

## **REPORT OF ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

### **TO THE LEADER AND COUNCIL**

**(Meeting held on 15 October 2020)**

#### **1. CALL-IN REQUEST – CHANGES TO SHORT AND LONG STAY SPACES IN WINSOR ROAD, CIVIC CENTRE AND WESTFIELD ROAD CAR PARK AND THE INTRODUCTION OF CHARGES IN CIVIC CENTRE AND WESTFIELD ROAD CAR PARKS, TOTTON**

The Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered the call-in request from Cllr Rackham, in relation to a Portfolio Holder decision to make changes to three car parks in Totton, which included the introduction of car parking charges in the Civic Centre and Westfield Road Car Parks.

The Panel heard from Cllr Rackham as well as other Members on the importance of Totton, how it was unique to other areas of the forest and should be treated differently. It was highlighted that due to the geographical location in Totton retailers needed to compete with businesses located outside of the District Council area, for example Shirley High Street and Hedge End. It was not practical for some local residents to walk to the centre of Totton. It was felt that the introduction of charges would impact negatively on the local economy and for employees on a lower wage or worked part time. Totton also provided important facilities such as a community centre, a library dialysis unit, stroke club and GP surgery and the users of these facilities benefitted from the free car parks. It was therefore requested that the Portfolio Holder reconsider his decision.

The Panel expressed their views, noting that other areas of the forest did not provide free car parking and that it was inequitable and unfair that other areas should subsidise those car parks in Totton which were currently free. It was noted that there was a cost to “free” car parking and that the residents of Totton had been paying towards the cost of the car parking, regardless of whether they used these car parks. The majority of panel members supported the Portfolio Holder decision to introduce car parking charges in the Totton car parks.

An alternative view was expressed by some members of the Panel raising concerns about the hardship additional charges would place on people, particularly during the national pandemic and that the views of the local District Councillors who had raised concerns should be considered.

Councillor Edward Heron was present at the meeting and addressed the Panel having heard the views expressed at the meeting. He spoke of the importance for all areas of the forest to be treated equally and all were unique in their character. The economy of local towns in the forest needed to compete with other areas, for example, New Milton with Christchurch and Ringwood with Castlepoint, Bournemouth so this issue was not unique. Free car parking did not encourage more environmentally friendly options such as walking or bus travel. The Council’s car parking clock was available to purchase by both residents and non-residents and offered good value for money, noting that a short stay parking clock, used once a week cost 18p an hour. He did not feel this was a disincentive to use the car parks in Totton. Having heard the discussions at the meeting, he reported he had not heard anything to change his view on the decision he had made.

The Panel concluded the following:

- i) That the decision was within the Council's policy and budget; and
- ii) That it was not necessary for the policy and budget to be reviewed as a result of the decision; and
- iii) That the Portfolio Holder decision taken on 11 September in relation to short and long stay spaces and to introduce charges to car parks in Totton was supported.

**COUNCILLOR STEVE RIPPON-SWAINE  
CHAIRMAN**