

## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **CABINET**

**18<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2017**

### **REVIEW OF CAR PARKING CHARGES**

#### **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR, HIGHWAYS & STREETCARE SERVICES, IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR A MORGAN**

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#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide detailed feedback from the 6-week public consultation period during November – December 2016 with respect to proposed changes to the Council's existing car park charging regime and to help inform a cabinet decision on the way forward.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that:
- (a) The Council's car parking charges, including season ticket charges, be revised as per the proposed new tariffs consulted upon.
  - (b) A flat rate of £1 for all day parking is introduced across all long-stay car parks for Saturdays.
  - (c) The Council retain the existing period of a month of free parking, after 10am, across all car parks during the month of December.
  - (d) A feasibility study be undertaken with regard to the possible future introduction of card payment facilities and mobile technology

#### **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 A detailed report collating feedback from the public consultation into car park charges can be found as an Appendix to this report (please see Appendix 1).
- 3.2 The vast majority of consultees, (over 70%), responded in favour of reducing daily car park charges and season ticket charges, as outlined in the proposals below.



- 3.3 An even greater number of respondents, (over 80%), agreed with the additional proposal to introduce a flat rate of £1 for Saturday parking.
- 3.4 95% of respondents supported free parking in Council car parks in December with the majority of these, (85%), believing that the Council should provide free parking throughout the whole month of December annually.
- 3.5 Respondents were also asked if they had any comments on the methods of payment for daily car parking charges and the possibility of introducing payments via credit or debit card, including contactless, featured strongly in the responses received.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 In recent years, town centres have been faced with the growing competition of large scale out-of-town developments, as well as the exponential growth of on-line retailing. It is recognised that the impact of changing shopping habits is having an impact on the footfall of the town centre. Alongside these challenges, the cost of parking is also considered to be a contributing factor to the changes in footfall.
- 4.2 The Council continues to support town centres through a range of initiatives, including improvements to the quality of public spaces, promoting the towns as key locations to invest, work and visit; it also has built relations with local business fora to support local activities to attract more visitors into the centres. However, the continuing health of the town centre depends on local businesses being able to draw enough people to spend time and money in the centre.
- 4.3 The current Council administration have further supported town centres in recent years by “freezing” car parking charges since 2013 and more than doubling the length of free car parking after 10am across all its car parks for Christmas shoppers, from the two weeks leading up to Christmas, to the whole month of December instead.
- 4.3 Consequently, a wide-ranging review of the car parking tariffs was prepared to provide yet more support to town centres as shopping habits continue to change, with the aim of reducing the leakage of retail expenditure from the local area and reduce the need to travel further afield.
- 4.4 The review was subject to a public consultation exercise, conducted in-house, and which ran from the 3<sup>rd</sup> November to the 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2016. The consultation exercise included direct engagement with local businesses, Chambers of Trade, and the wider general public, specifically in the 5 town centres that currently have pay and display car parks: Pontypridd, Aberdare, Mountain Ash, Tonypany and Porth.

## 5. PROPOSED NEW CAR PARK CHARGING REGIME

5.1 The table below outlines proposed new car parking tariffs alongside existing tariffs for comparison:

	Short-stay					Long-stay			
Time Periods	Up to 1 hr	Up to 2hrs	Up to 3hrs	Up to 4hrs	4hrs Plus	Up to 4hrs	4hrs Plus	Monthly Permit	Annual Permit
Existing	75p	£1.50	£2.50	£3.40	£12.55	£1.30	£2.50	£37.50	£375.00
Proposed	50p	£1.00	£1.50	£2.00	N / A	£1.00	£2.00	£20.00	£200.00

- 5.2 The proposed new tariffs not only reflect the views of the overwhelming majority of consultees whom called for a reduction in car parking charges in order to help boost town centre footfall and business, (including key trader's groups such as Your Pontypridd and the Aberdare Business and Tourism Association: please see Appendices 2 and 3), but they can also be seen as a further departure from previous policy thinking of increasing car parking charges in line with retail price indexation and national inflation.
- 5.3 In addition, all daily tariffs have been designed with simplicity of use in mind, (i.e. with minimal amounts of coinage required to purchase parking tickets, 2 coins or less), and permit prices have been reduced to more favourably compare with present market conditions.
- 5.4 Furthermore, it should be noted that by removing the 4hrs plus tariff from the short-stay car parks, this will mean that, in effect, all short-stay car parks will have a maximum parking period of 4hrs, (a view supported by the majority of consultees). In order to combat the potential abuse of this new operating system, enhanced car park enforcement practices may be required, at least initially.
- 5.5 The Council is currently working with and supporting Your Pontypridd to subsidise parking at two long-stay car parks in Pontypridd on Saturdays. Moreover, as a consequence of seeking views on the notion of a £1 all day parking tariff across *all* long-stay car parks on Saturdays, it is widely perceived that a specific reduction in Saturday parking rates would benefit town centres across the County Borough, not just Pontypridd.
- 5.6 With regards to the existing Christmas free parking initiative across all car parks for the month of December, whilst a very large proportion of respondents emphasised the need for the initiative to stay in place for the whole month of December, there

was far less consensus regarding its hours of operation. As a result, at the present time, and unless a new, firm consensus becomes apparent in the fullness of time, it is advised to retain the existing hours of operation, i.e. from 10am, to help ensure that car parking spaces are not merely taken up by town centre workers, traders or commuters, but are instead free for visitors and shoppers to utilise.

- 5.7 Of those consultees who disagreed with the new proposed charges, the main reasoning given was a belief that town centre car parking should be free in its entirety in order to assist struggling town centres. This message came across particularly strongly with respect to some smaller town centres that have pay and display car parks, namely Mountain Ash, Porth and Tonypany.
- 5.8 Further in relation to the issue of free car parking, there were also a large number of comments received that advocated the idea of making the first hour or two of a car park stay, free, (with charges then being implemented after that time period had expired).
- 5.9 However, it should be noted that the introduction of a free period at the beginning of a car park stay would almost certainly necessitate a change in enforcement regime as, in order to prevent abuse of the system, it would be necessary to accurately record the time at which each vehicle entered and left a given car park. Such recording systems do exist, but usually in the form of automated number plate recognition (ANPR) technology, as opposed to being manually recorded by a car park attendant or enforcement officer. (The potential benefits and disbenefits, including employment and cost implications, of a move towards ANPR car park enforcement would have to be very carefully considered prior to the introduction of any such system).
- 5.10 At present all Council car park ticket machines accept payment via coins only but the majority of machines can be adapted to take card payments (including contactless). However, initial enquiries with payment service providers have indicated that precisely because of the Council's low daily car parking charges, the costs to the Council of introducing card payment facilities, would not, in all likelihood, be financially practical at this time. Nevertheless, further research into this aspect, in order to obtain a more complete picture, is required.

## **6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 An Equality and Impact Assessment screening form has been prepared for the purposes of this report. The screening has not identified any negative or adverse impact upon vulnerable groups (e.g. disabled drivers). The Council does not currently charge disabled drivers using the 175 designated disabled bays in Council car parks; they are exempt from charging if parked in such bays, whilst displaying valid disabled parking badges. This review *does not seek to change* this aspect of car parking policy.

- 6.2 The Council exceeds national guidance regarding the number of designated bays for parking for blue badge holders. The guidance stipulates a minimum of 4% provision in car parks with over 200 spaces, whereas the Council provides 6%, approximately 50% extra. In car parks of less than 200 spaces the guidance requires 6%, whereas RCT provides 9%, again 50% extra.

## **7. CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 From November – December 2016, a 6-week public consultation was undertaken to seek views on proposed new car parking charges in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The consultation took the forms of an online questionnaire, to which over 500 responses were received, and direct engagement via town centre public consultation events in Pontypridd, Aberdare, Mountain Ash, Tonypany and Porth.
- 7.2 Any agreement to change the Council's car parking charges, or amend car park operational regulations requires a statutory period of 21 days' public notice prior to the commencement of any changes to charging. (This would involve notices detailing the changes to car park regulations being displayed in all existing pay and display car parks).

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 8.1 It has been calculated the reductions in car park revenue as a result of reducing daily car park charges and season ticket charges, introducing a new £1 all day parking charge across long-stay car parks on Saturdays, and formalising a month of free parking after 10am across all car parks each December would, based on current levels of car park usage, be in the region of £300k annually.
- 8.2 However, such estimated losses do not take into account the potential for increased car park usage as a result of the reduction in charges. This would off-set some of the reduction in car park revenue.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 9.1 If any changes to car park charging or car park operation are realised, then the Council's existing Off-Street Car Parks Regulation Order will require varying in order to reflect the changes. This is in accordance with the relevant section(s) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

## **10. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/ SIP**

- 10.1 A reduction in car parking charges can be seen to link to the Single Integrated Plan in respect to the theme of “Prosperity”: businesses are supported to thrive and grow.

## **11. CONCLUSION**

- 11.1 The recent period of public consultation with respect to the Council’s proposals to significantly revise its car parking charges was very successful with the key proposals being very well received by town centre traders and visitors.
- 11.2 Overall, a large majority of all types of consultees believed that by reducing the cost of town centre parking, it would inevitably encourage more people into town centres and thus provide a welcome boost to the local economy.
- 11.3 Therefore, the recommendations outlined above of revisions to the Council’s existing car park charging regime, including: reducing daily car parking charges, car park season ticket charges, charging on Saturday’s and free parking in the month of December can be seen to represent a significant boost for town centres across the County Borough.
- 11.4 Moreover, with specific reference to the recommendation of offering a free month of parking each December, recently acquired footfall data for December 2016 shows a positive impact in Pontypridd, Aberdare, Mountain Ash and Tonypany.
- 11.5 Whilst the potential provision of alternative methods of paying for parking time requires further investigation, one other note of caution to sound is that by reducing car parking charges, these proposals could be perceived as encouraging car usage at a time when there are a number of initiatives promoting public transport and active travel. However, a reduction in town centre parking charges can actually be seen to encourage more local car journeys, rather than longer journeys to out of town retail sites, and thus this would limit any potential adverse environmental impact of these proposals.
- 11.6 Finally, having listened to the views of hundreds of town centre businesses and shoppers over the course of the 6-week period of public consultation, it is clear that the need to sustain town centre trade and boost the local high street economy is prominent amongst the feelings of the general public in Rhondda Cynon Taf and as such, the above recommendations should be welcomed.



## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Car parking charges consultation report.

Appendix 2 – Letter from the Chair of Your Pontypridd.

Appendix 3 – Response from the President of the Aberdare Business and Tourism Association.

\*Note: All of the appendices can be found in separate documents.



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DWEUD

# Car Parking Charges Consultation Report



**December 2016**



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This section provides a summary of the main findings from the consultation.
- The purpose of the consultation was to seek views on proposed new car parking charges in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- The consultation was conducted in-house. The consultation period ran from the 3<sup>rd</sup> November to the 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2016.
- 563 responses to the online consultation were received.
- The majority of respondents **disagreed with the existing parking charges**, 84.6% (short-stay) and 82.1% (long-stay).
- The majority of respondents **agreed with the proposed reduced parking charges**, 71.5% (short-stay) and 75% (long-stay)
- Overall the proposal was welcomed by the majority of respondents, with people thinking it would encourage more people into town centres and that the charges were more reasonable and affordable.
- Of those that said they disagreed with the proposals, the main reason given was that they felt that parking should be completely free, with no charge at all.
- Related to those respondents who felt the parking should be free, there were a large number of comments from people who said that they needed to park for a short time and that the first hour/half hour should be free.
- 63.1% of respondents thought that there should be a limit on the maximum parking time in the short-stay car parks. Of those who said there should be a limit 32% said that it should be 4 hours, 29% no limit, 20% 3 hours and 19% 2 hours.
- The majority of respondents (83.3%) agreed with the proposal to charge £1 for parking on a Saturday.
- Respondents were asked if they had any comments on the methods of payment for daily car parking charges and they suggested card payments, web, phone and contactless payments. They also suggested that the machines should give change.
- The majority of respondents (95%) supported free parking in Council car parks in December. The majority also felt that the Council should provide free parking throughout the month of December (84.6%) and

that the Council should provide free parking in all council car parks (88.7%).

