

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Executive Director Neighbourhoods & Environment

to
Cabinet

on
30 June 2020

Report prepared by Sharon Harrington
Head of Traffic and Highways

Covid-19; Parking Recovery Proposals

Relevant Scrutiny Committee(s): Place Scrutiny
Executive Councillor: Councillor Ron Woodley
Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The COVID-19 pandemic has had and continues to have a major adverse impact on individuals, families, social networks, businesses and the wider economy on a global basis. The initial impact of the pandemic is now subsiding but it is clear that its impacts will be long term and far reaching and may re-emerge.
- 1.2 This report sets out how Parking Services could support the Council's intentions to lead and support its communities and businesses through the crisis and help them towards a sustainable recovery.
- 1.3 The Council itself has been significantly affected by the pandemic and this report also outlines the approach by which parking will adapt its way of working to engage with customers and deliver services in what has been described as the "new normal", for an agreed period of time.

2 Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 2.1 Approve the proposed temporary parking concession approach by which the Council will lead and support its communities and businesses by selecting options as set out in section 5 of this report and noting the relevant financial impact and proposed funding of the option chosen.
- 2.2 Approve the continuation of the additional 5 Civil Enforcement Officers at an additional monthly cost of £16K up to a maximum of six months (£96K) to support the increased parking pressures being identified as more vehicles are moving around the borough, which would be self-funded. The increase of officers will support enforcement in Controlled Parking Zones where complaints are being received due to parking of vehicles without permits.

- 2.3 Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Neighbourhoods and Environment in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport, Capital & Inward Investment to remove the schemes as and when the support for extended parking and reduced hours of enforcement are no longer required.

3. Background

- 3.1 At council on the 18 July 2019 there was an agreement to recruit on a temporary basis an additional 5 Civil Enforcement Officers as there was an appetite for increased parking enforcement, particularly in the vicinity of schools for example.
- 3.2 The recruitment of Civil Enforcement Officers was undertaken; however due to the lack of interest officers were not on boarded until February 2020.
- 3.3 Based on the statistics of enforcement Civil Enforcement Officers usually cover their costs; however due to Covid-19 there has been a significant decrease in enforcement over the last few months.
- 3.4 As we embark on relaxation there is more of a need to keep enforcement as robust as is possible to keep our network congestion free.
- 3.5 During lockdown the Civil enforcement officers were used to undertake other duties to support deliveries etc. however in normal working times their focus must be on enforcement to ensure we keep our network moving. We are currently not enforcing all contraventions in the borough due to the increased pressures we are experiencing in and around the seafront location. Therefore a reducing in officers could mean less enforcement which would create bad parking / driver behaviours.
- 3.6 We currently employ 37 Civil Enforcement Officers; based on a 7 day a week service on a shift pattern we have approx. 8 officers patrolling on any one shift.

4 Policy Justification

- 4.1 The situation arising from the C-19 pandemic is unprecedented and as maybe expected given this, the Council has no specific policies and no history of previous decisions directly relevant to this report.
- 4.2 However, fundamentally the Council exists to serve the town and its residents and support its community and the businesses in times of need. It is acknowledged at a national level that local authorities have played a key role in managing the response to the pandemic and will continue to do so through the recovery period and beyond.

5. Options

- 5.1 Option 1.** Do nothing; continue with the current enforcement times and charging structure.
- 5.2 Option 2.** Extend parking sessions; allowing the customer to buy 1 hour and get one free (in all off-street car park locations ONLY) and reduce enforcement times and not charge after 4pm - 7 days a week (in all off-street car park

locations ONLY) and extend the temporary recruitment of 5 mobile Civil Enforcement Officers for a further six month period.

Over the three month period (July, August & September); there is a potential risk to income in the region of £155k for the change of parking sessions and enforcement times. This loss in income will be met from the funding for COVID-19 response and recovery.

There is also a £16k per month pressure for the next six months for the extension of 5 Civil Enforcement Officer totalling £96k. However; it would be expected that this would be self-funding throughout the life of the recruitment.

