

Agenda Item

REPORT OF Head of Communities & Place
To: Community and Resources Committee
Subject: Campervan overnight parking in Churchfields Car Park, Appledore
Date: 7th December 2020 **Reference:**

PURPOSE OF REPORT: To consider the following written notice of motion proposed by Councillor Ford and referred to this committee by Full Council.

From next Easter, I propose that a specific area is allocated for camper/mobile homes. I would suggest the area where there are recycle bins, immediately in the car park on the left. By my calculation, I think we could allow a maximum of 12. I would also increase the fee to £15 per night and one overnight stay per visit. In conclusion, this would alleviate the problem of them blocking to footpaths, which is the only safe route through the car park for many, especially those using push chairs and wheelchairs.

1. INTRODUCTION

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

Churchfields car park is a very popular car park in the centre of Appledore. During the summer months Churchfields is often full during the day and very busy though the evening when normal charging and enforcement has ended.

Since 2014 the Council has permitted the overnight parking of camper/mobile homes (between 6pm and 10am the following day) for a maximum of 2 consecutive nights. There is a specific tariff for these overnight stays (£5 per night).

This initiative was designed to support the tourist economy by encouraging visits to our towns where motorhomists might stay and spend in local establishments. The initiative has been well received by motorhomists and businesses within our towns and we have received hundreds of letters and messages of thanks and praise for its implementation. In 2014 the Council was commended by the Federation of Small Business for the scheme because of the support it provided for local economies.

There have been some objections to the scheme during the following years, almost exclusively from local camp sites as there is an element of competition introduced.

This committee has previously debated whether motor home parking puts the Council in direct competition motor home parks in the district. It was last agreed in December 2017 that this was not the case and that the £5 per night for a max of 2 nights was appropriate because there were no power, washing or waste disposal facilities provided to those who park.



After the end of the Covid 19 related lockdown in the spring and early summer of 2020 visits to the area became extraordinarily popular, in part due to restrictions on over seas travel and nervousness about the virus. In addition this area of the country had seen the lowest infection rates and was viewed by many as one of the safest places in the Country to holiday in.

The car parks in our tourist resorts became very busy and this included a marked up turn in overnight stays by motorhomists. In Churchfields car park alone between the 15th June and 30th September 260 tickets for motor home parking were purchased through the pay and display machines and more would have been recorded on Parkmobile. We are also aware that some motor home parking occurs without charge as drivers can arrive after normal enforcement ends and leave very early before it recommences.

This inevitably meant that an already busy Churchfields car park became busier. We received a number of complaints that inconsiderate motor home parking was blocking the pavement that runs along the Eastern boundary of the car park, that motorhomists were spilling out from their vans into the car parks to create small encampments and that the beautiful views across the Estuary were compromised for many by the large vans on the river's edge.

The Appledore ward members both voiced concern about campervan parking in Appledore and Cllr Ford in particular wished to suggest ways to improve the situation.

These complaints were largely valid and towards the end of the summer enforcement was organised for late evening and very early morning to help manage these issues.

It is difficult to predict future trends in visitor activity but it is probably prudent that we should expect an upturn in staycation visits over the next few years and therefore consider how we best manage our facilities to cope with that increased demand.

3. IMPLICATIONS

Legal Implications

To enact changes to the management of motorhome/campervan parking in Churchfields car park the Off Street Parking Places Order will need to be amended following the prescribed process.

Financial Implications

The costs of amending the Off Street Parking Places Order is estimated to be between £5,000 and £10,000 depending on the scale of change and the extend of new or replacement signage across the district's car parking.

It is very difficult to predict the financial impact of changing overnight stay arrangements for campervans/motorhomes. It is possible that there will be a modest decrease in stays thus a small negative impact on the budget but that might be off set by an increase in the tariff.

It is likely that to make any change effective we will need to do more out of normal hours enforcement patrols and this of course will increase the overtime salary spend.

Human Resources Implications

N/A

Sustainability Implications

Equality/Diversity

N/A



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 2018

Ward Member and Leader Member Views

Cllr Hicks - Lead Member for Economy 26/11/20

It is important that we manage our car parks to support the local economy and raise important funds for the Council that enable us to effectively run our services. It is though equally important that we listen to the concerns of our communities and Ward Members and organise things so that they have as few negative impacts on our district as possible. I look forward to the debate as we try to balance these tensions.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In Cllr Ford's notice of motion three substantive proposals are made:

1. That a specific area for around 12 motorhomes is created
2. That the charge for an over night stay is increased to £15
3. That only one night stays are permitted rather than the current two.

Members can obviously resolve to support the notice of motion but your officers respectfully request the opportunity to suggest some alternative ways of managing the problems in Churchfields car park.

To address the first point in the Notice of Motion. It is the view of your officers that this proposal, whilst physically possible, would be difficult to enforce and would limit the parking spaces available for other users of the car park and therefore reduce our income generating capacity. The intention of the proposal is to limit motorhome parking and to keep them away from the riverside where they block the pavement and the view for others. Officers believe that these intentions can be more easily managed, without the risk of income reduction, need for physical adaptation or additional line marking by prohibiting campervan/ motorhome parking in the spaces on the right hand side of the main route through the car park (on the river side). Camper vans would therefore only be able to park in the spaces on the left hand side of the main route, away from the pavement and river side, thus not causing obstruction of passage or view. Extra signage would be required to make motorists aware of these new restrictions.

To address the second point. The price point of £5 per night was set in 2014 and has not increased since that time. Your officers feel that there is some scope for an increase (not only for Churchfields but all permissible car parks) without making the very popular over night stay unattractive to visitors. It is suggested that members consider a more modest increase of £3 (to £8 per night) It is felt that this would be reasonable given that no facilities are provided for users other than a parking space.

To address the third point. If members wish to limit overnight stays to one night, rather than two, they might consider making that arrangement for Churchfields car park only, rather than all permissible car parks, as no objections to the status quo have been reported elsewhere.



Whichever ever proposal is approved, it is recommended that it's success in addressing the issues raised is kept under review and that a report on that should be brought to Internal Overview and Scrutiny in 12 months for members to debate.

It is intended that any amendments to the Off Street Parking Places Order would be in place for enforcement to by Easter 2021. What ever members resolve in relation to these matters it will be essential that additional enforcement is provided to ensure compliance. This will come in the form of out of normal hours patrols and will increase the staffing costs of the service.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Members consider whether to approve or the notice of motion, or;
2. Approve the alternative proposal for the zonal restriction of camper van parking as set out in the report with an increase to £8per night,and;
3. Consider whether a maximum one or two night stay should be applicable to Churchfields car park, and;
4. Authorise officers to seek amendment to the Off street Parking Places Order as necessary

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Consultations: Chief Executive, Head of Legal and Governance, S151 Officer
Contact Sean Kearney
Officer:
Background
Papers:

