

**NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S REPORT TO THE  
ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Date 14<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

1. **REPORT TITLE** Consideration of Car Parking Issues
- Submitted by:** Head of Housing, Regeneration and Assets
- Portfolio:** Finance and Efficiency
- Ward(s) affected:** Town

**Purpose of the Report**

To review the changes made to the car parking charges implemented prior to the Christmas retail period and to consider the views of the traders.

**Recommendations**

**To consider the effect of the £1 after 3pm town centre car parking charge and the other Christmas car parking concessions.**

**Reasons**

Scrutiny Committee has asked to review the car parking charges in particular in line with the views of the Newcastle Business Improvement District (BID) Retailers Forum.

1. **Background**

- 1.1 In October 2018 Cabinet considered a report on the management and operation of the Council's town centre car parks with the aim of increasing utilisation thereby increasing footfall to improve the town centre economy and stabilising income for the Council. The Scrutiny Committee reviewed these alongside car parking financial information at the December meeting. At this time there was limited information available as the new charges had only just been implemented.
- 1.2 The car parking charges seek to achieve a reasonable balance between the Council's ongoing need for income generation (noting the responsibility for management, maintenance and repair) and making the town centre more accessible and affordable thereby supporting the town centre economy.

2. **Issues**

- 2.1 The alterations made to the town centre car parking charges were primarily:
- To facilitate free parking on all town centre car parks from noon to 8pm on the 2018 Christmas lights switch-on.
  - To give free parking on all town centre car parks from 3pm to 8pm on up to five late night pre-Christmas shopping events.
  - That officers be authorised to take all the necessary steps to introduce a flat rate charge of £1 for all town centre car parks after 3pm.

- To open the Merrial Street car park which was for Civic Office users to members of the public as a pay and display car park.
- To offer discounted town centre parking from noon on special events (on up to five occasions in any financial year with the choice of days at the BID's discretion). The BID have asked for the following event days to be supported:
  1. Lymelight - Saturday 4th May
  2. Easter – Saturday 21st April
  3. Homecoming (TBC) – Saturday 29th June
  4. Jazz and Blues – Saturday 25th May
  5. One other date to be agreedOn these days customers will be able to purchase a one hours parking ticket to cover parking from noon until the following morning.

### 3. **Options Considered**

- 3.1 Car parking income and ticket sales are appended to this report. At a high level they show that that income has decreased but there has been a slight increase in ticket sales.
- For the week of the Christmas Lights Switch On the ticket sales dropped from 8,642 in 2017 to 7,766 in 2018. In terms of income this dropped from £14,212 in 2017 to £13,055 in 2018.
  - Week 36 to 39 are the December weeks where the majority of the Christmas concessions were taking place. In week 36 there was a peak sale of car parking tickets at 12,395, compared to an average week selling approximately 9,000.
  - Looking at the effect of the £1 after 3pm from January onwards it has shown that ticket sales have increased from 82,326 in 2018 to 83,901 in 2019. Over this same time period income dropped 7.29% (£127,012 in 2017 to £117,751 in 2018).
- 3.2 The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Efficiency attended the BID Retailers Forum to hear first-hand what the local Newcastle businesses thought of the car parking concessions. They asked:
- That the Council continue to be more proactive with the promotion of car parking offers including the £1 after 3pm and discounted parking for 5 BID event days;
  - Promotion to include the installation of a banner on the railings of the Ryecroft car park,
  - Promotion to include regular feeds on Facebook and Twitter.
  - To revisit the BID led refund of 1 hours parking charge when you shop in the town centre.
  - Greater discount for BID members on the agreed Ryecroft permit scheme.
  - Consideration to bringing the £1 evening charge to start at 1pm.

### 4. **Proposal**

- 4.1 The Council to continue promotion of the parking offers so that members of the public are aware that some of the offers like the £1 after 3pm operate all year. This will include Facebook and Twitter. Equally the BID can also use these communication methods to promote the offers especially the 1 hours parking charge for town centre events. Discussions are taking place to see where banners can be used so that they do not impact on Highway safety.
- 4.2 A few years ago the Town Centre Partnership established a scheme whereby town centre customers could claim 1 hours free parking back from the shops when they spent a minimum amount. The shops set their own minimum amount to reflect the level of profit in

their products. In most areas where car parking is refunded it is normal that the business benefiting from the sale of the goods makes a financial contribution to the cost of the scheme. This was not discussed in detail at the Retailers Forum therefore further discussions are required with the BID.