- 58.4% of respondents agreed with the limiting of free Christmas parking to 4 hours to encourage turnover during this busy period.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of a consultation on the Council's review of car parking charges.
- 1.2 The consultation aimed to outline proposed changes to the Council's existing daily car parking charges, including monthly and annual season tickets, and to gather the views of the public on the proposals.
- 1.3 Section 2 outlines the background to the proposal and the proposed new charges that were consulted upon.
- 1.4 Section 3 details the methodology used.
- 1.5 Section 4 presents the consultation results.

## 2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Table 1 below outlines proposed new car parking tariffs alongside existing tariffs for comparison:

Table 1:

	Short-stay					Long-stay			
Time Periods	Up to 1 hr	Up to 2hrs	Up to 3hrs	Up to 4hrs	4hrs Plus	Up to 4hrs	4hrs Plus	Monthly Permit	Annual Permit
Existing	75p	£1.50	£2.50	£3.40	£12.55	£1.30	£2.50	£37.50	£375.00
Proposed	50p	£1.00	£1.50	£2.00	N / A	£1.00	£2.00	£20.00	£200.00

- 2.2 The proposed new tariffs represent a radical departure from previous policy thinking of increasing car parking charges in line with retail price indexation and national inflation.
- 2.3 All daily tariffs have been designed with simplicity of use in mind, (i.e. with minimal amounts of coinage required to purchase parking tickets, 2 coins or less), and permit prices have been reduced to more favourably compare with present marking conditions.
- 2.4 In addition to the above proposed new car parking tariffs, the Council also sought views on the notion of a £1 all day parking tariff across all long-stay car parks on Saturdays.
- 2.5 Furthermore, to compliment the proposed changes to individual tariff charges, views were also sought as to the methods of paying for daily car parking charges. At present all Council car park ticket machines accept payment via coins only but the majority of machines can be adapted to take card payments (including contactless).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The purpose of the consultation was to seek views on proposed new car parking charges in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 3.2 The consultation has been conducted in-house. The consultation period ran from the 3<sup>rd</sup> November to the 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2016.
- 3.3 The consultation ran alongside the Council's Budget Consultation 2017/18 and the following events were held for discussions on the budget and the proposed car parking charges.

#### Town Centre Roadshows

DATE (w/c)	Detail/Events
Tuesday 22nd November (10am - 2pm)	Aberdare Town Centre
Thursday 24th November (9am - 12pm)	Mountain Ash Town Centre
Tuesday 29th November (10am - 2pm)	Pontypridd Town Centre
Friday 2nd December (9am -12pm)	Porth Town Centre
Friday 9th December(10am -2pm)	Tonypandy Town Centre

#### DAY CENTRES

DATE (w/c)	Detail/Events
11th Nov (11.30-12.30pm)	Tonyrefail Day Centre - Mill Street
15th Nov (12-2pm)	Nazareth House Day Centre Tonypandy
16th Nov (12-2pm)	St Mairs Day Centre
18th Nov (12-2pm)	Teifi House Day Centre, Maerdy
24th Nov (12-2pm)	Mountain Ash Day Centre
2nd Dec (12-2pm)	Alec Jones Day Centre Porth
5th Dec (12-2pm)	Gelli Day Centre, Ystrad
14th Dec (12-2pm)	Gilfach Goch Day Centre

#### Leisure Centres

DATE (w/c)	Detail/Events
16th Nov (3-6pm)	Aberdare Leisure Centre
17th Nov (3-6pm)	Hawthorn Leisure Centre
25th Nov (3-6pm)	Abercynon Sport Centre
6th Dec (3-6pm)	Rhondda Sport Centre (Ystrad)
14th Dec (3-6pm)	Llantrisant Leisure Centre
15th Dec (3-6pm)	Rhondda Fach Sport Centre
16th Dec (8.30- 11am)	Tonyrefail Leisure Centre



## 4 CONSULTATION RESULTS

### Results – Online Survey

#### Existing Charges

- 4.1 The majority of respondents **disagreed** with the existing parking charges, 86.8% (short-stay) and 82.1% (long-stay).

Analysis % Respondents			
	Yes	No	Don't Know
Base	13.5%	84.6%	1.9%
Short-stay	11.5%	86.8%	1.6%
Long-stay	15.7%	82.1%	2.2%

#### Proposed New Reduced Parking Charges

- 4.2 The majority of respondents **agreed** with the proposed reduced parking charges, 71.5% (short-stay) and 75% (long-stay)

Analysis % Respondents			
	Yes	No	Don't Know
Base	73.2%	24.0%	2.8%
Short-stay	71.5%	26.0%	2.5%
Long-stay	75.0%	21.9%	3.1%

#### Comments – Main themes emerging

- 4.3 Overall the proposal was welcomed by the majority of respondents, the following themes outline some of the supporting comments.

- **Will encourage more people into town centres** (paying for parking has been stopping people visiting town centres, with people going out of town instead.)

