	£898.95	£765.70	£1,664.65
	The Pill	£6,115.90	£5,693.30	£11,809.20
	The Quay	£6,340.65	£5,447.10	£11,787.75
Great Torrington	Sydney House	£4,705.80	£3,388.25	£8,094.05
	Barley Grove	£2,062.35	£1,943.20	£4,005.55
Holsworthy	The Manor	£4,146.65	£3,810.10	£7,956.75
Total		£38,900.45	£33,540.60	£72,441.05

The table shows, by town centre car park, the value of transactions for a two hour stay or less and now includes figures for the Manor car park in Bideford that were omitted from the report on the 17th August 2020.

Note: Figures for the Cattle Market car park and Springfield car park in Bideford and Well Park in Holsworthy are not included in the table as they all have a single £1 per day tariff and therefore it would not be possible to offer a two hour stay only.

3. IMPLICATIONS

Legal Implications

As set out in C&R report

Financial Implications

The estimated costs of 2hrs free parking are set out in the report to C&R with further updated information provided in the table above.

The costs of running the service for the months of October and November will remain the same regardless of any predicted loss in income

Given the lost income associated with the proposed free car parking members need to consider how this financial pressure could be met.

At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic the Council took the decision to support the vulnerable within our communities. The unspent balances on member and community grants from 2019-20 and a 50% top slice of the member grant allocation for 2020-21 (£36k) were allocated for this purpose.

Just under £50k was paid over to our Town and Parish Councils and £25k was transferred to Devon County Council to administer grants to Torridge residents. At the time of writing this report the final expenditure of the Town and Parish Councils is not known but is estimated to be in the region of £20k. Devon County Council has already returned £23k of the £25k originally allocated to them.

The table below provides an estimate of the member/community grants available to meet this pressure.



	£'000		
Resources			
Member Grants -2020/21 - 50% top slice	36		
Balance of member grants b/fwd from 2019-20	25		
New Homes Bonus - b/fwd from 2019-20	54		
Subtotal	115		
less expenditure			
Town & Parish Councils spend to support the Vulnerable	20	*** to be confirmed	
Devon County Council - Hardship payments	2		
Subtotal	22		
Balance available	93		

Within the projected financial breakeven position reported to Internal and Scrutiny on the 18th August 2020 was a recommendation to set aside £51k to support 4 apprentice placements. Members may decide not to support this recommendation and instead use some (or all) of these monies to contribute towards the cost of free car parking.

Human Resources Implications

As set out in C&R report

Sustainability Implications

As set out in C&R report

Equality/Diversity

As set out in C&R report

Risk Management

As set out in C&R Report

Compliance with Policies and Strategies

Parking services are delivered in accordance with the Off Street Parking Places Order 2019.

No amendment to the OSPPO would be required in order to provide a temporary period of non enforcement in some car parks.

Ward Member and Leader Member Views

N/A

3. CONCLUSIONS

Community and Resources Committee 13th July 2020

Cllr McGeough's original notice of motion was rejected but the principle of providing some free parking for drivers in our own centre was widely supported and he was encouraged to submit an amended notice of motion to Full Council for consideration.



Full Council 27th July 2020

A new notice of motion was presented and forwarded to Community and Resources Committee for consideration.

Community and Resources Committee 17th August 2020

The Notice of Motion was presented and fully debated and members resolved that a two hours free parking at any time during the day in all car parks in Bideford, Holsworthy and Torrington Town Centres for the months of October and November be agreed.

The consistent thread in all of the above committee discussion was that there are arguments for and against free parking as a means of stimulating economic activity in town centres. Nevertheless the majority of members have been in favour of the concession, even if only as a symbolic gesture of support for town centre businesses that are struggling as a result of the Covid pandemic.

It will be near impossible to measure the impact that free parking will have on our town centre trading environments as this year, more than another previous year, it is difficult to predict consumer behaviour. It should also be noted that there are currently exceptionally high numbers of tourists travelling to the area and that is expected to continue through the Autumn so any spike in footfall will not be solely attributable to free parking but many other external factors also. Given this and the fact that we have no bench mark by which we can measure success it would be unwise to use any data associated with this period of tariff concession when deciding on future parking management strategies.

In conclusion, members could take the decision to fund the financial pressure resulting from free car parking by

- forgoing a proportion of the available member/community grant funding
- or by not supporting the recruitment of 4 apprentices in conjunction with forgoing a £28k (£79k - £51k) from the member/community grants.

As these would be reprioritisations of existing budgets then this is a decision that can be made by Community and Resources Committee.

Should members wish to fund the cost pressure by other means, such as use of the capital programme, then that decision will need to be made by Full Council.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members consider the recommendation of Community and Resources Committee and decide whether:

- a) The resolution of Community and Resources to provide 2 hrs at any time in the day free parking be endorsed or not;
- b) To make a recommendation on how any free parking period might be funded from the proposals outlined in the report above which could either be referred to community and Resources Committee or Full Council to resolve; or
- c) That alternative proposals for funding be considered



SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Consultations: Chief Executive, Senior Solicitor and Monitoring Officer, Interim
S151 Officer
Contact Sean Kearney
Officer:
Background
Papers:



Agenda Item

REPORT OF Planning and Economy Manager
To: Community and Resources Committee
Subject: Notice of Motion referred from Full Council
Date: 17th August 2020 **Reference:**

PURPOSE OF REPORT: To consider the following written notice of motion proposed by Councillor McGeough and referred to this committee by Full Council on the 27th July 2020.

Given the strong feeling from the recent C and R committee combined with petitions from the public and representations from local businesses, I propose that TDC introduce free car parking for the first one or two hours in some or all of the car parks in Bideford, Holsworthy and Torrington town centres for a period of two months in order to further help traders during this pandemic crisis . This measure to be implemented as soon as is possible. How the cost for this will be met is to be decided by members considering - but not limited to - reviewing the capital project and/or rebalancing current car parking tariffs."

1. INTRODUCTION

The Covid 19 pandemic has swept across the globe causing both a health and economic emergency. The response of the Government, to limit the spread of the virus, was to lock the country down and advise people to stay at home. All non essential business were advised to close and specific direction for closure was made to retail establishments. This has obviously had a detrimental effect on the financial position of those businesses. To try to compensate the Government announced a range of grant and support schemes and each business in the Town Centres will have benefitted in some way from one or more of these schemes. These were intended to support businesses to survive until they could be reopened.

Covid 19 has also had a detrimental impact on the financial position of Torrington District Council and we are now being encouraged by the government to maximise our income generation to assist with economic recovery.

A previous notice of Motion that requested 2 months free parking in the Town Centre Car Parks to support town centre business was debated and subsequently rejected at Community and Resources committee on the 13th July. The committee were though minded to consider alternative proposals and gave words of encouragement to Cllr McGeough to propose an alternative motion for consideration, hence the motion as presented above.

A full covering report that debated the merits or otherwise of free town centre parking was provided at the previous meeting and therefore this report will not revisit that debate.

This report is intended to provide members with relevant information in order that they can be in an informed position when resolving whether to support or reject the above written notice of motion.



2. REPORT

The following table shows an estimate of the cost of providing a range of 2hrs free arrangements in a range of town centre car parks. The figures are based on average takings for each tariff or time slot over the six month period May- Oct 2019.

	Car Parks	Cost for Free Parking until 9:00	Cost for Free Parking until 10:00
Great Torrington	Sydney House	£2,312.44	£4,306.95
	Barley Grove	£982.25	£2,405.00
	Total	£3,294.68	£6,711.95
Bideford	Bridge Street	£1,178.49	£3,876.74
	The Quay	£1,711.13	£3,952.15
	The Pill	£1,060.69	£3,509.60
	Riverbank Longstay	£3,772.62	£6,038.45
	Riverbank Shortstay	£329.75	£1,008.15
	Clarence Wharf	£513.20	£967.04
	Total	£8,565.87	£19,352.14
Holsworthy	Holsworthy Manor	£1,717.06	£3,830.73
	Total	£1,717.06	£3,830.73
Grand Total		£11,265.18	£25,587.86
	Car Parks	Cost for 1 hour free parking for 2 months	Cost for 2 hour free parking for 2 months
Great Torrington	Sydney House	£2,988.40	£9,093.20
	Barley Grove	£1,421.70	£3,743.30
	Total	£4,410.10	£12,836.50
Bideford	Bridge Street	£6,523.60	£13,646.80
	The Quay	£6,770.00	£12,567.60
	The Pill	£5,082.00	£11,130.00
	Riverbank Longstay	£1,007.88	£5,082.60
	Riverbank Shortstay	£3,170.80	£8,908.40
	Clarence Wharf	£358.08	£1,073.76
	Total	£22,912.36	£52,409.16
Holsworthy	Holsworthy Manor	£2,984.40	£7,437.20
	Total	£2,984.40	£7,437.20
Grand Total		£30,306.86	£72,682.86

Permits and reserved bays

We would propose making no concession to permit or reserved bay fees or durations if this Notice of Motion were to succeed.

Pay and display machines

If any free parking period is agreed then the Pay and Display machines would need to be programmed to issue tickets at the start of a parking period in order that Civil Enforcement Officers will be able to know when any concessionary period ends. Therefore, car park users will still be required to enter their car registration number, select a tariff and display a ticket in their vehicle or they will be issued with a PCN.



