

# Agenda Item 58.

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Temporary Free Parking from 3pm in Wokingham Town Centre Car Parks</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	The Executive on 26 October 2017
<b>WARD</b>	Emmbrook, Evendons, Norreys and Wescott
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Josie Wragg. Interim Director of Environment
<b>LEAD MEMBER</b>	Chris Bowring Executive Member for Highways and Transport

## **OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

Provision of free parking in council owned car parks is expected to encourage more visitors to the town centre thereby increasing foot fall and supporting our local traders who are experiencing a down turn in their business due to extensive nature of works in the town centre.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Executive approves:

- 1) the temporary provision of free parking between 15:00 Hrs and 08:00 Hrs until the end of January 2018 at all Council owned car parks located within Wokingham Town Centre;
- 2) a supplementary estimate for £49,000 to cover the cost of lost income during this period and signage.

## **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

The measures proposed are intended to mitigate the impact on town centre trade as a result of the disruptions during the town centre regeneration and Market Place improvements. To support businesses through this busy seasonal trading period the Council is proposing to provide free parking at all its car parks within Wokingham Town Centre between 15:00 Hrs and 08:00 Hrs until the end of January 2018.

## Background

Wokingham Town Centre is undergoing an ambitious and unprecedented transformation. These works include the Peach Place redevelopment and the recently started transformation of Market Place. As a result of these works there is significant disruption in the town centre affecting both local traders and visitor to the town. In addition, to facilitate the works, numerous road closures are required and there is concern that this is having a detrimental impact on the number of visitors coming to the town.

Local businesses are particularly concerned that this will have a significant impact during the seasonal trading period which for many would be their busiest period of the year. The local traders have requested the council consider providing free parking across the council car parks to encourage visitors to the town and increase foot fall.

To respond and support businesses through this busy seasonal trading period, it is proposed to suspend car parking charges from 3pm to 8am in town centre car parks from November 2017 to the end of January 2018.

Car parks where this would apply are;

- 1) Carnival Multi-Storey Car Park;
- 2) Cockpit Path Car Park;
- 3) Council Offices Car Park, Shute End;
- 4) Denmark Street Car Park;
- 5) Easthampstead Road Car Parks (East & West);
- 6) The Paddocks Car Park; and
- 7) Wellington House Car Park.

In order to assist local traders and encourage shoppers in the town whilst at the same time ensuring spaces are not taken by all day parkers, it is proposed to allow free parking after 3pm until 8am.

By making the car parks free during the proposed time periods there will be a loss of income to the Council circa £48,000.

Not all the car parks within the town centre are owned by the Council. Several of the car parks are privately owned and there would still be a charge to use these car parks; one of these would be the Elms Road Multi-storey Car Park where the Council does not have control over tariffs (although it does enforce in this area.) As a result of Council owned car parks being free, the use of the private car parks may go down which would result in a reduction in income for the private operators.

Providing free parking at the Council car parks will require the need for additional temporary signs in car parks which would incur a cost estimated at £1,000.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

***The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.***

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1) from October 2017 to January 2018	£49k	No	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	Nil	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	Nil	Yes	Revenue

<b>Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision</b>
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Signage will need to be supplied and fitted twice in all town centre car parks at a cost of around £1,000
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<b>Cross-Council Implications</b>
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None
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<b>List of Background Papers</b>
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None
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