

Statement from Toni Gabell

My name is Toni Gabell, I am the shop manager of St Elizabeths charity shop in Saffron Walden and a resident. We are a small charity, and we are one of 8 shops.

We, as all the other charity shops in Saffron Walden rely heavily on volunteers, they freely give up their valuable time to help us and we could not function without them. Usually these volunteers will be retired, hence having the time available to help. This will mean that their income could be limited. With the current state of the economy and annual rises for services (council tax, water, etc) due in April, everyone is having to watch their finances more closely. We all have volunteers that travel to work with us, this incurs using their own vehicle, fuel and paying parking.

The proposals that have been made seem excessive for example the long stay in Swan Meadow if it goes ahead will mean an extra £1.20 a day. This is a lot for someone who is already giving so much. I am fearful that this might just be one step too far and I as well as other charity shops in the town might start to lose our volunteers.

As a retailer I see customers who regularly visit us particularly on Saturdays and spend money in our town. Taking away the free parking/putting up the tariffs could make them think twice about coming every weekend.

As I have already stated I am also a resident of Saffron Walden. I park my vehicle on the road as I do not have a driveway. Parking is already difficult for residents due to

restrictions and households having more than one vehicle. With increased parking charges this could mean that parking will become worse as people working in the town, try to find somewhere else to park rather than using car parks.

With the proposed increases obviously it has been calculated how much the council will receive as an income, but has it been considered as to how much they might lose by charging higher tariffs and people not using the car parks?

High Streets all over the country are suffering with an increase in retailer choosing to close their shops and move to big shopping centres where shoppers can park for free.

We are lucky in Saffron Walden. We have a beautiful historical town, two markets a week, a variety of shops including many independents and places to eat. Coming to Saffron Walden is a day out for people and these proposed increases could seriously damage the footfall in our town.