*“More people will use the town centres if the parking charges are lowered.”*

*“Reduced parking charges would encourage shoppers to visit town centres instead of them going to out of town shopping, where parking is free.”*



- **General agreement with charges** (seem reasonable/more affordable)

*“The reduced costs will benefit workers and shoppers alike. A positive move to increase footfall in the town”*

*“I think current prices are reasonable but always nice to see prices come down”*

*“They are an improvement obviously and hopefully will encourage more people into the towns and hopefully cause less congestion in residential side streets.”*

*“I believe that the proposed charges represent very good value for money when compared with Cardiff or Swansea and other towns and cities in the uk.”*

- **Agreement with the pricing structure**

*“Much simpler, 50p & pound charges easy to prepare for and reduced charges will help town traders become more competitive with out of town retailers”*

*“I rarely carry any cash or change on my person so I'm more likely to have the correct money with me when paying the new fees....”*

*“Rounding down the amount is 50p is easier to find in your pocket then 75p, machines don't give change either. The prices are also driving people away to Tescos as it is free shopping.”*

*“Don't always have the correct change for the existing tariff and the new tariff is much simpler”.*

#### Disagree with New Charges

- 4.4 Of those that said they disagreed with the proposals, the main reason given was that they felt that parking should be completely free, with no charge at all;

- **Parking should be completely free/no charge**

*“Short term free parking like in merthyr would give a much needed boost to the local town with people more likely to pop in for bits and pieces.”*

*“Should be free parking to help local businesses”*

*“Motorists pay enough in fuel, road tax and other car related services with a low income too the last thing I want to do is pay to park my car in a car park”*

*“Parking should be Free. Town shopping centres are dying for various reasons and charging for parking is just adding to the problem!”*

- 4.5 Related to those respondents who felt the parking should be free, there were a large number of comments from people who said that they needed to park for a short time and that the first hour/half hour should be free;

**Often only need to park for short periods/should be free for short period**

*"I think the first hour or even 30mins should be free. If you look at towns like Penarth and Cowbrige who both have time limited free on street parking these towns are generally busy ...."*

*"Although welcome lower parking charges, why not have the first hour( or 2 hours free) if Cardiff areas e.g. Llandaff can do this, why can't RCT to encourage people to visit town centres."*

*"It should be free for the first hour - short or long stay"*

*"The first hour should be free so you can go to doctors/dentist etc - why should you pay to shop in ur local town with hardly anything in it."*

*"consideration be made to introducing a daily two hour free slot and that the weekly footfall figures be used to determined the best times, so that both the traders and shoppers have maximum advantage."*

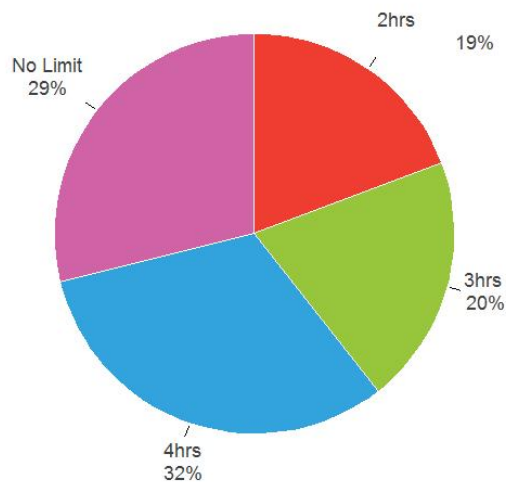
Limits on Parking time (Short-stay)

- 4.6 63.1% of respondents thought that there should be a limit on the maximum parking time in the short-stay car parks.

Analysis % Respondents	
Base	100.0%
Do you think there should be a limit on the maximum parking time in the short stay car parks?	
Yes	63.1%
No	36.9%

*"People may misuse the short stay car park so I think it should be limited"*

- 4.7 Of those who said there should be a limit 32% said that it should be 4 hours, 29% no limit, 20% 3 hours and 19% 2 hours.



#### Saturday Charging (long-stay)

- 4.8 The current charge for all day parking in a long stay car park is currently £2.50, under the proposals this charge would be reduced to £1 on a Saturday. The majority of respondents (83.3%) agreed with this proposal.

Analysis % Respondents	
	<b>Base</b> 100.0%
<b>The current charge for all day parking in a long stay car park is £2.50, under proposals this would be reduced to £1 on a Saturday - do you agree with the reduced charge?</b>	
	<b>Yes</b> 83.3%
	<b>No</b> 13.3%
	<b>Don't know</b> 3.4%

### Methods of payment

#### 4.9 Respondents were asked if they had any comments on the methods of payment for daily car parking charges (eg. card payment).

- Card payments

*"Card payment is easier than finding change in your car!"*

*"Yes I think we should be able to pay by card.it would probably benefit the council for those people who might not have enough change and try and get away with a lower amount."*

*"I very rarely park or use any facilities in Aberdare because I don't carry change around with me. In other places there are facilities to pay by card or automated phone call/text."*

*"I think having card machines for parking will draw in more people definitely. Loads of times iv wanted to go to a shop an think oh no I can't I haven't got change on me, then I go Asda instead."*

*"Many young people don't carry cash so the option of using a card payment would help us keep up with the modern age".*

- Web/contactless/phone

*"Card payment would be brilliant or pay by mobile."*

*"Card payment or mobile payment via phone"*

*"I use several car parks throughout the borough regularly and would really appreciate the ability to pay by card or even better to have wireless payments so I can use my phone or card. Makes it a lot quicker and convenient."*

*"Have a website where you could pay online instead for convenience"*

*"Should be able to dial up and pay via smart phone"*

*"Online applications for season tickets would help"*

*"These days, I think it is crucial that payments can be made by card. It would be worth considering popular new methods such as Contactless or payments via mobile phone (e.g. Apple Pay and Android Pay)."*

- Should Give change

*"It's very annoying that machines don't give change. People don't always have the right amount of money."*

4.10 The following diagram shows a visual representation of the most frequently reported 50 words for the question on methods of payment.

Do you have any comments regarding the methods of paying ...



Parking in December

4.11 The majority of respondents (95%) supported free parking in Council car parks in December.

Analysis % Respondents	
	Base 100.0%
Do you support free parking in Council car parks in December?	
Yes	95.0%
No	4.1%
Don't know	0.9%

4.12 The majority also felt that the Council should provide free parking throughout the month of December (84.5%) and that the Council should provide free parking in all council car parks (87.8%).

Analysis % Respondents	
	Base 100.0%
How many weeks do you think the Council should provide free parking in December?	
1 week	3.1%
2 weeks	12.4%
A month	84.5%

Analysis % Respondents			
	Yes	No	Don't Know
Should the Council provide free parking in .....	87.8%	10.8%	1.4%
All Council car parks	88.7%	9.6%	1.7%
Short stay car parks	91.8%	7.5%	0.7%
Long stay car parks	82.6%	15.9%	1.5%

- 4.13 58.4% of respondents agreed with the limiting of free Christmas parking to 4 hours to encourage turnover during this busy period.

Analysis % Respondents	
Base	100.0%
Yes	58.4%
No	34.8%
Don't know	6.8%

- 4.14 The following are a selection of quotes regarding Christmas parking in the town centres, there were those respondents who felt that it should be time limited;

*"Free Christmas parking should be time limited to 2 or 3 hours. Last Christmas people were parking early and staying all day, mostly workers in the town and after about 9.30 am it was very difficult to get a space thus defeating the object of the exercise"*

*"I said yes for short stay in Q 10. but I think in order to STOP Traders and Business people who would take the spaces in the car parks closest to the bus station if it were free all day, there has to be a limit to the free parking time allowed, policed well to enforce..."*

- 4.15 Some of the respondents, including people who worked in the town centres felt that there should not be a limit;

*"Limiting parking to 4 hours free at Christmas doesn't benefit those who work in the town all day"*

*"Free Christmas parking should benefit the workers of Aberdare not just the shoppers. It should start at 8.30am instead of 10am"*

*"Free parking in December should not have a from 10am restriction."*

*"Only giving free parking after 10am discriminates against workers based in town who contribute substantially to the local economy throughout the year."*

*“It would be a nice gesture to allow free parking from 8am to allow business owners and workers to park for free too.”*

*“Only to make it free all day and not from 10am as workers are penalised and they are using town centre and bringing in revenue also to the town”*

### Any Other Comments

4.16 There were some other comments/concerns made under the following themes;

- **Cost of the proposed option**

*“A lot of people these days carry a card, but, most of the general public know that if they are paying at a local car park they generally need the right change in cash amount. The council do not necessarily need extra costs of more expensive machinery really speaking.”*

*“card payment would be handy but would it cost more in the long run to its users??”*

*“Most individuals have cash for parking, consider the cost of changing all the machines and of card security”*

- **Staff/workers using spaces/parking issues**

*“ensure carparks are not blocked by workers leaving room for shoppers at periods of 2hrs only”*

*“The existing and proposed charges are still too high, the people who work in the town centre won't pay it and will continue to park around the streets of Aberdare. There should be free parking for the people”*

*“Whilst the existing levels are acceptable any reduction may help attract increased visitors to the towns. However if the car parks are filled with people who work in the town or to commute then it doesn't work”*

### Respondent Profile

4.17 In total 563 people took part in the online survey. The breakdown by type of respondent is shown below.

#### Type of respondent

Analysis % Respondents	
Base	100.0%
Are you.....	
A town centre trader	10.8%
A car park user	78.7%
Other (please state)	10.5%

4.18 78.7% of respondents were car park users.

#### Gender

Analysis % Respondents	
Base	100.0%
Are you;	
Male	35.1%
Female	64.9%

#### Age

Analysis % Respondents	
Base	100.0%
Age;	
Under 16	-
16-24	3.4%
25-34	23.1%
35-44	25.2%
45-54	26.5%
55-64	15.2%
65-74	6.1%
75+	0.5%



## Results - Face to Face Engagement

- 4.19 The views collected at the various events were similar to those obtained through the online survey, a selection of the comments are listed below for each of the town centres with main car parks;

### Aberdare Town Centre

Car park proposed excellent

Disabled parking - not enough in town centre in Aberdare.

Wouldn't mind that would be fine. £1 all day Sat v much in favour wouldn't mind a £1.

Happy with proposed charges, I use the car park at least 3 - 4 times a week. £1 on a Saturday is good and I agree with Christmas free parking. 10 days of free Christmas parking - from the Saturday, 10 days before.

I think it's a very good idea to reduce the charges. RCT have good car parks with lots of disabled bays. Being disabled I don't pay the charges anyway but it would benefit others.

Happy with proposed charges. £1 on a Saturday is good. Like free Christmas parking, they should continue this over the school holidays so people can take children out.

Agree with £1 car parking all day Saturday but who would stay in Aberdare for 4 hours? Make car parking free altogether, although a reduction is fair, we have a blue badge so I don't pay anyway.

In agreement with new reduced charges.

The car parks should be free. The machines are out of date. They should give change, pay by card and phone and have the option of paying the difference if you overstay.

Car parking charges should be abolished.

Christmas shopping parking shouldn't be free, that's the time people would pay - supply / demand

Shouldn't charge for the first 2 hours in all car parks. Christmas free parking for 2 weeks.

Good idea, but parking should be free. Key for traders.

Make a difference for some people. Xmas - whole of December

Will increase shoppers due to competition.

Should be no charge at all. Bring variety of businesses into town. Xmas - 1 week / 10 days.

Should scrap all car parking charges. Unless I'm in a city it doesn't make sense.

Too many council car parks in the first place. They want to get rid of them.

Limit free parking to 4 or 6 hours or for the Christmas month.

Christmas parking should be free for the whole month of December. If parking was free all the time, it would bring people in.

No issues paying fees - welcome any reduction - no 5ps / card payment

Saturday & Sunday should be free. £1 all day on a Saturday however isn't bad. We park in Tesco as we don't support the car parking. They lost more revenue by putting car parking up than if they'd left it.

In agreement with all proposed charges

### Porth Town Centre

Where do shop owners park, because they are full before I get there.

Trying to help motorists. Porth is bad for parking especially for events, when they close them.

Car parking charges have an impact not just on traders and shoppers but also people who use town centres for other purposes.

Parking charges completely abolished.

Reduce or abolish the charges.

Support reduced charges - also a very good idea for £1 parking. Towns need to be able to compete with supermarkets who have free parking.

Saturday are a good idea a stated amount.

Parking should be free, some car parks could be free, balance it out.

### Mountain Ash Town Centre

Business owner thinking of pulling out of Mountain Ash town centre to move towns.

Business owner - anything Council can do to help parking in town centre will help.

Car parking is free in Treorchy, that town is thriving!

In agreement with reduced changes, happy with £1 on a Saturday. End of November to the end of December for Christmas parking!

