

Agenda Item

REPORT OF Planning and Economy Manager
To: Community and Resources Committee
Subject: Annual Review of Parking – Recommendation from Internal Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 4th February 2019 **Reference:**

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To consider the recommendations of Internal Overview and Scrutiny in relation to the Annual Review of Parking report debated at Community and Resources Committee on the 26th November 2018.

1. INTRODUCTION

On the 26th November Community and Resources Committee considered the annual Review of Parking report of the Planning and Economy Manager .

Within the report there were three recommendations for Committee to resolve upon and following some robust debate the following was decided.

Annual Parking Review

Resolved:

Recommendation 1: Permits

- That the reserved bay charges be increased from £447 to £500 (Bideford and Appledore)
- That the double reserved bay charges (Willet St only) from £693 to £775

Recommendation 2:

That additional Free Parking from 12 noon Saturday until 6pm Sunday on Barley Grove car park (Torrington), Well Park car park (Holsworthy) and Riverbank Short Stay (Bideford) car park be refused.

Recommendation 3:

That the installation of new doors to the existing pay and display machines on the 5 short stay car parks identified in the report and an additional two being Manor car park, Holsworthy and Sydney House car park in Gt Torrington, to allow for card and contactless payment be approved. The minimum electronic transaction to be £3.00 to encourage longer stays in the town and to help to cover additional transaction costs.

2. REPORT



A call in request was lodged with the Head of Paid Service by Cllrs Cottle-Hunkin, Pennington, Brown and Simmons and was agreed by Cllr Watson for inclusion on the Internal Overview & Scrutiny agenda for the 18 December 2018.

Specific reason for the call in was provided by Cllr Pennington:
Grounds: Not enough consideration has been given to the changing nature of consumer purchasing in the present economic climate. With free parking at large supermarkets and consumer outlets (e.g Atlantic Village Bideford) and the ever growing use of online purchasing it is very important to make every effort to attract visitors to our local town centres. I believe greater focus should be given particularly with regard to recommendation 2 & 3 as this may have a detrimental impact on local centres.

3. IMPLICATIONS

Legal Implications

N/A

Financial Implications

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

Human Resources Implications

N/A

Sustainability Implications

N/A

Equality/Diversity

N/A

Risk Management

N/A

Compliance with Policies and Strategies

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

Ward Member and Leader Member Views

N/A

3. CONCLUSIONS

Community and Resources Committee 26th November 2018

These matters were debated at Community and Resources Committee but the detail of those discussions does not appear word for word in the minutes of the meeting.

Most relevant, the changing role of the High St and retail trends were referenced along with how reasonable parking charges are actually more beneficial to town centres than free parking (as spaces fill with residents and the workforce rather than shoppers).

It was also noted that this had been discussed in depth at a meeting of Community and Resources Committee in 2016 and the resolution had been the same at that time.



It was mentioned that discussions in Bideford with the Chamber and town council had led / should lead to the Council looking to find ways to increase length of stay (tariffs, events, things to do) rather than providing free parking to increase town centre footfall and spend.

Each Town is already granted two days of free parking per year to be used at a time of their choosing.

Internal Overview and Scrutiny Committee 18th December 2018

Members considered the decisions made by the Community and Resources Committee on the 26th November and representations were made by one of the Ward Members for Torrington reinforcing what the public speakers had said. She referred to a Freedom of Information request which had confirmed that over £30,000 had been earned by the Council through overpayments at the machines, either because people did not have the right change or because they were not aware of the free periods. The Planning and Economy Manager responded that the FOI had been carried out on a different tariff .i.e. when charges were set at £0.90 and now had moved to £1.00 the over-vend is significantly less.

Clarification was sought as to why there was no equality across the car parks and Members were advised that the lack of parity between Sydney House and Barley Grove car parks was historic and had resulted at a time when the Authority had tried to introduce an element of free car parking across a range of car parks.

The ensuing discussion focused on:

- Whether to look separately at Torrington, Holsworthy and Bideford.
- The trading difficulties all high streets were facing.
- A suggestion to run a pilot scheme to survey the influence of a period of free parking on trade.
- The lack of evidence that free parking has had a demonstrably beneficial impact on town centre trading.
- Whether traders could offer to refund parking fees if customer spend over a certain amount.
- The shortfall in the Council's budget.
- Whether the changes being proposed to the mechanics of the machines to accommodate electronic payment could incorporate a free parking facility. It was confirmed that this could not be done.

It was proposed by Councillor Brown, seconded by Councillor T Inch and –

Resolved:

- That the C&R decisions in respect of recommendations 1 and 3, which had been the subject of the call, be accepted.
- That a recommendation be made to Community & Resources consider to introduce a pilot scheme to see how periods of free parking might aid trading conditions in our market towns.

(Vote: For – unanimous)

Councillor Pennington had been minded to propose a change to recommendation 3 however, following discussion with the Planning and Economy Manager withdrew his motion.

Pilot Free Parking Scheme



No detailed consideration of how a pilot free parking scheme could operate has yet been undertaken but it should be noted that for the analysis of how successful any scheme has been there will need to be robust monitoring of car park use and the fortunes of the businesses that it is intended to benefit. The success or otherwise of a scheme will be very difficult to measure given that so many external factors can have an influence on trading conditions.

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 Torridge 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.

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.

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.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members consider the recommendation of Internal Overview and Scrutiny Committee and decide whether:

- a) The recommendation from Internal Overview and Scrutiny be refused.
- b) Investigations should be undertaken in a potential free parking pilot and if so;
- b) A further report detail proposals for a pilot should be presented to a future Community and Resources Committee.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Consultations:
Contact Sean Kearney
Officer:
Background
Papers:

