

Portfolio holder for Environment and Sustainability
Date of decision: 30TH September 2024

PARKING ARRANGEMENTS FOR CHRISTMAS 2024 IN SUPPORT OF LOCAL BUSINESSES

Purpose	For Decision
Classification	Public – No requirement for an exemption under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972
Executive Summary	<p>As in previous years, it is the intention to allow 4 days when charges do not apply in town and village centre car parks to assist businesses. These days are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small Business Saturday (this year on the 7th of December 2024) • The last weekend before Christmas (21st/22nd December 2024) • An additional day where Town and Parish Councils may request free parking in support of their Christmas events.
Recommendation(s)	That the Council allocate 4 days of free parking in town centre car parks to support local businesses and communities during December 2024.
Reasons for recommendation(s)	This recommendation supports the public at what is for many a difficult time of year financially, as well as promoting the use of local businesses for Christmas shopping. It supports the aims of Prosperity Priority 2 from the Corporate Plan 2024-28– “Supporting our high quality business base and economic centres to thrive and grow”
Ward(s)	All Wards
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Geoffrey Blunden – Environment and Sustainability
Strategic Director(s)	James Carpenter - Strategic Director of Place, Operations and Sustainability
Officer Contact	<p>David Hurd Environmental Enforcement & Amenities Manager 02380 285885 David.hurd@nfdc.gov.uk</p>

Introduction and background

1. In the past 6 years, NFDC have allowed 4 days when charges do not apply in town and village centre car parks to assist businesses. This initiative has been well-received and supports the public at what is for many a difficult time of year financially, as well as promoting the use of local businesses for Christmas shopping.

Proposal for 2024 free parking days

2. As in previous years, it is proposed to allow 4 days when charges do not apply in town and village centre car parks. These days are:
 - Small Business Saturday (this year on the 7th of December 2024)
 - The last weekend before Christmas (21st/22nd December 2024)
 - An additional day where Town and Parish Councils may request free parking in support of their Christmas events.

Corporate plan priorities

3. This proposal supports Prosperity Priority 2 from the Corporate Plan 2024-28 – “Supporting our high-quality business base and economic centres to thrive and grow”. It does this by encouraging both residents and visitors to visit our town and village centres at a vital time for local retailers and other businesses in the run-up to Christmas.

Options appraisal

4. The option of not providing these free parking days has been considered but it is felt that the benefit to the local communities outweigh the loss of revenue to the council over these days.

Consultation undertaken

5. Town and Parish councils have historically been in full support of this proposal. No further consultation has been undertaken and the matter can be given further consideration as part of the Council’s emerging Parking Strategy.

Financial and resource implications

6. The loss of income from these days is accepted in light of the financial benefits it brings to the local businesses and communities. It is estimated that, due to the use of parking clocks by a percentage of car park users that the loss of income would be less than £10K over the whole period.

Legal implications/Risk assessment

7. Not applicable.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

8. Free parking could increase the amount of car journeys to the respective towns, noting however that footfall and local spend would be to the benefit of the local economy. This could also increase carbon emissions in this limited period. It is also noted that there are often alternative sustainable modes of travel available, and these can be publicised by the towns and parishes in their advertisement of the free parking offer.

Equalities implications/Crime and disorder implications/Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

9. None applicable.

Portfolio holder endorsement

I have agreed to the recommendations of this report.

Signed: **Councillor Geoff Blunden**

Date: 1 October 2024

Date on which notice given of this Decision – 1 October 2024
Last date for call in – 8 October 2024