

Committee: Cabinet

Date: Thursday,
20th October 2022

Title: Christmas Car Parking Incentives 2022

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Richard Freeman,
Portfolio Holder for Public and Council
Services

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Manager

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Key decision:

No

Summary

1. The Council has operated a Christmas car parking promotion for a number of years in all Council managed pay and display car parks, except for Fairycroft Road car park in Saffron Walden (at the request of Waitrose who already fund a promotional incentive).
2. The purpose of the car park promotion is to:
 - a. Support the vitality and viability of the town and village centres.
 - b. Increase footfall into the town and village centres and promote local shopping and access to services.
3. It is proposed to implement a number of free car parking dates and times to incentivise shoppers into our three main towns, Saffron Walden, Great Dunmow and Stansted. The 2022 proposals reflect local feedback and provide an incentive to shop locally and support local businesses.

Recommendations

4. It is requested that the Cabinet approve
 - a. Free parking all day on Friday 25th November and Saturday 26th November 2022 in Saffron Walden (excluding Fairycroft Road) Great Dunmow and Stansted Mountfitchet.
 - b. Free parking from midday on the following dates;
 - i. Saffron Walden (excluding Fairycroft Road car park) on 18/11, 30/11, 7/12, 14/12 and 21/12
 - ii. Great Dunmow on 1/12, 8/12, 15/12 and 22/12
 - iii. Stansted Mountfitchet on 1/11, 8/11, 15/11 and 22/11.

- c. Free parking all day between Christmas 25/12/22 – 1/1/23 (inclusive) in Saffron Walden (excluding Fairycroft Road), Great Dunmow and Stansted.

Financial Implications

5. The total estimated loss of income if the proposals are approved is £11,910 for the three centres during November and December and for free parking in all car parks (excluding Fairycroft), between Christmas and New Year (4 chargeable days) is estimated at £10,745.

Background Papers

6. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

Impact

7.

Communication/Consultation	None
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Health and Safety	None
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None
Sustainability	None
Ward-specific impacts	Car parks are located in Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow town centres, and Stansted Mountfitchet village centre
Workforce/Workplace	None

Situation

8. For several years there has been a Christmas car parking promotion in all Council managed pay and display car parks, except for Fairycroft Road car park in Saffron Walden (at the request of Waitrose who already fund a promotional incentive).
9. The purpose of the car park promotion is to:
 - a. Support the vitality and viability of the town and village centres.

- b. Increase footfall into the town and village centres and promote local shopping and access to services.
10. The length of the promotion and time of day it applies have changed from year to year. In most years free parking has been a combination of the following options:
 - a. From 12 noon on the day of that centre's Christmas light switch-on event if it was held on a day when tariffs were charged.
 - b. From either 2pm or 3pm for the period 1/12 until 24/12 in all car parks, except Fairycroft Road car park.
 - c. All day between 25/12 and 1/1 inclusive.
11. In 2021 and in response to the rapid spread of the COVID-19 Omicron variant the Council agreed to only provide free parking between 25/12 and Monday 3rd January inclusive.
12. Due to the difficulties of reprogramming the car park ticket machines it has not been possible to monitor usage of the car parks during the promotional period to identify the exact amount of lost revenue to the Council or whether the promotion has increased footfall.
13. Anecdotal evidence from the Saffron Walden BID. and Great Dunmow Town Team, and from many individual businesses, is that these promotional campaigns do not increase footfall in the town centres. Dunmow businesses particularly complain about the free parking between Christmas and New Year when most of the businesses are closed.
14. In 2019 a consultant was commissioned to identify whether there was value in a Christmas car parking incentive. The key findings included:
 - Almost 90% of people parking in both Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow did not know that there was a parking incentive when they left home on that day.
 - Just over 50% reported that a free parking incentive would encourage them to visit the town centre
 - A parking promotion might encourage short stay parkers rather than long stay parkers.
15. The 2022 proposals reflect the local feedback and provide an incentive to shop local and support local businesses. It is proposed that:
 - a. On Friday 25th November 2022 and Saturday 26th November 2022 all car parks, except Fairycroft Road car park, will be free in all three centres

This offer coincides with the “Black Friday” weekend and is intended to offer an incentive for shoppers to visit their local retailers as an alternative to online shopping.

The Great Dunmow Christmas Lights Switch-on and Market are taking place on Saturday 26th November and this offer will also cover this event.

- b. Free parking from midday covering four Wednesdays, 30/11, 7/12, 14/12 and 21/12 in the Saffron Walden car parks, except for Fairycroft Road car park. Wednesdays are the quietest day of the week and this is intended to encourage shoppers into the town centre. In addition free parking from midday on Friday 18 November to support the Christmas activity events and the Christmas Lights Switch-on.
- c. Free parking from midday covering four Thursdays, 1/12, 8/12, 15/12 and 22/12 in Great Dunmow car parks. The retailers are intending to run four late night shopping events on these dates and have asked for free parking to encourage shoppers.
- d. Free parking from midday on four Tuesdays, 1/11, 8/11, 15/11 and 22/11 in Stansted Mountfitchet. These are intended to encourage families to attend a new Touchpoint project offering support after school / tea-time for local families.

16. Approved car parking incentives would be promoted through the use of stickers on ticket machines, local and social media advertising.

Risk Analysis

17.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Incentives do not bring in more shoppers	1 – it is likely that some additional shoppers will be attracted	1 – Little direct financial impact as income loss is not affected.	Ensure clear and widespread advertising of the individual incentives

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.