

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL
COMMUNITY & RESOURCES MEETING

Remote meeting via Zoom

Monday, 17 August 2020 - 4.00 pm

PRESENT

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

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

ALSO PRESENT

S Hearse	- Chief Executive
S Dorey	- Senior Solicitor
S Kearney	- Planning & Economy Manager
D Heyes	- Finance Manager & Interim S151 Officer
S Cawsey	- Democratic Services Officer

Councillors: C Cottle-Hunkin, C Hodson P Hackett, T Inch,
S Langford, C Leather, S Newton and P Pennington

20. PUBLIC CONTRIBUTIONS

The Chief Executive read to the meeting four representation statements that had been received, all relating to the Notice of Motion re free car parking. Below is a brief summary of each of the statements:

Peter and Linda Lindley supported the proposal to suspend the parking charges in Torrington. Their statement referred to the number of people who came into Torrington from outlying villages to visit Lidl, but due to parking charges do not shop at the local stores. At a time when local shops need all the support they can get, providing free parking would be a real boost to them. They felt that the role of the council was not merely to generate a funding stream via parking charges, but to nurture and support the local business community.

Great Torrington Town Council gave their support to the proposal for free parking. Their statement detailed reasons as to why they felt suspending parking charges would increase the footfall and spend in Gt Torrington.

The statement submitted by Mrs Eve Machin supported the motion for free parking. She mentioned that due to the pandemic and the increase in unemployment, businesses have been hit hard making it difficult for small independent businesses to survive. Local shops are essential to the towns and every support must be given to the Traders. Free parking will also make visitors feel they are welcome to the town.

Bryn & Jane Ralph supported the proposal for limited free parking for the towns in the Torridge district. Their statement stated that due to the Covid 19 pandemic, it is paramount that local businesses get as much support as possible.

21. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA BETWEEN PARTS I AND II

There were no Part II items.

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

There were no urgent matters brought forward.

23. NOTICE OF MOTION - FREE CAR PARKING

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.

The meeting commenced at 16.00 and closed at 17.22

Chair:

Date: