

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Full Council – 15 December 2020

Decisions taken under the urgency rules regarding the Car Parking Christmas Charging 2020

This matter is the responsibility of the Portfolio Holder for Car Parking and Planning
Cllr Mike Rigby

Report Author: **Stuart Noyce, Assistant Director Commercial Services**

1.0 Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the urgent decision to suspend car parking charges on the three Saturdays leading up to Christmas for 2020.
- 1.2 This decision was taken on 27th November 2020 by the Portfolio Holder for Car Parking and Planning under the urgency rules contained within paragraph 5 of the Budget and Policy Framework within the Council's Constitution. The Decision is attached as Appendix A.
- 1.3 There was insufficient time to take this decision through the normal democratic processes for this year as with previous years due to uncertainty with the second lockdown. The scheme was therefore agreed under the urgency provisions by the Portfolio Holder for Car Parking and Planning with the consent of the Chair of Scrutiny. The Constitution provides that, where urgent decisions are taken, a full report is made to the next available Council meeting to explain the decision, the reasons for it and why it had to be treated as a matter of urgency.
- 1.4 The intention is in future years to build this expected annual suspension into the Car Parks Fees and Charges report every February Budget Setting Council, with member agreement.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Council notes the decision made to suspend parking charges as detailed in 4.5 - 4.8 of the report on the three Saturdays leading up to Christmas and Sunday 6th December in Dulverton.

3.0 Risk Assessment

- 3.1 If the Council were to not relax charging for parking at Christmas as it has in previous years at the current time this could potentially have a negative economic impact on the district, and in particular town centres, as other shopping destinations are offering free parking to attract customers.
- 3.2 The other risk to the Council is the impact on parking income.

4.0 Background and Full details of the Report

- 4.1 The schedule of fees for Off Street Car Parking for 2020/2021 was approved by the Council at its meeting on the 19th February 2020.
- 4.2 From the 23rd March 2020, the Country went into legally enforced lockdown due to the Coronavirus Pandemic. This resulted in members of the public being directed to stay at home, unless classed as a key worker.
- 4.3 Parking enforcement activity were suspended as the contracted enforcement services were withdrawn. Car parking charges were suspended until September as set out and agreed at full Council meeting on the 7th July.
- 4.4 From the 5th November 2020, the Country went into a second legally enforced lockdown due to the Coronavirus Pandemic. As the local economy starts to rebound from the second lockdown there is a cost to the Council, but the opportunity to help economic stimulus is one that should not be lost. Free parking for the three Saturday's in the run up to Christmas with the aim of increasing footfall, dwell time and spend in our town centers.
- 4.5 The proposed suspension of car parking charges will apply for the three December 2020 Saturdays before Christmas i.e. 5th, 12th and 19th and on Sunday 6th December in Dulverton
- 4.6 Free parking will apply all day; from 00:00 to 23:59 on the dates listed in paragraph 4.5 (subject to car park opening hours) in Minehead and West Somerset Car Parks.
- 4.7 Free parking will apply from 15:00 to 23:59 on the dates listed in paragraph 4.5 (subject to car park opening hours) in Taunton Car Parks.
- 4.8 Free parking will apply all day; from 00:00 to 23:59 on Sunday 6th December (subject to car park opening hours) in Dulverton Car Parks to support the Dulverton by Starlight events.
- 5.0 Links to Corporate Strategy** – This decision directly supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan objective of Economy and improving and regenerating our town centers.
- 6.0 Finance / Resource Implications** – The Coronavirus Pandemic lockdown and subsequent closing of town centres has impacted on the amount of car parking income that has come into the Council.
Car parking income for the periods of charging suspension proposed have been estimated at £19,000.
- 7.0 Legal Implications** - The Council has been following the guidance set out by the Government and Local Government Association in respect of managing car parking during the Coronavirus Pandemic.
- 8.0 Climate and Sustainability Implications** - There has been a decrease in car journeys through lock down. The Council is alive to the implication of promoting measures that support car journeys, striving to move forward more sustainable forms of transport across the District. The time limited nature of this relaxation of charging is balanced with the economic benefit to the local community.

9.0 Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications - None

10.0 Equality and Diversity Implications - None

11.0 Social Value Implications - None

12.0 Partnership Implications - None

13.0 Health and Wellbeing Implications – None

14.0 Asset Management Implications – None

15.0 Data Protection Implications - None

16.0 Consultation Implications - None

Scrutiny/Executive Comments / Recommendation(s) – None as this report is a matter for Full Council

Democratic Path:

- **Scrutiny / Corporate Governance or Audit Committees – No**
- **Cabinet/Executive – No**
- **Full Council – Yes**

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