Events and licenses

If charging concessions are agreed we would propose that this would not alter the charges set for events and licenses on the car parks and that those arrangements would continue as if a non charging period had not been approved. No refunds or discounts to license holders will be made.

3. IMPLICATIONS

Legal Implications

N/A

Financial Implications

The costs of additional free parking are set out in this report to C&R.

Human Resources Implications

N/A

Sustainability Implications

The incentivisation of car use through free parking would appear to be at odds with the Council's climate emergency declaration of 2019

Equality/Diversity

The equality of a proposal that benefits car owners above non car owners will need to be considered as will whether or not the cost to the Council Tax payer of providing up to 2 hours free parking for both residents of the district and those who do not contribute to the council's funds is acceptable.

The fairness of providing up to hours free parking for the three market towns and not for the coastal resorts of the District is another consideration.

Risk Management

The financial risks to the Council following the detrimental impacts of the Covid 19 crisis have been previously considered and recognised by this committee.

Compliance with Policies and Strategies

Parking services are delivered in accordance with the Off Street Parking Places Order 2013 (as amended).

The notice of motion does not accord with the Council's Climate Emergency Declaration and the objectives of its emerging Carbon Plan

Ward Member and Leader Member Views

Councillor Hodson, Lead Member Resources

I have considered carefully the content of the report outlining the financial implications for this Council. Having regard to the expressed opinions of my fellow Councillors during the last debate, I would now support an option to provide two hours free parking until 10am in selected car parks in Bideford, Torrington and Holsworthy for a period of two months.



3. CONCLUSIONS

Parking charges in Torrridge

The current car parking charges in Torrridge are low in comparison to those in other districts.

Recent takings and reports from the Civil Enforcement Officers provide evidence that the town centre car parks are extremely busy. Therefore the customers are in the area and using the car parks without complaint.

In Summary

As previously reported, evidence from other authorities suggests that whilst free parking can be popular with residents there is little to prove that it makes a demonstrable improvement to trading conditions in retail areas. In fact there is some evidence to suggest that free parking can have a detrimental impact on trading conditions because parking bays become filled with residents rather than shoppers and shoppers are forced to do their business elsewhere.

In Torrridge free parking on the Pill in Bideford was introduced as a pilot scheme to see if it improved trading conditions. We have been provided with no information from the town traders that this free parking has had a positive impact, instead we continue to hear that trading conditions have become more difficult (this is obviously not entirely related to parking). Our own monitoring of the Pill Car Park shows us that on Saturday afternoon the car park fills with many residents' cars that remain on site until Monday morning. Similar can be said in both the Sydney House Car Park Torrington and the Manor Car Park in Holsworthy.

It should also be noted that parking charges are an important revenue stream for the Council and are used to cover the costs of service delivery. The costs of providing a parking service do not decrease if free parking is offered and will still need to be paid for. Given that there are extreme pressures on the Council's budget it seems counter intuitive to recommend any scheme that would reduce income without evidence that there would be benefits elsewhere.

The above point was recognised by this committee at its meeting on the 29th June 2020 when the following recommendation of the Interim S151 Officer was unanimously approved:

That members consider the financial impact of Covid 19 upon the council and the necessity for the council to maximise its income streams wherever possible.

Parking at large out of town retail outlets and supermarkets is subsidised for motorists by the site owners on the basis that they will generate their revenues from consumers elsewhere on that site. The Council is not afforded that opportunity and instead has chosen to implement comparatively low parking charges to help manage the car parks effectively and, more pertinently, for the benefit of its residents and traders.

Having said all of the above it is likely that a period of free parking would be well received by a significant number of car users and business owners who might feel that they would benefit. The Council might therefore receive positive press coverage and some short term reputational enhancement if some concession were made.

Management

It will be easier to manage a free period between 8 and 10am than a free two hour period at any time of the day for a number of reasons. First, we will be able to organise the working hours of the Civil Enforcement Officers effectively. Second, it will be easier to manage those who might park for two hours in a car park and then move their car to another car park for another two



hours free. It will also help us to manage the scenario where a driver might park for two hours free and then at the end of that period simply return to the pay and display machine for a new ticket and another two hours free.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The success or otherwise of 2 hours of free parking in Bideford, Torrington and Holsworthy will be very difficult to measure given that so many external factors can have an influence on trading conditions. In reality it is likely that this would be a symbolic gesture by the Council rather than a strategic initiative that will create a demonstrable improvement in the trading environments.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Members consider the notice of motion in cognisance of:

