

Key Decision Required:	Yes	In the Forward Plan:	Yes
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CABINET

12 DECEMBER 2014

REPORT OF DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND COAST PROTECTION

A.3 HOUSEHOLDER PARKING PERMITS

(Report prepared by Ian Taylor)

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To seek the Cabinet's approval to extend the current free Tendring householder parking permit scheme, on the same terms and conditions, to 31 March 2016.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Tendring householder free parking permit scheme has been operating since July 2012 and been renewed, annually, in March 2013 and March 2014, with the current agreement due to expire on 31 March 2015.
- The free Tendring householder parking permit provides one free parking permit per Council Tax paying household for use on all public Council car parks, with the exception of the Naze and Holland Haven country parks.
- The scheme also specifically excludes Council-owned private car parks such as in housing estates or associated with office buildings.
- The permit is available for use from 11.00am until midnight but also operates in conjunction with the existing concessionary free after 3pm parking for all users of TDC car parks (again excepting the Naze and Holland Haven), which effectively extends the free use of Council car parks to local residents using the householder permit from 11.00am to 8.00am the following day.
- A budget provision for 2015/16 of **£0.300m** is included within the updated Financial Baseline and Detailed Estimates Report set out elsewhere on the agenda. However, although the implementation of the proposals set out in this report are subject to the approval of the 2015/16 Budget by Council on 10 February 2015, the timing of this report enables the necessary planning and preparatory work to commence so the scheme can continue from 1 April 2015.
- Use of the free parking permit was surveyed among town centre shops in 2012/2013, which returned information indicating a high level of support.
- Support for the free permit remains high with no adverse comments or complaints received by the Council in respect of it being provided.

- The number of duplicated free permits requested by residents increased in 2014 from previous years and the use of Council car parks by permit holders does appear to be increasing further, indicating the popularity of the scheme and it meeting its objective of encouraging local residents to shop local and to visit other parts of the District, including the seaside.
- The permits were included with the delivery of Council Tax invoices in 2014, which resulted in a net saving in the region of £17,000 postage and a further £3,000 saving on print costs by combining costs with Council Tax. Provisional arrangements are in place to include the free parking permits in the same way for 2015/2016 should Cabinet agree to extend the permit.
- A further review of the free parking permit and the terms and conditions of use associated with it is recommended prior to any decision to extend the permit beyond 31 March 2016.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That, Cabinet agrees:

- To extend the current free householder parking permit scheme, on the same terms and conditions of use as the current permit, with an expiry date of 31 March 2016 subject to the provision of funding in the 2015/16 budget; and**
- That, Officers be delegated authority, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, to make all necessary arrangements and incur expenditure to continue the scheme, including the provision and delivery of replacement permits.**

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

Concessionary parking schemes support key priorities and outcomes required to address the Council's key objectives and, in particular, promoting sustainable economic growth and the building of a thriving local tourism industry.

Free, or concessionary, off-street parking schemes are supported by the policies and actions within the adopted Parking Strategy for Tendring.

The Council's priority in respect of parking is for Tendring to be seen and regarded as a car-friendly District, encouraging visitors to the District by car.

FINANCE, OTHER RESOURCES AND RISK

Financial Implications

In the three previous years of operating the free parking permit scheme, the Council has set aside £300,000 to support Parking and Seafront income budgets for car parks.

A surplus has been achieved each year in the region of £20,000 to £50,000.

Other Risks

Seasonal fluctuations and unforeseen circumstances

Car park income can rise or fall sharply as a result of good or bad weather, which is a major contributor to visitor numbers in Tendring. Car park income can vary by up to £150,000 between years with or without any concessionary permit schemes in operation.

Permits used more widely than anticipated

Following the introduction of the Tendring householder free parking permit on 31 July 2012, each year has seen an increase in the number of requests for additional permits to be provided.

It is difficult for the Council to refuse applications for replacement but introducing a requirement for such applications to be made, in writing, and to check Council tax records to ensure the applicant is a Tendring resident has had the effect of reducing or minimising the number of claims made and permits replaced.

It would remain imprudent not to consider the possibility of permits becoming more widely available to visitors (in addition to residents) as the scheme continues and becomes more widely known and used.

There is no evidence so far of additional permits provided affecting financial estimates for the scheme.

LEGAL

The options for consideration in this report are within the Council's legal powers.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Consideration has been given to the implications of the proposed decision in respect of the following and any significant issues are set out below.

Crime and Disorder/Equality and Diversity/Health Inequalities

Are not affected by the provision of a Tendring householder parking permit

Area or Ward affected

All

Consultation/Public Engagement

All shops throughout Tendring were surveyed in 2012/2013 and comments and feedback was noted from motorists.

The scheme appears to remain universally popular. The Parking and Seafront service has not received any complaints in respect of offering the free parking permit.

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE CONCESSIONARY PARKING SCHEME

The free Tendring householder parking permit scheme commenced on 31 July 2012 and is currently operating alongside another free parking concession available to all Tendring District Council car park users from 3 pm to 8 am daily.

