

## 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:** 15<sup>th</sup> September 2020 **Reference:**

### PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To scrutinise the decision of Community and Resources committee on the 17<sup>th</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup> 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	<b>£13,918.50</b>
	Clarence Wharf	£602.70	£561.25	<b>£1,163.95</b>
	Riverbank Long Stay	£1,572.70	£1,151.10	<b>£2,723.80</b>
	Riverbank Short Stay	£3,194.45	£2,003.50	<b>£5,197.95</b>
	The Manor	£2,128.00	£1,990.90	<b>£4,118.90</b>
	Honestone Street	£898.95	£765.70	<b>£1,664.65</b>
	The Pill	£6,115.90	£5,693.30	<b>£11,809.20</b>
	The Quay	£6,340.65	£5,447.10	<b>£11,787.75</b>
Great Torrington	Sydney House	£4,705.80	£3,388.25	<b>£8,094.05</b>
	Barley Grove	£2,062.35	£1,943.20	<b>£4,005.55</b>
Holsworthy	The Manor	£4,146.65	£3,810.10	<b>£7,956.75</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>£38,900.45</b>	<b>£33,540.60</b>	<b>£72,441.05</b>

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 17<sup>th</sup> 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		
<b>Resources</b>			
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		
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>115</b>		
less expenditure			
Town & Parish Councils spend to support the Vulnerable	20	<b>*** to be confirmed</b>	
Devon County Council - Hardship payments	2		
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>22</b>		
<b>Balance available</b>	<b>93</b>		

Within the projected financial breakeven position reported to Internal and Scrutiny on the 18<sup>th</sup> 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 13<sup>th</sup> 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 27<sup>th</sup> July 2020**

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

## **Community and Resources Committee 17<sup>th</sup> 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:

