

# CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

## Cabinet

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**Date of Meeting:** 3 November 2009

**Report of:** Strategic Director Places

**Subject/Title:** Notice of Motion - Free Car Parking Trial in Macclesfield

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor David Brickhill

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### 1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 At its meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2009, Council considered the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors A Arnold and J Narraway and resolved that the motion stand referred to Cabinet:

*“That Cheshire East Council suspends car parking charges on Saturdays in Macclesfield Town Centre for a trial period of three months initially, subject to a review of its effect in increasing local trade, will, if proved successful, extend the duration of the scheme and implement the same measure to other town centres in Cheshire East requiring assistance in regenerating local businesses.*

*Given the urgency of the need for regeneration assistance within our town centres, the trial scheme in Macclesfield should be implemented as quickly as possible.”*

### 2.0 Decision Requested

- 2.1 That Cabinet does not introduce a trial scheme for free parking but continues to invest in real *recession busting* activities through the work of its Task Group.

### 3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 This report asks Cabinet to consider this motion in light of the latest financial implications (8.0) and the advice from the Recession Task group (11.1 to 11.4).

### 4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 The trial scheme proposed would only affect Macclesfield Town but this would need to be extended to all towns and villages across the Borough.

### 5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 Ward Members for Macclesfield Town.

### 6.0 Policy Implications including - Climate change

## **- Health**

6.1 None specifically associated with the introduction of free parking.

### **7.0 Financial Implications for Transition Costs (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)**

7.1 None

### **8.0 Financial Implications 2009/10 and beyond (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)**

8.1 The cost of suspending car parking charges on Saturdays for a three month period in Macclesfield Town Centre is estimated to be £41,000.

8.2 If this were to be extended across the whole Borough, the full year effect on income budgets would be a reduction of approximately £420,000 per annum.

### **9.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)**

9.1 Should Cabinet decide that car parking charges will be suspended, it will be necessary to publish a notice of variation of the charges in the local press at least 21 days before it is due to come into force. The placing of such notices in the local press usually cost in the region of £600-800. It will also be necessary to erect notices at the appropriate car parks advising its users of the variation in charges and the date upon which it will come into effect.

### **10.0 Risk Management**

10.1 The financial risks are set out in 8.0 above.

### **11.0 Background and Options**

11.1 Cheshire East Council is demonstrating its leadership and commitment towards addressing the real and immediate impacts of the current recession through the work of its Recession Task Group. We are working to provide a coordinated range of actions to support our town centres through the recession, including projects to:

- Introduce an intense town centre street cleansing scheme.
- Promoting town centre floral displays to maximise retail benefit from RHS visitors
- Work with landlords and agents of empty units to smarten up vacant shops to help attract new businesses and visitors through themed window displays
- Investigate the feasibility of a Cheshire East Loyalty Card Scheme
- Developing a shop frontage improvement grant scheme
- Provide a recession survival guide on the Council web site and running support events for local businesses.

- 11.2 The primary factor affecting a town's competitiveness is the town's offer and Cheshire East Council is promoting an active intervention to support local regeneration projects from any town in Cheshire East wishing to get involved.
- 11.3 An extensive review of project options has taken place to ensure the effectiveness of the Councils recession busting activities. As part of that process, the impact of car parking charges of town centres has received detailed consideration. Pilot schemes have taken place across the country and these have provided inconclusive evidence to indicate the effectiveness of this action.
- 11.4 The overall message from a recent market towns car parking research project was that the relationship between parking and economic performance is weak. The report noted that management of parking can have a positive impact on economic viability by enabling better use to be made of the public space within towns.
- 11.5 Effective Car Park management contributes positively to the economic performance and customer experience of our town centres and seeks to provide good quality, accessible and secure facilities for workers, shoppers and other visitors.
- 11.6 Evidence from other areas suggests initiatives of this type do not, in fact, increase usage of our facilities or retail 'footfall' and spend in our shopping centres. Schemes like this can simply shift existing demand to the free periods, resulting in a poor customer experience caused by a lack of available spaces at these times and increased traffic congestion.
- 11.7 To ensure fairness and consistency, any such concessions would need to be implemented across the Borough.

## **12.0 Overview of Year One and Term One Issues**

12.1 N/A

## **13.0 Access to Information**

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

Name: Peter Hartwell  
Designation: Head of Safer & Stronger Communities  
Tel No: 01270 529614  
Email: [peter.hartwell@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:peter.hartwell@cheshireeast.gov.uk)