

Report To:	CABINET	Date:	30 JUNE 2020
Heading:	INTRODUCTION OF TWO HOURS FREE PARKING IN TOWN CENTRE CAR PARKS		
Portfolio Holder:	CLLR DAVID MARTIN, PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR PARKS & TOWN CENTRES		
Ward/s:	ALL WARDS		
Key Decision:	YES		
Subject to Call-In:	YES		

Purpose of Report

To agree to introduce two hours free parking in town centre car parks from early September 2020.

Recommendation(s)

1. Agree the proposal to introduce two hours free parking in town centre car parks from early September 2020
2. To approve the Notice of Variation as appended to the report and to proceed to implement the variation in accordance with the legislative procedure once the new Parking Order is made in line with the timeframe set out in the report.
3. To agree that parking will remain free in all Council car parks across the District until the new charges come into force.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

To support high street businesses to recover from the impacts of the Covid-19 lockdown and provide longer-term support to attract people into town centres.

Alternative Options Considered

Not to introduce two hours free parking for town centres - **not recommended**, the need to support town centre businesses is paramount and outweighs the loss of income.

Detailed Information

It was agreed at Cabinet on 25th November 2019 to introduce a new Parking Order to replace the current order which came into operation on 1st February 2016. The process to make the new order was undertaken with a 28 day period of informal consultation, followed by a 28 day period of formal consultation. Feedback from both consultations was considered, but no changes were required to be made to the order.

The order was due to be advertised at car parks during March and April but this process was put on hold when parking charges were suspended during the Covid-19 lockdown. During this period it has become apparent that town centres will require additional support due to the short-term effects of the closure of non-essential retail from late March until 15th June and the longer-term effects caused by a potential acceleration of online shopping, the existing and predicted increases in unemployment and reduced consumer confidence and spending. During lockdown it has been reported nationally that local independent businesses which were able to remain open have seen a rise in sales and support from local communities. It is an ideal opportunity to build on this support through promoting a 'shop local' message. A campaign to support our local high streets was launched in mid-June and will continue throughout the summer.

The new Parking Order is currently being advertised in car parks for the mandatory six week period. Thereafter we will introduce a notice of proposal for the variation of charges to introduce two hours free parking for all car parking spaces in town centre car parks. This will be advertised at the car park sites for a period of 28 days from which time the new charges will come into force on 7th September. Until the new charges come into force, parking will remain free in all Council car parks across the District. Extending the free parking period beyond June 2020 which was the previously approved period will reduce car parking income by circa £25k.

Based on the last full year usage of town centre car parks from 2018/19, providing two hours free parking would reduce income by approximately 26% or £42,700. This figure is based on the assumption that visitors who purchased four hour and 12 hour tickets will continue to do so in the same numbers. However experience from other Nottinghamshire councils who have introduced a two hour free parking tariff has shown that total income dropped by a greater than expected amount. Free parking promotions during the Christmas period have been very popular in the past two years and increasing the free period from one to two hours is likely to be very well received by traders and the public.

Although the reduction in income will need to be offset elsewhere in the Council's budget, there is an urgent need to support town centres and businesses through a very challenging time and to provide longer-term incentives to attract people to the town centres. This will support the investment from the Towns Fund (and the Future High Streets Fund for Sutton, subject to the bid being successful).

Town centre car parks where there will be two hours free parking are as follows: **Hucknall** - Market Place, Piggins Croft and Yorke Street, **Kirkby** - Market Yard, Ellis Street, Hodgkinson Road and Festival Hall and **Sutton** - Stoney Street, New Street, Market Place and Sherwood Place.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

Economic Growth and Place – key initiative; to re-invigorate and re-purpose town centres; introduce car parking promotions.

Legal:

By virtue of Sections 35(1) and 35(3) and 35C of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, a local authority may make variations to charges at off street parking places in accordance with the processes set out in related regulations.

Regulation 25 of the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996/2489 sets out the process for varying parking charges. The Council must publish its intention to vary parking charges and give at least 21 days' notice of the variation by publishing the notice in local newspapers and place notices in the car parks.

Finance:

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	The extension to free car parking to early September from the end of June will reduce car parking income by circa £25k. Introducing two hours free car parking for two hours will incur loss of income of circa £43k per annum with part year impact for 2020/21.
General Fund – Capital Programme	Not applicable
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	None
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	None

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
Reputational – negative publicity when the new order is advertised which includes the charges for two hours unless in a designated red bay	PR will be needed to ensure a clear message is communicated that all spaces will be free for all car parks until early September and thereafter two hours free parking will be available for all spaces

Human Resources:

No implications identified.

Environmental/Sustainability

No implications identified.

Equalities:

No implications identified.

Other Implications:

No implications identified.

Reason(s) for Urgency

Not applicable

Reason(s) for Exemption

Not applicable

Background Papers

Not applicable

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