- 4.3 The BID members subsidised parking permit scheme was established based on the Council offering 25% discount in line with that offered to large businesses buying significant numbers of permits, then the BID were subsidising a further 25% discount, thus giving local BID members a 50% discount. A meeting is arranged with the BID manager to discuss what further support the BID wish to see offered to their members. A verbal update will be given to the meeting on the progress with this item.
- 4.3 Prior to the changes implemented from the October Cabinet decisions the evening charge was 8pm onwards. This was brought forward to 3pm to support the town centre which traditionally goes quieter in the later afternoon. 3pm ties into the time when carers collect their children from school and may wish to come into the town centre. Further changes to this would need an appraisal of the potential impact both in terms of the benefit of increasing trading and the financial cost to the Council. Should Members wish to consider this it would be appropriate to ask the traders to provide information as to how their trading income has improved following the £1 commencing at 3pm. In line with this it would also be recommended to review the charges for 4 plus hours parking. Subject to Scrutiny members views it would be recommended that this is considered as part of the 10 year parking strategy.
- 4.4 Overall Scrutiny may wish to consider the impact of the car parking charges on:
- Council income / finances
  - Ticket sales
  - Footfall in the town
  - Business trading both day and evening, plus week days and weekends
- Scrutiny member views can then be fed into the development of the 10 year parking strategy.

5. **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

- 5.1 Scrutiny Committee have previously recognised that car parking is a valuable asset to the town centre and as such the Council should review how the car parks support the operation of the town centre.

6. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

- 6.1 Delivery of effective car parking is key to the delivery of the Council's corporate priority of a Town Centre For All.

7. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 7.1 The Council operates the car parks in line with the Traffic Regulation Order.

8. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 8.1 Providing car parks that are accessible to all members of the community is important.

9. **Financial and Resource Implications**

9.1 Subject to Scrutiny Committee views all potential future changes to car parking charging would need to be fully costed and appraised.

10. **Major Risks**

10.1 The Council's budget includes expected income from the car parks. Should income not be generated this would need to be considered carefully in line with other Council expenditure.

11. **Sustainability and Climate Change Implications**

11.1 The Council will need to review the options to install electric charging points to support the growth of electric cars as part of the national drive to reduce carbon emissions. It would be appropriate that the car parks are considered so that cars can be charged whilst the drivers are in the town centre.

12. **Key Decision Information**

12.1 This is not a key decision item.

13. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

13.1 Scrutiny Committee considered the issues on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2018 following the Cabinet decision on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2018.

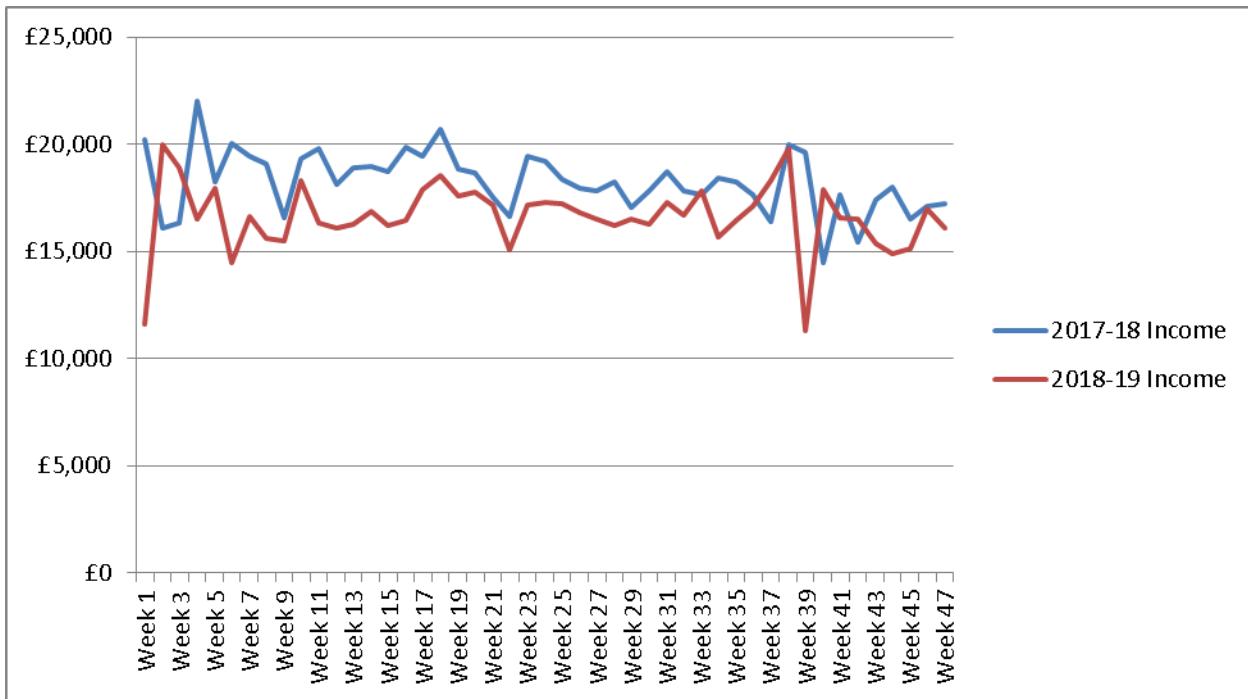
14. **List of Appendices**

14.1 Car Parking income and ticket sales.

15. **Background Papers**

15.1 None.

**Car Parking Income for 2017/18 and 2018/19**



**Ticket sales for 2017/18 and 2018/19**

