

# **Cherwell District Council**

## **Executive**

**5 December 2016**

<p><b>Notification of Urgent Action – Free Parking for Small Business Saturday on 3 December 2016 and Free After Three Parking in January 2017</b></p>
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### **Report of Director of Operational Delivery**

This report is public

#### **Purpose of report**

To report the urgent action which was taken by the Director of Operational Delivery in consultation with the Leader relating to offering free parking for Small Business Saturday on 3 December 2016 and Free After Three Parking in January 2017.

#### **1.0 Recommendation**

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To note the urgent action taken by the Director of Operational Delivery in consultation with the Leader to offer free parking for Small Business Saturday on 3 December 2016 and Free After Three parking in January 2017.

#### **2.0 Introduction**

- 2.1 The Council has in the past considered different means of assisting traders in its urban centres. One of these measures has been incentivising the use of town centres by offering free car parking over the Christmas and New Year trading period. Free use at certain times such as the week end has been offered previously in some years but this needs to be balanced against the effectiveness of this when compared to alternative free car parking promotions and the Council's ability to fund the loss of income.
- 2.2 A request has been received for the Council to support Small Business Saturday on 3 December 2016 as means of assisting the many independent town centre traders over difficult trading times.

## **3.0 Report Details**

### **Small Business Day 3 December 2016**

- 3.1 The Council has received via its Growth team during its interface with local trader's requests to support the promotion of and resident participation in Small Business Saturday on 3 December 2016. These requests originate largely from the strong base of independent traders who operate in Banbury and Bicester.
- 3.2 Support by this Council in the form of car parking offers for this trading day promotion has been given previously in 2012, 2014 and 2015 which was welcomed by traders and formed part of the overall promotion of the event in those years.
- 3.3 The loss of income can only be estimated based on previous years and other Saturdays in late November /early December. These vary from year to year and have also been subject to similar free parking offers. It is estimated that the loss of income and the implementation costs will be c £7,500.

### **Free After Three in January 2017**

- 3.4 This initiative was trialled last year from late November through to early January. Regrettably, the car parking technology the Council uses is ageing and cannot provide any accurate data for tickets sold after 3.00pm nor parts of tickets which are bought before 3.00pm but extend beyond it. The loss of income and implementation costs last year was estimated to be c£60,000. There is also a requirement for a public notice three weeks in advance of a variation to the relevant traffic order.
- 3.5 From monitoring undertaken by the Car Park Wardens last year, it appeared that the car parks were no busier than previous Christmas periods with the exception of the two ultra short stays, Banbury Market Place and Bicester Market Square. These seemed busier after 3.00pm throughout December with Bicester Market Square also busier at the start of January.
- 3.6 It is therefore proposed that the free after three promotion is not repeated during the same period as last year as the car parks are normally full at those times and therefore little benefit can be gained through further promotion. However, by focussing on the post-Christmas period in January 2017, there is more opportunity for greater value to be gained for town centre traders.
- 3.7 The cost implications to the Council of introducing this are also difficult to estimate as the ageing ticket machines do not provide the level of ticket sales analysis to do this accurately. The majority of the cost will arise from the loss of income and is based in broad terms on January 2016 income less any long stay tickets. The balance is then divided by total charging hours and then multiplied by 4 (representing the 4 hours free). With implementation costs, this is estimated to be c £49,000

## **4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations**

- 4.1 Following requests to the Council to introduce free parking incentives to support local town centre traders over the Christmas and New Year period, the Director of Operational Delivery took urgent action in consultation with the Leader of the Council to approve the Small Business Day and Free after Three in January 2017 free parking offers.
- 4.2 The urgency for this arose from the need to publicise the decision to take effect at least 21 days before 3 December event and to enable the free parking offer to be part of the promotion for event.

## **5.0 Consultation**

- 5.1 The Leader of the Council only due to the urgency

## **6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection**

- 6.1 Different applications time periods for the free after three parking offer as outlined in the report.

## **7.0 Implications**

### **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 7.1 There is difficulty estimating with a reasonable degree of accuracy the actual loss of income which is the primary cost to the Council of these free parking proposals. The best estimates with implementation costs are £7,500 for the Small Business Saturday and £49,000 for free after three in January. The financial effect of these will be considered as part of the mid and end of year budget review processes.

Comments checked by:  
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### **Legal Implications**

- 7.2 None as long as the Notice of Variation is published as per the details in the report.

Comments checked by:  
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## 8.0 Decision Information

### Key Decision

**Financial Threshold Met:** Yes

**Community Impact Threshold Met:** No

### Wards Affected

All Banbury and Bicester wards

### Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

A District of Opportunity - Supporting economic development, employment, conservation, regeneration and development of the District

### Lead Councillor

Councillor George Reynolds, Deputy Leader

## Document Information

Appendix No	Title
None	
<b>Background Papers</b>	
None	
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