

**COUNCIL – 23 FEBRUARY 2010**

**CHRISTMAS PARKING**

Report of the: Community and Planning Services Director

Also considered by: Cabinet – 19 November 2009

Status: For Decision

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**This report supports the Key Aim** of the effective management of Council resources.

**Portfolio Holder** Cllr. G. Williamson

**Head of Service** Head of Environmental and Operational Services – Mr. Richard Wilson

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Recommendation: It be RESOLVED that:

the estimated cost incurred in offering free parking on two Saturdays before Christmas (£12,000) be approved as a supplementary estimate to the 2009/10 budget, to be funded from the General Fund Reserve.

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**Introduction**

1. This report requests Members to approve a supplementary estimate to the 2009/10 budget to fund the cost of free parking on two Saturdays before Christmas. The proposal was approved in order to support local traders and businesses in acknowledgement of the impact of the financial down-turn.
2. The attached Cabinet report sets out details of the parking changes on those days, together with key implications. Members are now asked to approve a supplementary estimate to the 2009/10 budget for £12,000, being the estimated cost of free parking on those dates.

**Sources of Information:** Cabinet Report 19 November 2009.

**Contact Officer(s):** Richard Wilson

**Kristen Paterson, Community  
and Planning Services  
Director**

**CABINET – 19 NOVEMBER 2009**

**CHRISTMAS PARKING**

Report of the: Community and Planning Services Director

Status: For Decision

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**Executive Summary:**

This report requests Members to consider the provision of free parking on Saturdays in the run-up to Christmas to offer support to local traders and businesses in acknowledgement of the current affects of the financial down-turn.

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**This report supports the Key Aim** of the effective management of Council resources.

**Portfolio Holder** Cllr. G. Williamson

**Head of Service** Head of Environmental and Operational Services – Mr. Richard Wilson

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Recommendation: It be RESOLVED that:

1. Cabinet determine whether free parking be provided in all car parks and on-street parking areas throughout the district for two Saturdays in December, these being the 12<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> December or as otherwise specified,
  2. the estimated resultant loss of parking income and additional expenditure incurred (which totals £6,000 per Saturday) be funded from Supplementary Estimates.
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**Introduction**

3. Members may be aware of recent articles in the local press concerning the difficulties faced by local businesses during the current economic down-turn and requesting the Council to consider making parking free in the run up to Christmas.
4. In response to this, and in recognition of the financial situation being experienced, officers have been asked to investigate ways in which parking concessions could be provided and to advise of the budgetary implications of any options.
5. More recently, we have received a request from the Sevenoaks Town Council asking that free parking be provided on Saturdays in December leading up to

**Item No. 6c – Appendix**

Christmas. The Town Council has expressed concerns that retailers in the town are struggling as a result of the economic climate and that shoppers need to be encouraged to support local traders rather than shopping elsewhere.

6. The Town Council's request is being accommodated within proposals already being considered for the district as a whole.

**Proposals**

7. Because of the need to be able to effectively control car park use, it is impractical to offer parking free for short periods of the day, i.e the first hour of parking free or for a particular time of day. If parking is to be made free-of-charge, it really needs to be done for whole days. This enables a mechanism for closing-off the ticket machines to be put in place and also reduces confusion to car park users.
8. Saturday is obviously the most popular day for shoppers and, therefore, any free parking initiative provided on this day of the week is likely to have a greater impact and greater benefit to traders than perhaps on any other day.
9. To avoid any confusion to the public should the parking charges for the Council's car parks be suspended for a certain day, then it is recommended that the on-street charges should likewise be suspended.
10. The economic down-turn is, of course, a national phenomenon and, therefore, any concession offered should rightly be applied across the district. It is recommended that the proposals be applied to pay and display car parks and on-street parking in Sevenoaks (including the areas of St Johns Hill and Sevenoaks station), Swanley and Westerham in order to fairly benefit businesses throughout the district.
11. Notwithstanding the cost implications of providing free parking at a time when there is significant pressure upon the Council's budgets, it is suggested that more than one day's free parking should be considered. This is not only to maximise the benefit to businesses, but to also reduce and spread parking demand in an attempt to avoid excessive congestion in the car parks and surrounding roads.
12. It is proposed that free parking be made available on two Saturdays in December and that this be applied to all car parks and on-street parking areas throughout the district.
13. This will require all ticket machines to be closed-off with suitable signing being provided to advise users that they do not need to pay. Taking into account the number of ticket machines throughout the district (45 in Sevenoaks, 14 in Swanley and 13 in Westerham), this presents a logistical challenge. It has been assumed that this function will be addressed mainly through overtime for the Civil Enforcement Officers. The most suitable way of closing the ticket machines has yet to be determined.

14. Should two days free parking be considered, it is suggested that this be on the two consecutive Saturdays before Christmas Day, i.e. the 12<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> December. An alternative, would be to consider making this alternate Saturdays, say the 5<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> December.
15. It should be noted that the provision of free parking will enable people to park up to the maximum period of stay should they so wish, which is likely to reduce the turnover of spaces. All parking areas will be enforced as normal to ensure compliance with general conditions of use.

### **Consultation**

16. The parking area managed and operated by Sencio at its Sevenoaks leisure centre form part of the Suffolk Way car park. Sencio would need to be consulted to see whether it would take part in the free parking concession and, therefore, its views have been invited and any response will be brought to the meeting for Members' information.

### **Key Implications**

#### Financial

17. It is estimated that the loss of pay and display income all car parks and on-street areas throughout the district for one Saturday would be approximately £5,500. This comprises £4,700 for car parks and £800 for on-street parking.
18. In addition, an allowance of £500 per Saturday should be made to cover closing ticket machines and providing signing. The total cost per Saturday would therefore be around £6,000 meaning that the proposal for two Saturdays would cost £12,000.

#### Community Impact and Outcomes

19. The provision of free parking will be of benefit to businesses and the local community. By encouraging people to shop in the district it will offer support to businesses at a difficult time.
20. Apart from budgetary concerns, the proposals would be no adverse impact.

#### Legal, Human Rights etc.

21. There are no human rights issues or implications.

### **Conclusions**

22. It is recommended that free parking be made available for two Saturdays in December during the run-up to Christmas.
23. It is recommended that the free parking applies to all car parks and on-street parking areas in the district.

**Risk Assessment Statement**

24. The proposals are intended to support local businesses in the district by encouraging people to use local shopping areas rather than shop elsewhere. The risk, should these proposals not be approved, would be that businesses suffer financially as a result of reduced levels of trade and that the general well-being of shopping areas in the district is not maintained.

**Sources of Information:** Parking income and ticket machine records.

**Contact Officer(s):** Gary Connor Ext.7310

**Kristen Paterson, Community  
and Planning Services  
Director**