- The previous resolution that the Council should seek to maximise its income streams wherever possible in light of the financial impact of Covid 19 on its financial position
- It's fit with Council's Climate Emergency Declaration and Carbon Management Plan
- The equality and fairness of the proposal for all residents
- Any perceived benefits the proposal might have for the trading environment of our town centres

2. Members resolve to approve or reject the Notice of Motion and decide whether to introduce free car parking for the first one or two hours in some or all of the car parks in Bideford, Holsworthy and Torrington town centres for a period of two months and that if approved the arrangements for enforcement, permits, reserved bays and events and licenses would be as proposed in the body of this report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Consultations: Chief Executive, Senior Solicitor and Monitoring Officer, Interim
S151 Officer
Contact Sean Kearney
Officer:
Background
Papers:



Notice of Motion - Free Car Parking

- [Meeting of Special, Community & Resources, Monday, 17th August, 2020 4.00 pm \(Item 23.\)](#)

To receive the report of the Planning & Economy Manager

Decision:

RESOLVED:

That the Notice of Motion be approved and that a total of two hours free parking at any time during the day in all car parks in Bideford, Holsworthy and Torrington town centres for the months of October and November be agreed.

Minutes:

The Planning and Economy Manager presented the report which provided Members with the relevant information to ensure they are in an informed position when considering whether to support or reject Councillor McGeough's written Notice of Motion.

The Chair invited Councillor McGeough to present his Notice of Motion.

Councillor McGeough presented his following Notice of Motion which had been referred to this Committee by Full Council on 27 July 2020:

"Given the strong feeling from the recent C and R committee combined with petitions from the public and representations from local businesses, I propose that TDC introduce free car parking for the first one or two hours in some or all of the car parks in Bideford, Holsworthy and Torrington town centres for a period of two months in order to further help traders during this pandemic crisis . This measure to be implemented as soon as is possible. How the cost for this will be met is to be decided by members considering - but not limited to - reviewing the capital project and/or rebalancing current car parking tariffs."

Councillor McGeough proposed two hours free parking at any time during the day. He said to state specific hours would not be beneficial to residents or traders. This motion was seconded by Councillor Bright.

During the debate and considering the needs of residents and local businesses, and the detrimental impact on the financial position of the Authority, the following proposals/comments were made:

Councillor Lock expressed support for the two hours free parking, but for one nominated car park in each town only, to commence 1 September. This would then reduce the loss of income to the Council during these difficult times. Councillor Laws gave his support to this proposal.

Councillor Brenton was in support of two hours free parking at any time, but as the Motion did not stipulate which two months, he proposed October and November. This would then tie in with the Bideford Town Council who subsidise free parking in Bideford during December.

Councillor Brenton proposed two hours free parking at any time of the day during the months of October and November. The motion was seconded by Councillor Christie.

Councillor Hutchings declared an interest – licence holder with outside events during the day.

A statement from Councillor Jones, Holsworthy Ward Member, was read to the meeting by Councillor Hutchings.

Arguments against the Motion were put forward –

- People go into towns for the services, not because of free parking
- 60% now shop online
- If limited to one car park only in each town, queues will form in those car parks
- The financial cost to the Authority
- No evidence that free parking will increase the footfall in towns

The Finance Manager & Interim s151 Officer reported that the financial position of the Authority is currently stable, but the future is uncertain. Following a question regarding reimbursement from Central Government on loss of income, Members were advised they will not reimburse the Authority for a decision on car parks made by ourselves.

Members debated alternative proposals – specific hours, all or allocated car parks.

The Planning & Economy Manager addressed all questions and concerns raised during the debate. He clarified the position regarding the issuing of tickets from pay and display machines and the policing of the car parks.

The Chief Executive explained the process should the Notice be approved and depending on the proposals agreed and the costs involved will determine whether it will be presented to Full Council.

Following an enquiry from Members, the Chief Executive confirmed that the Notice of Motion allowed for each town to be voted upon individually.

Councillor McGeough agreed to include in his proposal the months of October and November. Councillor Bushby seconded this motion. Following this amendment Councillor Christie withdrew his seconding the motion of Councillor Brenton and gave his support to Councillor McGeough's motion.

Councillor Laws proposed that free parking be given until 10am each morning in all car parks in Holsworthy & Torrington and one car park in Bideford. Councillor James seconded this proposal. The Planning & Economy Manager advised this would not apply to two car parks in Bideford where the charge is £1 for all day parking.

It was proposed by Councillor McGeough, seconded by Councillor Bushby and -

RESOLVED:

That the Notice of Motion be approved, and that a total of two hours free parking at any time during the day in all car parks in Bideford, Holsworthy and Torrington town centres for the months of October and November be agreed.

A recorded vote was taken.

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

(Vote: For 8, Against 3)

The motion was carried.