The combined concessionary parking schemes make it possible for any Council Tax paying household in Tendring to park, free of charge, on Council car parks from 11.00am to 8.00am the following morning, year round, with the exception of the car parks at the Naze and Holland Haven country parks and any Council-owned resident only car parks.

The emphasis on the Council's private and residential car parks was to ensure permits were not used in residential areas and on Council-owned private car parks, such as housing estate car parks or at Council offices.

The country park car park exemption from the free permit scheme reflects an historical free charging period up to 10.30 am on these car parks and daytime and evening activities requiring enforcement, which is most effective when a ticket is purchased.

The terms and conditions of use are displayed on the permit.

The primary purpose of the householder permits is to encourage people to shop locally and to encourage residents to travel more widely throughout the District and to visit and enjoy local facilities such as the seafront.

The 'free after three' concessionary parking scheme is intended to promote shopping at non-peak times and to promote the evening economy.

Members are seeking to demonstrate that Tendring is open for business and willing to support its local businesses by providing a free Tendring householder parking permit and encouraging private vehicles into town centres in the District, as outlined in the recently adopted Parking Strategy for Tendring.

INDICATORS AND MEASURES OF SUCCESS

What Constitutes Success?

Indicators of success of the free Tendring householder car park permit and the free after three car park concession for all car park users will be determined by:

- Improved footfall and business opportunities for local shops and businesses.
- Development of an evening economy in the District with visitors staying longer and increased activity at non-peak times.

Secondary indicators of success are:

- Ease of access for workers to local businesses.
- Assisting businesses when operating.

- Improved quality of life for residents of the District and in particular residents living in town centres with limited available parking.

Measures of Success

The measures of success against the above will be:

- Footfall – feedback from businesses
- Reports - received by the Council from the public and businesses

ANALYSIS

Footfall – feedback from Consultation - responses from businesses

Shops across the District were surveyed in 2012/2013 with a view to indicating if footfall had increased and whether the permit should remain and, if so, whether its conditions of use should alter.

The surveys conclude that a clear majority of businesses consider there has been an increase in footfall arising from the free householder permits.

The survey also indicated that a significant number of businesses consider that the free householder car park permit should be modified to exclude the peak summer season months.

Use of the car parks by longer staying vehicles and local residents at work, or for the convenience of shop workers, is considered to have some detrimental effect on local business due to a lack of available car park space for visitors and shoppers.

It is for this reason the permit start time was altered from 10.00am to 11.00am in 2013.

It is not proposed to conduct further shop surveys. There is a footfall counter installed in Clacton Town Centre, which could provide some data about town centre pedestrian footfall.

Reports Received by the Council from the Public and Businesses

A number of very positive comments and letters have been received by both elected members and Council officers about the free Tendring householder car park permit. This was reflected in a press release issued shortly after the schemes launch in early August 2012 and letters and comments continue to be printed in the local press and received in Council offices via letter and e mail.

A survey of shop occupancy rates in Clacton and Tendring has indicated a below the national average rate of empty shops in this District, which has been widely attributed to the popularity and success of the free Tendring householder parking permit.

There have been some comments from visitors and local businesses made about lack of available parking during periods of peak demand such as the school holidays.

CONCLUSION

The introduction of any free parking concession will result in reduced direct income to the Council and the financial implications associated with continuing the current permit scheme are highlighted in the report.

This report provides members with clear evidence to indicate strong support for concessionary parking schemes in Council car parks from local businesses as a means of improving footfall in local shops and encouraging additional visits to the seaside and generally within the District by local residents.

There is also further, more anecdotal evidence, to indicate that the free car park permits are enabling businesses to operate more effectively and are assisting shop workers and local residents to better utilise car parks during periods of non-peak demand.

The free parking concession is supported by policies and actions within the recently adopted Parking Strategy for Tendring, which outlines a clear aim to make Tendring a car friendly District and recognises that as a rural and coastal District, encouraging use of private vehicles is an important and useful way to support local shops and businesses and the general visitor economy.

The budget set aside to support the scheme has proven sufficient with some additional income over the profiled budget returned each year.

The extension of the start time for the parking permits from 10.00am to 11.00am, agreed in March 2013, was prudent and so far appears to have offset any additional income lost as a result of increasing familiarity with and use of the permits.

However, a full evaluation of revenues will need to be taken over a longer period (four to five years) in order to avoid making financial forecasts based on seasonally fluctuating income.

To date, the additional risks previously highlighted about the permits becoming widely available outside of the District, have been managed effectively.

Consideration for the exclusion of July and August months from the permit would increase parking revenues and enable consideration for reducing the current figure of £300,000 set aside to support the cost of the scheme. However, this option is not generally favoured by local residents who wish to continue to utilise the free parking permits year round.

Information so far from businesses is that Tendring is reversing national trends for shops in smaller shopping centres. The off-street car park permits are supporting key Council strategies and policies in respect of encouraging visitors to the area and are promoting economic benefits for the District. They are proving popular with both residents and local businesses.

APPENDICES

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR THE DECISION

None