- 5.3 Option 3.** Extend parking sessions; allowing the customer to buy 2 hours and get one free (in all off-street car park locations ONLY) and reduce enforcement times and not charge after 4pm - 7 days a week (in all off-street car park locations ONLY) and extend the temporary recruitment of 5 mobile Civil Enforcement Officers for a further six month period.

Over the three month period (July, August & September); there is a potential risk to income in the region of £115k for the change of parking sessions and enforcement times. This loss in income will be met from the funding for COVID-19 response and recovery.

There is also a £16k per month pressure for the next six months for the extension of 5 Civil Enforcement Officer totalling £96k. However; it would be expected that this would be self-funding throughout the life of the recruitment.

6. Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 The service would recommend Option 2 or 3 as the preferred option to support the rejuvenation of the town centre whilst queuing to enter establishments is still at its height; this together with the extension of the enforcement to protect congestion and abuse of parking and support residents returning to their properties being able to find parking. However; all options come carry a financial risk which is outlined in 8 below.

7. Corporate Implications

- 7.1 Contribution to Council's Vision & Corporate Priorities

- 7.1 Pride and Joy. "Our Streets and Public Spaces are clean and inviting."

- 7.2 Our parks and green spaces are well used the town's residents and visitors. Maintaining green spaces within the communities across the borough helps support the provision of clean and inviting town.

- 7.3 Safe and Well. – This ensures that essential workers are able to continue their work whilst the government recommends that they do not use public transport

8 Financial Implications

- 8.1 Option 1:** It is anticipated that doing nothing to support and encourage visitors and shoppers into the borough may discourage them completely from visiting our town centres and could impact on future parking income levels.
- 8.2 Option 2:** Parking benchmarking shows that availability of parking space is considered much more important than cost. The risk to income is not able to be quantified at this stage; however it would be expected to encourage more people to visit our town's at a time when the economy of the Towns needs to revive. July to September accounts for 28% of transactions therefore the total impact across that timeframe for the off-street element of that is predicted to be in the region of £110,000.

To support the town centre's; it is recommended to look at reducing the charging times to help encourage visitors in the late afternoon but offering free parking after 4pm (7 days a week). This is a potential loss of approx. £15k per month (£45,000 for the three months of July, August & September). This option is likely to benefit evening establishments only and not the town centre shopping locations which predominately close around 5pm, however it does give them the option to stagger their opening hours.

Civil Enforcement Officers have always been seen to be cost neutral; however due to unprecedented times this has not been the case. In C-19 the enforcement service was supporting with enforcement, as and when required, and, where any downtime was identified, was supporting with essential deliveries to the vulnerable and those shielding. The cost of these additional officers equates to a monthly cost of £16,000 (totalling £96k.) which should be self-funded through enforcement.

- 8.3 Option 3:** Parking benchmarking shows that availability of parking space is considered much more important than cost. The risk to income is not able to be quantified at this stage; however it would be expected to encourage more people to visit our town's at a time when the economy of the Towns needs to revive. July to September accounts for 39% of transactions therefore the total impact across that timeframe for the off-street element of that is predicted to be in the region of £70,000.

To support the town centre's; it is recommended to look at reducing the charging times to help encourage visitors in the late afternoon but offering free parking after 4pm (7 days a week). This is a potential loss of approx. £15k per month (£45,000 for the three months of July, August & September). This option is likely to benefit evening establishments only and not the town centre shopping locations which predominately close around 5pm, however it does give them the option to stagger their opening hours.

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- 9 Legal Implications
 - 9.1 N/A
- 10. People Implications
 - 10.1 If agreement is not sought to continue with the additional officers they will be made redundant with immediate effect.
- 11 Property Implications
 - 11.1 There are no property implications
- 12 Consultation
 - 12.1 No public consultation has been undertaken, other than with cabinet members.
- 13 Equalities and Diversity Implications
 - 13.1 There are no Equality and Diversity Issues
 - 13.2 Risk Assessment
 - 13.3 Value for Money
 - 13.4 No issues identified at this time
 - 13.5 Community Safety Implications
 - 13.6 No community safety implications have been identified at this time.
 - 13.7 Environmental Impact
 - 13.8 TBC
- 14. Background Papers**
 - 14.1 There are no background papers.
- 15. Appendices**
 - 15.1 There are no Appendices