

EXECUTIVE – 5 AUGUST 2014

AGENDA ITEM 7 – CAR PARKING PAY & DISPLAY CHARGES – OBJECTIONS TO TRO

SUMMARY OF COUNCIL DEBATE ON PETITION

Laura Sleight attended the Council meeting on 30 July 2014 and presented her petition, as referred to at paragraph 2.5 of the Executive Member's report.

The petitioner highlighted the key concerns shared by residents who had signed the petition. She stated their opposition to the idea of evening charges and did not believe that half an hour's free parking would justify the impact on residents and the economy.

She also highlighted the unfairness on town centre residents who relied on car parks to deal with the difficulties of parking near to where they lived. Some residents were permitted to purchase season tickets from £36 per year whilst others were forced to buy daily car park tickets costing up to £1,400 per year. This not only discouraged town centre dwelling, it also contradicted the car parking policy of consistency in setting charges for similar services.

The petitioner also referred to the impact on the business community, including those who relied on daytime business, which suggested that the proposals would have a negative impact on the local economy.

The Executive Member for Economic Development responded by referring to the set of principles agreed by the Executive in 2012 for the car parking service. These included the need for charging to be fair to all including council taxpayers and for the costs of car parks to be borne by users rather than the council taxpayer. The current charging structure did not reflect these principles as evening users did not contribute.

The Executive Member indicated that, having taken note of all the comments that had been submitted in response to the TRO advertisement, he would be recommending to his Executive colleagues, a withdrawal of the proposed evening charges beyond 6.30 pm, but that other elements of the charging proposals be implemented, so that daytime users could visit town centres for longer and for a lesser charge.

Finally, the Executive Member referred to further proposals in the pipeline and advised that Officers were looking at a number of issues that utilised new technology in areas, such as pay on exit and ANPR.

Various other Members spoke. Councillor P Ruffles expressed partial support for the petition in respect of the costs on town centre dwellers, but hoped that the principle of evening charges would not be lost completely. The Leader alluded to other work that was progressing and referred to the role of the emerging District Plan. Councillor J Wing congratulated the Executive Member for taking a radical approach, but expressed concern with the impact of evening charges on volunteers in community groups.