

REPORT OF ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

TO THE LEADER AND COUNCIL

(Meeting held on 14 January 2021)

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 implement changes to the short and long stay spaces in three car parks in Totton (Winsor Road, Civic Centre and Westfield Road) and the introduction of car parking charges in the Civic Centre and Westfield Road Car Parks, following a statutory consultation process.

The Panel heard from Cllr Rackham who spoke about the changes to the long and short stay spaces and the impact this would have to businesses, and users of the doctors surgery, community centre, etc. She raised concerns about the number of town centre long stay spaces being replaced with short stay spaces.

Cllr Rackham as part of her call-in request also raised concerns about the consultation process, noting that only seven responses had been received, of which none had been supportive of the proposed changes. Cllr Rackham reported that she had received 50 responses in opposition to the proposals via her facebook page.

Cllr Rackham felt that the introduction of charges would influence people to shop in areas offering free parking, thereby reducing the footfall in the town centre and have a detrimental impact on the local businesses in Totton. It would also encourage people to park in residential streets rather than use the car parks to avoid parking charges. She reminded the Panel that the coronavirus pandemic was having an impact on the economy and that the businesses in Totton should be given additional support to enable the town centre to recover, and therefore delaying the implementation of parking charges for 6 months to 1 year would help local businesses.

The Panel noted that a consultation exercise had been carried out on the proposed changes, with signage erected in the car parks affected as well as in adjacent streets. The proposals had also been advertised in the local media, as part of the statutory process and through social media.

The decision to adjust the balance of long and short stay car parking spaces had been proposed, based on evidence of the need for more short stay spaces in the town centre following an independent car parking survey. It was therefore proposed that all the spaces in Winsor Road car park be short stay, all the long stay spaces in the Civic Centre would be changed to short stay and 40 spaces in the Westfield Road Car Park would become short stay. This would support local businesses with spaces becoming available more frequently for customers.

Cllr Edward Heron, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure, having heard the points raised by Cllr Rackham and other members of the Panel addressed the meeting. He acknowledged that some of the points raised had already been discussed at the last meeting, through the previous call-in.

He spoke about the layout of spaces and the fact the Council wanted to increase the capacity in car parks. The provision of short stay spaces in the town centre was a priority for the Council. Those who required parking all day could use car parks

further away from the main centre, leaving town centre parking available for customers of local businesses and services.

The Portfolio Holder gave a commitment to continue to monitor the distribution of car parking spaces across the District, and that should a need to make changes be identified it would be responded to.

The Portfolio Holder recognised the challenges for local business, but also acknowledged the challenges for the public sector. The introduction of charges brought conformity to all areas across the District. The cost to purchase a short stay car parking clock was not considered to be a barrier when compared to the cost to maintain a motor vehicle.

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 4 December in relation to short and long stay spaces and to introduce charges to car parks in Totton was supported.

**COUNCILLOR STEVE RIPPON-SWAINE
CHAIRMAN**