

Report of:	Head of Environment & Healthy Lifestyles
Contact Officer:	Mike Edmonds
Contact Number:	01543 464416
Portfolio Leader:	Environment & Climate Change
Key Decision:	No
Report Track:	Cabinet: 28/01/21

Cabinet
28 January 2021
Car Parking Charges - Rugeley

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present to Cabinet a request received from Rugeley Town Council on 13 January 2021 to provide free car parking in Rugeley for a 12-month period on the basis set out in the letter, attached as Appendix 1.
- 1.2 To seek Members' direction with regards to the next steps to be taken in relation to this request.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 Cabinet are requested to consider the content of the request received from Rugeley Town Council in light of the information provided in this report and either:
- (a) Agree to the request; and the Budget recommended to Council is amended accordingly to reflect a £67,000 shortfall on car parking income and such funding identified to set a Balanced Budget
- (b) Reject the request, or
- (c) Propose another way forward in respect of the request

3 Key Issues and Reasons for Recommendations

Key Issues

- 3.1 The economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been significant and there is considerable uncertainty as to how quickly the economy will recover. It is

highly likely that the pandemic will have a significant impact on our town centres and high streets within Cannock Chase, but at present it is not fully known if these impacts will be short-term or whether they may lead to longer-term changes. The Council's new Corporate Plan 2021-24 identifies that our town centres may need to change and to that end includes a range of objectives aimed at reshaping our town centres. One such objective is to review the Council's car parking strategy over the next 3 years.

- 3.2 The Council also faces a period of financial uncertainty, with a significant loss of income and the increased costs of the impact of Covid-19.
- 3.3 The Town Council's proposal to offer free car parking for a 12 month period in Rugeley, would result in a loss of income to the Council of £67k based on the budget provision for Car Parking in 2021-22. In addition, the Council would not be able to reclaim 75% of lost income (pre-covid) as part of the Government's Income Guarantee Scheme (currently available for April to June 21).
- 3.4 The reduction in income would have to be met from making savings elsewhere, implementing service reductions or use of balances. The Council however has already a forecast deficit of £300K for 2021-22

Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.5 Information in respect of the request received from Rugeley Town Council to provide free car parking in Rugeley for a 12-month period has been set out in this report for consideration. The options available to Members are included in the recommendations section of this report.

4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 Economic Prosperity and supporting the recovery of our town centres are priorities that align with our current and future Corporate Plan for 2021-24.

5 Report Detail

- 5.1 On 6 November 2020, the Council received a letter from Rugeley Town Council requesting that Cabinet consider providing permanent fee car parking in Rugeley on the same basis as that agreed with Hednesford Town Council. Appendix 2 refers.
- 5.2 Following discussions with the Leader of the Council and the portfolio Holder for the Environment and Climate Change, the Town Council were informed that whilst Cabinet were likely to be supportive of this request and of its intentions, they could not agree to the offer at that time. The significant financial impact on the Council's future budgets and the fact that the Council had just installed new contactless pay and display ticket machines and a pay by phone option across all of its pay and display car parks in the District were factors..
- 5.3 On 13 January the Clerk to Rugeley Town Council again wrote to the Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles requesting that Cabinet consider its latest proposal; to offer free car parking in Rugeley for a 12 month period, in return for a one-off contribution of circa £25k to £30k from the Town Council. This would

provide the Council with some certainty of income at a time when car parking income cannot be assured.

- 5.4 The Clerk has been advised at Cabinet's request that Members would consider this proposal at Cabinet on 28 January 2021.
- 5.5 Pre-Covid car parking income for all of the Council's pay and display car parks in 2019-20 amounted to £735,288 of which £129,772 related to income from car parks in Rugeley.
- 5.6 So far the net car parking income for all of the Council's pay and display car parks in 2020-21 (April 20 – December 20) is £242,205 of which £50,080 relates to income from car parks in Rugeley. The forecast outturn for Rugeley Car Parks assumes income of approximately £67,000 and compensation as part of the Governments Income Guarantee of £49,000
- 5.7 It is difficult to determine the position for next year. However, if the position remains the same for next financial year, agreeing to the Town Council's proposal based on the income received year to date would result in a loss of income to the Council of circa £37k after the Town Council's contribution of £30k. Agreeing to this proposal would also prevent the Council from reclaiming lost car parking income of circa £13,000 as part of the Governments Income Guarantee scheme (at present only relating to the period April to June 2021).. Obviously if car parking is free no loss of income can be reclaimed under this scheme. The potential full loss, pre COVID, would be in the region of £100,000. The budget for 2021-22 assumes a potential loss in car park income of 25%
- 5.8 In considering this proposal another factor to take into account is the decision of Cabinet in February 2020 to commit £98k capital expenditure to introduce new contactless car parking ticketing machines with an additional pay by phone option in all of the district's pay and display car parks. These were installed in December 2020.

