

Agenda Item

REPORT OF Planning and Economy Manager
To: Community and Resources Committee
Subject: Recommendation from Internal Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 5th October 2020 **Reference:**

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

Following scrutiny 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, this report presents the recommendation of Internal Overview and Scrutiny to provide the 2nd hour of parking free rather than 2hrs free parking in October and November 2020 in town centre car parks to be funded from the balance of Member Grants and the balance remaining following the closure of the New Homes Bonus grant scheme.

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.

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. (Report attached as Appendix 2)

To assist with that debate, a table was presented that showed the potential reduction in takings, based on last year's receipts for the same period, if 2hrs free parking were agreed

In addition, in order to help members make recommendation on how any parking charging concessions might be funded, the following options were presented:

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 distributed 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 now estimated to be in the region of £30k. 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.

Resources	£'000
Member Grants - 2020/21 - 50% top slice	36
Balance of member grants b/fwd from 2019-20	25
Former New Homes Bonus Scheme	54
Subtotal	115
less expenditure	
Town and Parish Council's spend to support the Vulnerable	30
Devon County Council - Hardship payments	2
Subtotal	32
Balance available	83
* There was a surge in Parish spending when it became clear that this Council intended to recoup unspent funds thus there is £10K less available for redistribution than when this table was last reported.	

At Full Council on the 24th February 2020 it was agreed that the New Homes Bonus Grants Scheme would be ended on the 31/03/20 and a the prospect of adopting a replacement scheme be considered in 2021 should there be sufficient resources available to do so.

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 were given the option to decide not to support this recommendation and instead use some (or all) of these monies to contribute towards the cost of free car parking.

Internal Overview and Scrutiny Committee debated in depth the information above and, after much consideration, resolved that they would prefer to recommend to Community and Resources an alternative proposal for free parking and how that might be funded. (Minutes of the meeting attached as Appendix 3)

Resolution of Internal Overview and Scrutiny

That the first hour is paid for and the second hour is free in all car parks listed on page 4 of the report for October and November, and to be funded from the balance of Member Grants and from the former New Homes Bonus scheme.



3. IMPLICATIONS

Legal Implications

As set out in previous reports

Financial Implications

Based on 2019 takings the cost of providing the second hour of parking free in the identified car parks in October and November would be **£43,396**. This is set out in the table below.

	Car Parks	Cost for 2nd hour free parking for October	Cost for 2nd hour free parking for November	Total
Great Torrington	Sydney House	£7,684.80	£2,108.40	£9,793.20
	Barley Grove	£1,285.20	£1,233.60	£2,518.80
	Total	£8,970.00	£3,342.00	£12,312.00
Bideford	Bridge Street	£3,598.00	£3,418.00	£7,016.00
	The Manor			N/A
	The Quay	£3,310.00	£2,770.00	£6,080.00
	The Pill	£3,360.00	£3,398.00	£6,758.00
	Riverbank Longstay	£1,209.60	£946.80	£2,156.40
	Riverbank Shortstay	£2,080.00	£1,326.00	£3,406.00
	Clarence Wharf	£400.80	£378.00	£778.80
	Total	£13,958.40	£12,236.80	£26,195.20
Holsworthy	Holsworthy Manor	£2,530.80	£2,358.00	£4,888.80
	Total	£2,530.80	£2,358.00	£4,888.80
Grand Total		£25,459.20	£17,936.80	£43,396.00

- Note – no second hour stay is available in the Manor Car Park Bideford.

Based on the 2019 takings the estimated cost of providing 2hrs free parking at any time of the day in the identified car parks October and November would be **£72,441**.

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.

Human Resources Implications

As set out in previous reports

Sustainability Implications

As set out in previous reports

Equality/Diversity

As set out in previous reports

Risk Management

As set out in previous reports

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.

Internal Overview and Scrutiny Committee 15th September 2020

Members debated the resolution of Community and Resources Committee and resolved to recommend back to that Committee that:



That the first hour is paid for and the second hour is free in all car parks listed on page 4 of the report for October and November, and to be funded from the balance of Member Grants and from the New Homes Bonus brought forward from 2019/20.

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 unusually 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 any period of tariff concession when deciding on future parking management strategies.

In conclusion, if Members were minded to agree with the recommendation from Internal Overview and Scrutiny, that decision would be considered made and immediate arrangements would be made for implementation as soon as possible. There is no provision for call in or further scrutiny within the constitution.

If Members were minded to disagree with the recommendation of Internal Overview and Scrutiny and resolve to proceed with the original decision they will need to consider how that will be funded as there was no recommendation made on funding at the Community and Resources Meeting on the 17th August 2020. If the initiative can be funded from within existing budgetary provision (i.e from the revenue budget suggestions in this report) then that decision can be made by Community and Resources Committee and (following the period when the funding element of the decision could be called in for scrutiny) arrangements would be made for the implementation of that decision. If no recommendation for funding the free parking is made by this committee then the matter will proceed to Full Council to be dealt with.

If Members were minded to disagree with Internal Overview and Scrutiny Committee and propose an alternative free parking arrangement and/or wish to fund any proposal from alternative sources (i.e not from within existing budgetary provision or perhaps from the capital programme) then that decision will proceed to Full Council as a recommendation for consideration. Any such resolution could also be subject to call in should the requisite number of members feel that this is an appropriate course of action.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- a) The recommendation of Internal Overview and Scrutiny Committee is approved or not;
- b) That the original decision of Community and Resources Committee for 2hrs fee parking at any time in the town centre car parks in October and November should stand and make a recommendation on how this free parking might be funded from the proposals outlined in the report above which could either be approved by Community and Resources Committee or Full Council; or
- c) That alternative proposals for free parking and/or funding be considered and referred to the appropriate committee for consideration



SUPPORTING INFORMATION

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