Would agree with the reduced charges, it would help the shops too.

If people park up and get the train to Cardiff they should pay a bit more as they're using the car park all day.

Look for free parking areas in Mountain Ash, no benefits from parking charges.

The car parks aren't making enough money to justify the loss in local shops.

Free for hours in NRC (number plate recognition cameras) - no win no fee. People need the chance to come in, use the town centre.

One size doesn't fit all.

£1 all day Saturday is a good idea.

Car parking should be free!

People come to park in the car park and then get the train to Cardiff

Henry street north should operate in the same way as miskin road.

Car parking reduced ticket prices is a step in the right direction. Henry street north is free for a certain amount of time. In Mountain Ash, there's no need for a long and short stay.

Possible expansion of the Iceland store (into the Henry Street car park) Iceland are genuinely considering.

Iceland store to buy and operate Henry Street car park - expand store. 1 hour free parking + charges afterwards.

### Pontypridd Town Centre

In agreement with all car parking reduced charges and free Christmas parking should be free for December £1 for Saturday is fab

Reducing car parking charges in Ponty is a good idea. Agree with £1 parking on a Saturday, Christmas parking should be free for the whole of December.

Happy to reduce car parking. Christmas parking should be free end of November.

Ponty - don't put people off at the moment.

In agreement - good to bring people in to town

Reducing car parking charges is a good idea!

People who work in the local shops have to pay full price for the car parking. Should be free. There's no parking for the disabled.

1 month Christmas free shopping and in agreement.

In agreement with the proposed charges, £1 all day Saturday would be good.

Happy with reduced car parking charges - park in the multi-storey at the moment

Should have Christmas parking for a month. We don't have anything else for free.

Happy with reduced charges, good idea.

2 weeks in December & 2 weeks in January for Christmas parking.

1 month free parking, £1 Saturday car park in agreement.

Welcome proposal to reduce parking charges (thinks car parking should be free)

Car parking reductions a good idea. "will help businesses"

Needs more promotion - press releases / advertising. GTFM - come to Pontypridd as parking is now cheaper.

Would be happy with reduced car parking charges in Ponty. If I had my way, I'd reduce them even further.

Reducing car parking charges is a good idea. I don't drive but it would help the town centre.

Agree with charges proposed

In agreement with reduced car parking charges, it would help the town.

Need suitable disabled car parking!!

### Tonypandy Town Centre

Should be free, I wouldn't pay to come to Tonypandy

More parking enforcement in Tonypandy

Should be free car parks in Tonypandy, never anywhere to park in town

Disabled people are unable to park

Amount of spaces in Gas Rd car park not enough disabled spaces

Parking charges deter allot of people

December car parking good idea, reduced car parking charges as long as it doesn't go onto rates

Parking enforcement team need to work longer hours to catch people parking without permits

Free parking in pandy, car parks have killed the town, free car parking will encourage people

fully support prices coming down, but the permit system is a farce, not enough people enforcing, works vans out of hours

### Day Centre Responses

- 4.20 From the discussions held with Day Centre service users the following are a summary of the views at a selection of centres;

When talking about car park charges there was a consensus amongst service users that they should be abolished completely, they were also in favour of free parking over the festive period. (Maerdy Day Centre service users)

When discussing car parking charges service users were all in favour of reducing or abolishing car parking charges across the Borough. It was also stated that the reduction in car parking charges would be especially welcomed in Pontypridd and would help towards the regeneration of the town. (Porth Day Centre service users).

When looking at parking charges the service users were fully supportive of either the lowering or abolition of parking charges in RCT. Many commented that having to pay a full hour to pop into the bank for ten minutes wasn't acceptable. They were also all supportive of free parking over the Christmas period, believing that it should be free all day everyday for the festive period. (Tonypandy Day Centre Service users)

"Even if car parking is cheap, it doesn't make a difference if there are no shops" (Nazareth House Day centre service user).

"Get rid of car parking charges to bring more people into the town";  
"free parking should be at the time to attract people into the town. (Gelli Day Centre service users).

"local shopkeepers would be happy with reduced parking charges"  
(Mountain Ash Day Centres service user)

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Appendix 1 - includes all open responses to the online questionnaire

Appendix 2 – Letter from the Chair of Your Pontypridd

Appendix 3 – Email from the President Aberdare Business and Tourism Association

Note: All of the appendices are found in separate documents.

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15/12/2016

Dear Cllr Morgan,

**Your Pontypridd's views regarding the RCT wide Parking consultation December 2016**

I am writing to express the views of Your Pontypridd on RCT's parking consultation. We are pleased that you have taken our concerns into consideration and are reviewing the existing parking arrangements in Pontypridd town centre.

The reduction in parking charges and simplification of the tariffs are welcomed and we believe that this will make Pontypridd more accessible to shoppers. As you are aware, we are delighted with the proposals for £1 parking all day on Saturdays which has helped save Your Pontypridd valuable resources going forward from April 2017. We believe that this will help to bring more footfall into the town centre on Saturdays and revive Pontypridd as a weekend shopping destination.

The continuation of free Christmas parking is also excellent, however, as we have discussed this should not be available in short stay car parks such as Gas Lane which has a negative effect on the town centre with workers paying for one hour and choosing to remain parked there all day. Your Pontypridd also lends its support to the proposal for introducing a no return policy for the short stay car parks to generate a turnover of shoppers and encourage workers to use long stay car parks. This is particularly important looking to the future with the new development of the Taff Vale Precinct site. The consensus is also that three hours no return would be an adequate time for shoppers.

Many thanks for your consideration; we look forward to hearing the outcomes of the consultation in due course.

Kind regards,

Robert Thomas

Chair of Your Pontypridd

**RECORD OF DELEGATED OFFICER DECISION**

Key Decision



Operational Decision

**SUBJECT: REVIEW OF CAR PARKING CHARGES – PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

**PURPOSE OF REPORT:**


To outline proposed changes to the Council's existing daily car parking charges, including monthly and annual season tickets, and to recommend a period of public consultation with respect to the proposals.

In accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation, this report has been prepared to accompany the intended officer decision of the Director of Highways and Streetcare Services as described below.

**DELEGATED DECISION (Date):**

**It is agreed to:**

- 1) To proceed with an 6-week long consultation period to seek the views of local traders and the general public on Council plans to implement changes to existing car parking charges.
- 2) Upon completion of the consultation period, to present a report to Cabinet summarising the feedback received and to put forward suggested recommendations with regards to any revisions to existing car parking charges.

 <b>Chief Officer Signature</b>	Nigel Wheeler <b>Print Name</b>	19/10/16 <b>Date</b>
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The decision is taken in accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government Act, 2000 (Executive Functions) and in the terms set out in Section 5 of Part 3 of the Council's Constitution

**CONSULTATION**

A. Morgan

19/10/16

**CONSULTEE CABINET MEMBER SIGNATURE**

**DATE**

RJ Wilt

19/10/16

**CONSULTEE OFFICER SIGNATURE**

**DATE**

**CALL-IN PROCEDURE RULES**

***IS THE DECISION DEEMED URGENT AND NOT SUBJECT TO CALL-IN BY THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:***

NO ✓

*Reason for urgency:* .....

*If deemed urgent - signature of Mayor or Deputy Mayor or Head of Paid Service confirming agreement that the proposed decision is reasonable in all the circumstances for it being treated as a matter of urgency, in accordance with the overview and scrutiny procedure rule 17.2:*

.....  
**(Mayor)**

.....  
**(Dated)**

**NB - If this is a reconsidered decision then the decision Cannot be Called In and the decision will take effect from the date the decision is signed.**

FOR CABINET OFFICE USE ONLY

**PUBLICATION & IMPLEMENTATION DATES**

**PUBLICATION**

Publication on the Councils Website: - \_\_\_\_\_

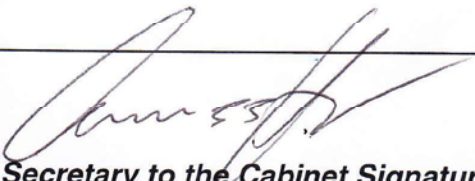
**DATE**

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

**Note:** This decision will not come into force and may not be implemented until the expiry of 5 clear working days after its publication to enable it to be the subject to the Call-In Procedure in Rule 17.1 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

Subject to Call-In the implementation date will be: \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE**

 <b>Secretary to the Cabinet Signature</b>	CIRCUSTIONS SI HANAWAN <b>Print Name</b>	19/10/16 <b>Date</b>
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Further Information

Directorate:	Highways and Streetcare Services
Contact Name:	Alistair Critchlow
Designation:	Parking Services & Streetworks Manager
Tel.No:	(01443) 494751

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2016-2017**

**REPORT TO ACCOMPANY A DECISION OF THE DIRECTOR OF HIGHWAYS AND  
STREETCARE SERVICES**

Part 1	Item No.
Review of car parking charges – public consultation	


**DATE: OCTOBER 2016**

**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to outline proposed changes to the Council's existing daily car parking charges, including monthly and annual permits, and to recommend a period of public consultation with respect to the proposals.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**


2.1 It is recommended that:

- (a) The Council undertakes an 6-week long period of consultation with local businesses, Chambers of Trade, and the wider general public to seek their views and opinions on the proposed new car parking charges outlined below with respect to the Council's Pay and Display car parks estate 
- (b) A report is prepared for Cabinet following the conclusion of the consultation period, which will summarise the feedback received and put forward suggested recommendations with regards to any revisions to existing car parking charges.

**3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To seek the views of key stakeholders and the wider public on the Council's proposals to reduce the cost, to car park users, of car parking across the County Borough; and to then implement any recommend changes accordingly.

**4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 Town Centres in recent years have been faced with the growing competition of large scale out of town developments, as well as the exponential growth of on-line retailing. It is recognised that the impact of changing shopping habits is having an impact on the footfall of the town centre. Parking charges alongside these challenges are also considered another contributing factor to the changes in footfall. 

# Summary of Comments on Review of Car Parking Charges - Public Consultation


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Page: 5

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 Number: 1 Author: jim Subject: Sticky Note Date: 08/12/16 14:06:48

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 Author: jim Subject: Sticky Note Date: 01/11/16 10:40:41

ABTA, who have been lobbying for sensible car parking arrangements for many years welcomes the reduction and simplification in car parking charges. This will show that the Welsh Assembly Governments policy of returning vitality and viability to town centres has been adopted by RCT

 Number: 2 Author: jim Subject: Sticky Note Date: 08/12/16 14:07:48


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The rise in out of town superstores has been promoted by RCT and so the demise of town centres is in part due to planning permissions given by RCT. All of the affect on town centres, by the growth of out of town stores, was foreseeable by RCT and local traders through the Chamber of Trade and now ABTA have been lobbying for many many years for a change to car parking policy. With regard to the on line stores, with some funded training town centre shops could fight back and being light on their feet could prosper. It is important to note and quote the store manager at ASDA Cwmbach actually thanked RCT for their car parking charging regime as it actively encouraged more customers to his store.


 Author: jim Subject: Sticky Note Date: 01/11/16 11:37:21

In addition the reduction in charges may (hopefully) create an increase in business which may in turn reverse the affect of out of town stores and increase employment

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4.2 The Council continues to support town centres through a range of initiatives, including improvements to the quality of public spaces, promoting the towns as key locations to invest, work and visit; it also has built relations with local business forums to support local activities to attract more visitors into the centres. 

4.3 Moreover, the current Council administration have further supported town centres in recent years by “freezing” car parking charges since 2013 and more than doubled the length of free car parking after 10am across all its car parks for Christmas shoppers, from the two weeks leading up to Christmas, to the whole month of December instead. 


4.4 However, the continuing health of the town centre depends on the on local businesses being able to draw enough people to spend time and money in the centre. Consequently, a wide-ranging review of the car parking tariffs has been prepared to provide yet more support town centres as shopping habits continue to change, with the aim to reduce the leakage of retail expenditure from the local area and reduce the need to travel further afield. 


