

# CABINET

18<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2022

## FREE PARKING DAYS IN TOWNS

### Purpose:

Consideration of varying the current arrangement in towns of five free days each year to support their economic growth.

### Recommendations:

To note the contents of the report and consider the following options:

1. Maintain the current 5 days – approx. cost to Council is £57k per year.
2. Extend to 10 days – approx. total cost to Council £114k per year (i.e. an additional £57k over the existing costs).
3. Extend to 12 days – approx. total cost to Council £137k per year (i.e. an additional £80k over the existing costs).
4. Maintain the existing 5-day provision for the three principal towns (Carmarthen, Llanelli and Ammanford) and extend supporting towns to 10 days (£61.5k per year) or 12 days (£63.3k per year). This proposal results in a net additional cost of *£4.5k and £6.3k respectively for the 10 and 12 day options.*
5. Undertake a pilot scheme for 12 months to assess the impact of an extended provision of 12 days in Llandovery.
6. Undertake a review of the current car parking strategy, approved in 2018, with a future report to be considered by Cabinet to confirm the Terms of Reference for the review

### Reasons:

To consider the cost and resource implications of varying the current free parking days arrangement.

Relevant scrutiny committee to be consulted NO

Cabinet Decision Required: Yes

CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER: Cllr. Edward Thomas

Directorate:

Name of Head of Service:  
Stephen Pilliner

Report Author:  
Richard Waters

Designations:

Head of Highways and  
Transport

Highways &  
Transportation Services  
Manager

Email addresses:

[SGPilliner@carmarthenshire.gov.uk](mailto:SGPilliner@carmarthenshire.gov.uk)

[rwaters@carmarthenshire.gov.uk](mailto:rwaters@carmarthenshire.gov.uk)

# CABINET

18<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2022

## FREE PARKING DAYS IN TOWNS

### BRIEF SUMMARY OF PURPOSE OF REPORT.

#### 1. Background

The Council has an approved policy to provide free parking in its pay & display car parks on up to five separate days each year to support events or campaigns in each town.

This initiative was introduced in 2013 and aimed to increase footfall in towns. Normally it used to support events such as the Christmas Lights launch which is popular annual event in most towns and other more bespoke events such as the Cycling Championship in Newcastle Emlyn, Festival of Senses in Llandeilo or the Sheep Festival in Llandovery.

Applications for the free parking days are submitted on-line and must have the support of the appropriate Town Council and Town Centre Management Group. Following internal consultation, the applications are put forward for Cabinet Member approval.

The free parking days are available for the following towns and their associated car parks.

Ammanford	Margaret Street/Lloyd Street, Carregamman, Wind Street Baltic, Hall Street
Carmarthen	St Peters, John Street, Quayside, Lammas Street, Friars Park, Blue Street, Priory Street, County Hall, 3 Spilman Street, Parc Myrddin, Station approach, Coach/bus station approach
Llandeilo	Crescent Road
Llandovery	Castle
Llanelli	Murray Street Multi Storey, Church Street, Thomas/Edgar Street, Vauxhall Road, East Gate
Newcastle Emlyn	Mart, Cawdor, Castle
St Clears	Pentre Road

In addition to this, a pilot initiative was introduced in October 2018 to boost footfall in our town centres which provides regular free parking in our short stay car parks. The timing of the free parking was agreed with the respective towns to increase visitor number during quieter periods. The allocation, which is still on-going, is shown below.

Carmarthen	Tuesdays & Thursdays 3:30pm to 6pm
Ammanford, Llandeilo, Llandovery, Newcastle Emlyn & St Clears	Monday to Wednesday 10am to 2pm
Llanelli	Mondays & Tuesdays 10am to 4pm

Questions have been asked recently by representatives in some of the rural towns about the potential to increase the free parking days over and above the current 5 free-parking days per annum that the Council has in place. The requests are made on the basis of independent reports commissioned as part of the Council's Ten Town initiative.

The Ten Towns initiative has been designed to increase the resilience and future growth of Carmarthenshire's rural market towns and their surrounding areas. A key part of this programme is the development of Economic growth plans to drive forward an agenda for change for ten rural towns across the County. The Authority secured funding via the Rural Development Plan to commission external consultants to develop plans in each of the respective areas. This process has encouraged the involvement of local businesses, communities and stakeholders in identifying actions needed to support growth in their localities.

The Growth Plans are very much community owned documents. Growth Plan Teams have been established in the respective areas to take forward some of the key aspirations identified. The Growth Plan Teams are chaired by the local Member and include representation from Town and community councils, local businesses and third sector. Their role is to oversee the delivery of the ideas which have been identified within the growth plans and to identify how they can collectively take these ideas forward. To support the Teams, 3 Rural Market Town officers have been appointed to help progress the ideas identified by the communities.

The Authority has committed £1m capital funding to support the Growth Plan teams to take forward some of the capital aspirations identified within the plans. Each of the growth plan teams have been invited to collectively bring forward their priority projects for consideration. Initial Expressions of Interest were submitted by the end of February and an 'in principle' approval granted at the end of March. Each of the Growth Plan teams have been invited to submit their second stage applications by November 2022, before final approval can be granted.

However, it is unlikely that the capital fund would support free parking days and the consequential loss of revenue would impact on the Authority if any additionality was granted.

## **2. Operational Impact**

There are two areas of resource impact on the Parking Services' resources in facilitating the initiative, namely the processing of applications and the signing of the free parking days.

Applications for free parking days are received on-line and processed by the business support team who validate the application, consult with colleagues before putting forward applications for Cabinet Member approval.

