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Subject to approval at the next Free Parking Scheme Review Working Party meeting

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FREE PARKING SCHEME REVIEW WORKING PARTY

13 May 2024 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Wallsgrove (Chair), Wiltshire (Vice-Chair) and Blanchard-Cooper

Councillor Bob Waterhouse (nominated representative from Bognor Regis Town Council), Councillor Freddie Tandy (nominated representative from Littlehampton Town Council), Councillor Alan Butcher (nominated representative from Littlehampton Town Council), Heather Allen (nominated representative from Bognor Regis BID)

9. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed members of the Working Party and Officers to the meeting.

As there had been a change to the membership of the Working Party since the first meeting, introductions were made, and it was confirmed the membership would be made up of the following:

Councillor Sue Wallsgrove	Arun District Council Environment Committee Member
Councillor Billy Blanchard-Cooper	Arun District Council Environment Committee Member
Councillor Keir Greenway	Arun District Council Environment Committee Member
Councillor Christine Wiltshire	Arun District Council Environment Committee Member
Councillor Francis Oppler	Bognor Regis Town Council
Councillor Bob Waterhouse	Bognor Regis Town Council
Councillor Freddie Tandy	Littlehampton Town Council
Councillor Alan Butcher	Littlehampton Town Council
Heather Allen	Bognor Regis BID
Mike La Traille	Littlehampton Trader

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10. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Greenway and Mike La Traille.

11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Heather Allen, from Bognor Regis Business Improvement District (BID) wished it to be recorded that the Bognor Regis BID were in receipt of payment for services in distribution.

Councillor Wiltshire declared a Personal Interest in all items of the agenda as a Member of Littlehampton Town Council.

Councillor Blanchard-Cooper declared a Personal Interest in all items of the agenda as a Member of Littlehampton Town Council.

12. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 05 February 2024 were approved by the Working Party. These would be signed after the meeting.

13. WORKING PARTY TERMS OF REFERENCE

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Group Head of Technical Services explained that at the Arun District Council (ADC) Environment Committee meeting on 19 March 2024, the Committee agreed to change the Terms of Reference for the Free Parking Scheme Review Working Party as follows (additions shown in **bold** and deletions are shown in ~~strikethrough~~):

- ~~ADC Environment Committee Vice Chair~~
- **3 4** additional Members of the ADC Environment Committee, to be agreed by Group Leaders

The reason for this change was that the Vice-Chair of the Environment Committee was unable to attend the Working Party meetings. Cllr Blanchard-Cooper would now sit on the Working Party as a nominated Member of the ADC Environment Committee.

The Group Head of Technical Services then reminded members of the purpose and objectives of the Working Party as set out in the Terms of Reference.

The Working Party noted the revised Terms of Reference.

14. TWO HOUR TOWN CENTRE PARKING SCHEMES

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Group Head of Technical Services presented the report to the Working Party. He reminded members that they had been asked to provide suggestions that they wished to be considered by the Working Party, at the last meeting. There had been several suggestions submitted by Heather Allen from Bognor Regis BID, which could be found in Appendix A of the report. Officers had carried out further work on each of these options, and the detail of this was contained within the report. There had also been a submission by Mike La Traille which had been received after circulation of the agenda. This had been provided to members separately in a supplementary pack in advance of the meeting, and paper copies of this were also available at the meeting. Members were also provided with an additional document at the meeting, which was an Options Comparison Chart (based on 50,000 sales of physical and virtual discs), comparing the costs of each option highlighted in the report.

The Group Head of Technical Services presented each option to the Working Party. Questions and discussion took place after each option was presented, as briefly summarised below.

Option A – The scheme remain unchanged.

- One member asked whether an average usage could be agreed upon as a base for discussion. Officers and other members felt this was not possible, as the data was not available, and it would likely vary from user to user and between Littlehampton and Bognor Regis.
- It was asked whether there was a solution for parents wishing to use the car parks twice each day for short periods during school drop-off and pick-up. Officers confirmed there had been no complaints regarding this so far, and they were communicating with West Sussex County Council around this matter. Some parents had been arranging to share journeys, so one parent would collect, and another would drop-off.

Option B - Continue the scheme but explore changes in price to the end users.

- It was felt by one member that it was unrealistic to ask businesses to purchase the discs for a much higher value, as the income they would generate from the disc would still be the same. Currently, businesses selling the discs were making 40p per disc, and if the outlay was higher, this would not be worthwhile to them.
- One member felt the figures had not established that ADC was making a loss on the sale of the discs. Further discussion took place around the difficulty of estimating costs to ADC without usage data, which was why it was necessary to review the current scheme.
- It was felt that businesses were selling the discs for the footfall it brought to their shops, not the profit from the sales of the discs.
- One member suggested that rather than operating 2 discs, a singular 'One Arun' disc be created, with the pricing around £5 per disc. This could potentially be a virtual only scheme.
- While physical discs were still in use, data could not be obtained on usage and therefore cost of the scheme.