Options open to Cabinet

- 5.9 To consider the content of the request in light of the information provided in this report and either:
 - (a) Accept the request and the Budget recommended to Council is amended accordingly and funding identified ,
 - (b) Reject the request, or
 - (c) Propose another way forward in respect of the request

6 Implications

6.1 Financial

The budgeted provision for Rugeley car parks for 2021-22 amounts to £97,000

Provision exists within the Environment portfolio for car park income in accordance with the original budget for 2020-21. A separate provision exists for the impact of COVID19 with a 25% reduction in income provided for.

A shortfall of £67,000 would exist if a one off contribution of £30,000 was approved by Cabinet

In considering the proposal Cabinet will need to take into account the financial position of the Council with a deficit of £300,000 existing on the 2021-22 General Fund Budget as included elsewhere on the Agenda

6.2 Legal

None.

6.3 Human Resources

None.

6.4 Risk Management

One of the keys risk facing the Council is that the economic impact of the pandemic on our town centres is far greater than expected requiring a number of measures to be put in place to support local businesses and to reshape our town centres so that they are fit for purpose in the future. Unfortunately, it is still too early to determine exactly what recovery will look like and what is needed to provide support. Offering free car parking in isolation at this time may not be the answer and providing a package of support once the economic landscape is a little clearer is more likely to offer the support needed to support our town centres and high streets across the district.

6.5 Equality & Diversity

None.

6.6 Climate Change

None.

7 Appendices to the Report

Appendix 1: Letter from Rugeley Town Council – 13 January 2021

Appendix 2: Letter from Rugeley Town Council – 6 November 2020

Previous Consideration

None.

Background Papers

None.



Rugeley Town Council

Rose Theatre and Community Hall
Taylors Lane
Rugeley
Staffordshire
WS15 2AA

Tel: 01889 574074

Our Ref: RTC.148.21

13th January 2021

Mike Edmonds
Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles
Cannock Chase District Council
Civic Centre
Beecroft Road
Cannock
WS11 1BG

Dear Mike

Car Parking Charges in Rugeley

Thank you for your email outlining the response from the Cabinet Briefing meeting.

I took this to the Full Council meeting on 6th January 2021 for Cllrs consideration and the following points were raised:

- 1) It was never suggested that this arrangement would be the panacea to revitalize the town centre following the pandemic – more a case that it would help to bring shoppers back into the town centre and support local shops.
- 2) It is acknowledged that during all the periods of lockdown in the past 12 months, parking income will have been severely restricted. Would CCDC be interested in a one-off donation from Rugeley Town Council of around £25,000 - £30,000 which will ensure that car parks are offered FREE to local shoppers and businesses for a 12-month period? This will entice shoppers back and bring in an assured income to CCDC who will otherwise be struggling to receive income from parking fees for the foreseeable future.
- 3) Cllrs are just looking for Rugeley to be treated the same as Hednesford and therefore will CCDC be reviewing the amount received as a contribution from Hednesford Town Council in order that it more accurately reflects the possible income from CCDC charging for car parking spaces?

I understand that Cabinet will be meeting this Thursday and wonder if you could take this to the meeting for us please?

Yours sincerely

Hilary Goodreid
Town Clerk
Rugeley Town Council





Rugeley Town Council

Rose Theatre and Community Hall
Taylors Lane
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Staffordshire
WS15 2AA

Tel: 01889 574074

Our Ref: RTC.147.20

6th November 2020

Mike Edmonds
Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles
Cannock Chase District Council
Civic Centre
Beecroft Road
Cannock
WS11 1BG

Dear Mike

Car Parking Charges in Rugeley

You may be aware that CCDC Cllr Dudson attended a meeting of Rugeley Town Council in October and part of the discussion was around free parking in Rugeley. He suggested that the Town Council may like to offer funding to Cannock Chase in order that town parking spaces are permanently offered free of charge.

To this end, at the Rugeley Town Council meeting last night, it was agreed that we contact yourselves with a request that Rugeley Town Council pay on the same basis as Hednesford Town Council in order that all town centre car parking spaces are offered free of charge to users.

Please can you advise how we can progress this for the town?

Yours sincerely

Hilary Goodreid
Town Clerk
Rugeley Town Council