## 5. REVIEW OF CAR PARKING CHARGES – PROPOSED NEW TARIFFS

5.1 Table 1 below outlines proposed new car parking tariffs alongside existing tariffs for comparison:

Table 1: ‘

Time Periods	Short-stay					Long-stay			
	Up to 1 hr	Up to 2hrs	Up to 3hrs	Up to 4hrs	4hrs Plus	Up to 4hrs	4hrs Plus	Monthly Permit	Annual Permit
<b>Existing</b>	75p	£1.50	£2.50	£3.40	£12.55	£1.30	£2.50	£37.50	£375.00
<b>Proposed</b>	50p	£1.00	£1.50	£2.00	N / A	£1.00	£2.00	£20.00	£200.00

5.2 The proposed new tariffs represent additional positive steps taken by the Council to support town centres and can also been seen as a further departure from previous policy thinking of increasing car parking charges in line with retail price indexation and national inflation. 

5.3 All daily tariffs have been designed with simplicity of use in mind, (i.e. with minimal amounts of coinage required to purchase parking tickets, 2 coins or less), and permit prices have been reduced to more favourably compare with present market conditions. 

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Number: 1 Author: jim Subject: Sticky Note Date: 08/12/16 14:09:19

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Author: jim Subject: Sticky Note Date: 01/11/16 10:54:56

This support has definitely helped Aberdare town centre however it would be helpful through the forums to include local trade representatives in the planning and execution of future improvements.

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Number: 2 Author: jim Subject: Sticky Note Date: 08/12/16 13:20:24

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The free parking over the Christmas period tends to allow the traders and their staff to clog up the long stay car parks. For the future a four hour period of free parking may provide shoppers with adequate time but deter traders?  
Notwithstanding the above alternative free parking for traders and their staff should be found (all year)

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Number: 3 Author: jim Subject: Sticky Note Date: 08/12/16 14:44:41

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This is a welcome statement of the recognition of need. We need also to be aware of the threat of Trago Mills in addition to the Merthyr retail park! Local superstores control their free parking and in a similar way so could the town centre. For the future the only way to attract customers is to do so on a level playing field in relation to those charges levied by superstores.

Superstores have considerably reduced local employment by transferring town sales to them (town centre shops employed far more people) If by these and future reductions in parking charges business increases then employment will increase. RCT has conditions for their grants that employment must increase. This loss of income to RCT could be seen as an investment to increase employment or at the very least protection of employment that would otherwise have been lost

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Number: 4 Author: jim Subject: Sticky Note Date: 01/11/16 11:02:08

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ABTA welcome this statement whole heartedly


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Number: 5 Author: jim Subject: Sticky Note Date: 23/11/16 13:03:28

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ABTA again welcomes this.

We ask that emphasis be put on 2hours for £1 as this will have the major attraction. ABTA recognises the 4 hour facility as also being very helpful to the ladies hairdresser provision.

5.4 In addition to the above proposed new car parking tariffs, the Council is also seeking views on the notion of a £1 all day parking tariff across all long-stay car parks on Saturdays, and also regarding maintaining or amending the existing Christmas free parking initiative across all car parks for the month of December. 

5.5 Furthermore, to compliment the proposed changes to individual tariff charges, views will also be sought as to the methods of paying for daily car parking charges. At present all Council car park ticket machines accept payment via coins only but the majority of machines can be adapted to take card payments (including contactless). 


## 6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no equality or diversity implications associated with this report.

## 7. CONSULTATION

7.1 6-week long period of consultation with local businesses, Chambers of Trade, and the wider general public. The consultation period will include direct engagement with town centre trading representatives of the 5 town centres, which have pay and display car parks: Pontypridd, Aberdare, Mountain Ash, Tonypany and Porth.

## 8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

8.1 There are no significant financial implications associated with undertaking an 6-week long public consultation exercise. Although, if realised, it has been calculated that any losses in car park revenue as a result of reducing charges in line with the above proposals would, based on current levels of car park usage, be in the region of £300k annually. However, such estimated losses do not take into account the potential for increased car park usage as a result of the reduction in charges. 

## 9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

9.1 If any changes to car park tariffs are realised, then the Council's existing Off-Street Car Parks Regulation Order will require varying in order to reflect the changes. This is in accordance with the relevant section(s) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

## 10. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES / SIP

10.1 A reduction in car parking charges can be seen to link to the Single Integrated Plan in respect to the theme of "Prosperity": businesses are supported to thrive and grow.

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Number: 1 Author: jim Subject: Sticky Note Date: 08/12/16 14:13:10

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Author: jim Subject: Sticky Note Date: 08/12/16 14:32:45

This would be very welcome but as with all arrangements the need to ensure car parks are available for the paying public is paramount.

Alternative arrangements should be sought for traders and their staff.

It is thought important to provide teachers, police, RCT facilities (Dare Valley country Park, Museum and Leisure facilities etc.) and many local authority staff either with free car parks or returned cost by means of expenses. This free privilege for some has been explained away (in the past) as essential to promote business. This reasoning is a sensible business approach so why is this free facility not available to town centre enterprises. I thought that our current political leaders value fairness

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Number: 2 Author: jim Subject: Sticky Note Date: 01/11/16 11:24:54

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Author: jim Subject: Sticky Note Date: 01/11/16 11:26:45

It is essential that card and contactless facilities (both phone and card) be available

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Number: 3 Author: jim Subject: Sticky Note Date: 01/11/16 11:33:46

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It will be interesting to see how many more people are attracted by this reduction. If more than this will obviously eat into and reduce this loss. Though RCT does not see the benefit directly business taxes will also rise out of any improvement in footfall.

The accuracy in the collection of footfall figures in Aberdare is very questionable. A thorough overhaul of the system will need to be undertaken at some point in the future but I suggest perhaps a six month period of the present system after these changes may provide comparable figures?

## 11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1 The proposals outlined above of reductions in daily, monthly and annual car parking charges will directly affect 5 key town centres as well as car park users and traders from across the County Borough. Consequently, an extended period of public consultation is essential to aid Council decision-making on this issue.