Approved free parking days are then advertised within each of the car parks with signs deployed and subsequently removed by Civil Enforcement Officers.

### 3. Financial Impact

The five free parking days tend to be spread throughout the year and the financial loss of income varies as parking incomes fluctuate through the year. The covid pandemic over last two years has also had a significant impact with customer levels dipping from February 2020 onwards.

To consider the potential impact of varying the current five-day allocation a pre-covid base year of 2018/19 has been used to identify ticket sale levels. An average ticket sales per day has been calculated using comparable days of the week either side of the free parking day that year for each of the towns. The cost estimate calculated in the table below also includes the 20 pence charge increase introduced in January 2021 and a deduction in income for VAT.

Car Park	Typical cost / free parking day	Typical Cost for 5 days (existing arrangement)	Typical Cost for 10 days	Typical cost for 12 days
Ammanford*	£705.76	£3 528.80	£7057.60	£8 469.12
Carmarthen*	£8195.21	£40 976.05	£81 952.10	£98 342.52
Llandeilo	£353.96	£1 769.80	£3 539.60	£4 247.52
Llandovery	£202.03	£1 010.15	£2 020.30	£2 424.36
Llanelli*	£1596.61	£7 983.05	£15 966.10	£19 159.32
Newcastle Emlyn	£285.11	£1 425.55	£2 851.10	£3 421.32
St Clears	£60.88	£304.40	£608.80	£730.56
<b>Total</b>	<b>£11 399.56</b>	<b>£56 997.80**</b>	<b>£113 995.60</b>	<b>£136 794.72</b>
<i>Additional Cost of extending days for all towns</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>£56,997.80</i>	<i>£79,796.92</i>
<i>Additional cost of mixed option (extending non-principal towns)</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>£4,509.90</i>	<i>£6,313.86</i>

Note: cost estimates based on pre-covid 2018/19 data with 20p price increase and VAT deducted.

\* denotes principal towns.

\*\* - current cost of agreed 5 day initiative for all towns.

Estimates indicate as car parking levels post-covid return to more normative levels the current initiative of having 5 free parking days will result in an annual loss of income of £56 997. If this were to be increased to 10 days free parking the total income loss is estimated at £113 995 (i.e. **an additional £56,977 per year over the current cost**) and this increases to £136 794 (i.e. **an additional £79,797 per year over the current cost**) if the initiative were to be extended to 12 days per year.

A mixed option is also available of maintaining the 5 days within the principal towns of Carmarthen, Llanelli and Ammanford and extending the 10 day or 12 days free parking options to the smaller supporting towns at a cost total of £61,507.70 and £63,311.66 respectively. These options would therefore result in a net increase of £4,509.9 for the additional 5 days and £6313.86 for the additional 7 days over and above the existing 5 day free parking arrangement.

In addition to the income loss there would also be an increase in workload associated with administering applications and advertising the free parking days.

#### 4. Conclusions

- If the additional free days are granted to all towns, then this would have a negative financial impact on the Department as set out in the report.
- The impact of applying additional free parking days to the non-principal towns only is less in financial terms, however the equity of this approach could be questioned if businesses in the principal towns thought they were being treated differently.
- It is not clear at this stage if the additional free-days (up to 10 or 12) will substantially make a difference to the footfall within the towns.
- A 12-month pilot scheme could be considered to inform the debate, but the financial impact to the service would need to be recognised in the context of any current pressures with respect to shortfall in car park revenue post Covid.
- The other option is to remain with the current arrangements of 5 free parking days as set out under the current policy.
- Given the changing nature of Carmarthenshire's towns and the impact of the covid pandemic it may be appropriate to undertake a review of the current car parking strategy, approved in 2018, with a future report to be considered by Cabinet to confirm the Terms of Reference for the review.

#### 5. Summary of Options

The main options available to continue the free parking initiative are as follows:

1. Maintain the current 5 days – approx. cost to Council is £57k per year.
2. Extend to 10 days – approx. total cost to Council £114k per year (i.e. an additional £57k over the existing costs).
3. Extend to 12 days – approx. total cost to Council £137k per year (i.e. an additional £80k over the existing costs).
4. Maintain the existing 5-day provision for the three principal towns (Carmarthen, Llanelli and Ammanford) and extend supporting towns to 10 days (£61.5k per year) or 12 days (£63.3k per year). This proposal results in a net additional cost of **£4.5k and £6.3k respectively for the 10 and 12 day options.**
5. Undertake a pilot scheme for 12 months to assess the impact of the extended provision.
6. Undertake a review of the Car Parking Strategy adopted in 2018.

**DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?**

**NO**

# IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report:

Signed: S. Pilliner

Head of Highways & Transportation

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets
<b>NONE</b>	<b>NONE</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NONE</b>	<b>NONE</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NONE</b>

## Finance

<i>Additional cost of mixed option (extending non-principal towns)</i>	N/A	N/A	£4,509.90	£6,313.86
--	-----	-----	-----------	-----------

The financial impact to the service would need to be recognised in the context of any current pressures with respect to recovery of car park revenue post Covid.

## Staffing Implications

The potential increase in staff workloads are identified within the report but can be accommodated within existing staff resources.

# CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below

Signed: S. Pilliner

Head of Highways & Transportation

1. Scrutiny Committee – N/A

2. Local Member(s) - N/A

3. Community / Town Council – N/A

4. Relevant Partners - N/A

5. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations – N/A

CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER  
AWARE/CONSULTED

Yes

Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information  
List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

THERE ARE NONE