

<b>Decision maker:</b>	<b>Cabinet member transport and regulatory services</b>
<b>Decision date:</b>	<b>Wednesday, 30 January 2019</b>
<b>Title of report:</b>	<b>Car Parking Concessions Review - pilot event</b>
<b>Report by:</b>	<b>Parking Strategy &amp; Processing Manager</b>

## **Classification**

Open

## **Decision type**

Non-key

## **Wards affected**

(All Wards);

## **Purpose and summary**

In order to inform a countywide review of concessions currently offered in respect of parking charges in council car parks and on street paid for parking spaces a pilot event is proposed in order to measure the benefit and impact of such events for the future.

It is recommended that a free parking in all council car parks be approved and for the free parking to take effect on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2019, subject to certain conditions as outlined.

## **Recommendation(s)**

**That:**

- (a) **Free parking for up to 4 hours after 10am on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2019 in all Herefordshire Council off street car parks (except Friar Street military club), be approved as a pilot.**

## **Alternative options**

1. General all day free parking for the entire day could be approved. However, this would fail to manage the demand for parking spaces from commuters and drivers arriving to the city early in the day. This could lead to congestion of car parks as space availability would be

limited when taken by the first drivers to arrive into the town and city centres in the morning, predominately shop workers.

2. Another alternative is to promote a number of free parking events and measure the impact at different times of the year. This is not recommended due to the impact that this would have on parking revenue income.

## Key considerations

1. There has been recent nationwide publicity about the 'decline of the high street', which is attributed, in the main, to factors such as online shopping and uncertainty surrounding the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union. A free parking pilot event of this nature would enable the council to understand any advantage that concession parking may offer in the future to support high streets.
2. It is planned to review concessions offered in council car parks and on street paid for parking during 2019. The current council guidelines allow for free parking events such as at Christmas where evenings are free on Wednesdays in Hereford. There is currently no information available as to if or how these events support local economies in the county. This pilot will enable local town councils and stakeholder groups to monitor the impact of the free parking on their local economies and report any findings back to the council following the pilot.
3. There will be an expectation from these stakeholder groups to provide feedback, with evidence where possible. This will enable the review of concessions to take into account all available information. Stakeholder groups will be asked specifically for detailed data information that can be used to measure the economic impact compared to 'normal' parking arrangements last year.
4. It is possible that by removing the car park charges and thus the disincentive to travel by car, drivers will choose to drive short journeys in the city centre and add to congestion. The Urban Traffic Control (UTC) system in Hereford will be utilised to sample the introduction of the pilot and compare to previous similar dates. The data together with the potential economic benefit and cost of implementing will be used to assess the overall benefit.
5. Year on year comparison of car park use in Herefordshire demonstrates an increase in overall car park use, by ticket sales, across the county of 2% - with Hereford increasing by 4%. There is therefore no evidence to suggest that current car park charges negatively affect the number of visitors to the county.
6. Charges will apply as normal to on street pay and display spaces in Hereford in order to continue to manage short stay vehicular traffic and retain short stay turnover.
7. As Friar Street car park is owned privately by the Military Club, it is only managed by the council this pilot would not apply at this location. It is at their discretion as to whether to allow free parking for this event.

## Community impact

8. One priority of the council contained within the corporate plan 2016 – 2020 is to 'support the growth of our economy'. By approving this pilot event the council can better understand if concessional parking can offer a benefits to economic vitality to support this principle.

9. However, another key priority is to ‘enable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives’. The council would need to therefore equally understand any potential disadvantages on congestion (and air quality) and the promotion of sustainable travel choices.

## Equality duty

10. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the ‘general duty’ on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
11. Where a decision is likely to result in detrimental impact on any group with a protected characteristic it must be justified objectively. This means that attempts to mitigate the harm need to be explored. If the harm cannot be avoided, the decision maker must balance this detrimental impact against the strength of legitimate public need to pursue the service change.
12. As the free parking will be available to all the council do not believe there will be a detrimental impact to equality.

## Resource implications

13. The total cost of approving this decision is estimated to be in the region of £10K in lost car parking revenue. This will be paid for using current underspend on the car parking budget.

Revenue or Capital cost of project (indicate R or C)	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Future Years	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
<i>Free parking event – Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2019 (R)</i>	10	0	0	0	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>

## Legal implications

14. Charging for parking under the Council’s car parking policy will be an executive function and likely a key decision on the basis that it may result in the council making savings which are significant having regard to the Council’s budget for the service or function concerned, although the above recommendation relates to only one day waiving the parking fees for set car parks. The decision has been delegated by the leader to the portfolio holder and

individual cabinet member for transport and regulatory services under Part 3 Section 3 of the Constitution.

15. Although the council as the traffic authority has the powers to make Traffic Regulation Orders under the RTRA and to deal with off-street parking charges under Sections 32, 35 and 35C of the RTRA where appropriate to vary or delete the orders; the Council is waiving the charge on one day. It is therefore felt a notice of variation is not an appropriate method of changing the charge and the free parking will be allowed by virtue of non-enforcement of the current car park order for the period set out within this report .

## Risk management

16.

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Risk – Car parks will become heavily used and congested resulting in less space for short stay shoppers.	<p>The offer will commence at 10 am and only be available for 4 hour stays. This will ensure that commuter traffic is still managed in the same way as normal.</p> <p>On street paid parking will still apply which will ensure that a turnover of spaces for short stay use is still available.</p> <p>Hereford City's Urban Traffic Control traffic management system will be interrogated to identify any adverse impacts on the network during the period and sample previous similar dates. This review will inform any mitigation measures required.</p>
Risk – no feedback or inconclusive feedback is presented as a result of this pilot. Resulting in no further clarity on the benefits of concessional parking to inform the review.	<p>All Stake holder groups will be written to request information.</p> <p>If no information is presented this will be taken as 'no benefit experienced'.</p>

## Consultees

17. All Town and City Councils, Hereford Business Improvement District, Maylords and Old Market shopping centres were all written to informally and consulted on a free parking proposal. It was originally planned for the 5<sup>th</sup> January 2019.
18. Of the eight organisations that were consulted seven responded. The majority felt that the January date was too soon after the Christmas period to be a real benefit. As a result of their feedback, it is now proposed for the 9<sup>th</sup> February 2019.

## Appendices

None

# Background papers

None identified