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- There was a suggestion that the discs could potentially offer 3 hours of free parking instead of 2, but it was recognised that this would add to ADC's cost of delivering the scheme.
- Members were keen to support the town centres and increase footfall.
- It was suggested that best practice be obtained from other local authorities. The Group Head of Technical Services reiterated that members had been asked at the first meeting to carry out research and look at potential solutions. No other Sussex Council operated a free town centre parking scheme.
- One member had researched the correlation between parking and footfall, and had found a 2015 study which looked at free parking. It had found a relationship between free parking and town centre footfall, but it was difficult to establish how much weight this carried, and it was felt there was more of a focus around accessibility, how well the town was looked after and the facilities on offer.
- Chichester had no free parking scheme, but the town centre was busy.
- It was asked whether observational surveys could be carried out to provide more data. The Group Head of Technical Services explained this was technically possible, but would take resources to implement.

Option C – Increase partner contributions

- It was thought the lack of data around how much the scheme was costing ADC would make it difficult to arrive at a contribution figure.

Option D – Virtual permits only. The Group Head of Technical Services explained this achieved the three objectives of acquiring usage data, stopping abuse of the scheme, and reducing admin costs.

- It was asked whether a virtual only scheme could incorporate multiple separate free 2 hour parking stays within the same day. Officers confirmed that currently users could only park free once per day, whether or not they used the full 2 hour free parking period, however they could pay virtually to top up their parking for additional hours. Officers could look into whether multiple free parking sessions would be technically possible.
- It was asked whether a single Arun virtual disc could be used in both Bognor Regis and Littlehampton on the same day. Officers confirmed users could only use the free parking once per day if these were part of the same disc scheme.

Option E&F – Pay on exit technology. The Group Head of Technical Services explained there were legal complexities around the use of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) technology by a local authority, which did not apply to private landlords. This could be further investigated by Officers if the Working Party wished. The use of barrier technology could also be further explored if the Working party were interested in this option.

- One member felt pay on exit technology was well established and would be the least open to abuse.
- It was asked why this option would be so costly. Officers explained spaces would be lost in order to fit in the barriers, and all car park users would get the first 2 hours free, so income would be reduced.

Option G&H - Cap 2/3-hour parking charges at 50p and £1. The Group Head of Technical Services explained the issue with this option was that there was no way of stopping users from repeat purchasing subsidised parking sessions, leading to abuse of the scheme.

Option I - Complete withdrawal of the schemes. The Group Head of Technical Services explained there was uncertainty over current use of the scheme, and also over the impact removal of the scheme would have on behaviour. 49% of people using ADC car parks currently used an app to pay for their parking, which cost extra to do so. People placed a value on convenience, and it was unclear the impact of free parking on town centre footfall.

- One member wanted this option ruled out, as he could not support removing the free parking scheme entirely.
- It was asked whether withdrawal of the scheme would mean the money saved could be used to support town centres in other ways, such as improvement grants, events, safety and security measures. Other members felt it was not possible to use car park revenue for other initiatives.

The Group Head of Technical Services also reminded members about the submission by Mike La Traille prior to the meeting.

The Chair explained that the Working Party needed to choose two or three options to be further researched by Officers, and be brought back to the next meeting of the Working Party for consideration. Following further review and discussion, the favoured options were:

- 1) Virtual only permits
- 2) A hybrid of both physical and virtual discs, with the virtual discs costing less for the end users to purchase than the physical discs.
- 3) Continue the current scheme but explore changes in price to the end user.

It was felt that the options should be looked at both for separate Bognor Regis and Littlehampton discs, and also for a singular Arun disc covering both towns.

A discussion took place around whether 2 hours free parking was restrictive and whether this should be increased to 3 hours, which would have to be reflected in the cost of the disc. Members did not agree to pursue this option further at this stage.

The Group Head of Technical Services asked members for a guide on suggested pricing for the discs. Some members felt this should be no higher than £5 per disc, whereas another member felt this could go up to £10.

One member was disappointed that ANPR was not being looked at further at this stage, although another member pointed out that this may still be looked at as part of the Parking Review.

For clarity, the Committee Manager read out the three suggested options (as written in the resolution) to be further researched by Officers, and be brought back to the next meeting of the Working Party for consideration. Each option was to be looked

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at both for separate Bognor Regis and Littlehampton discs, and also for a singular Arun disc covering both towns.

Having been proposed by Councillor Blanchard-Cooper and seconded by Councillor Wallsgrove,

The Working Party

RESOLVED – that

The following three options be further researched by Officers, and be brought back to the next meeting of the Working Party for consideration. Each option is to be looked at both for separate Bognor Regis and Littlehampton discs, and also for a singular Arun disc covering both towns:

- 1) Virtual only permits
- 2) A hybrid of both physical and virtual discs, with the virtual discs costing less for the end users to purchase than the physical discs.
- 3) Continue the current scheme but explore changes in price to the end user.

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Free Parking Scheme Review Working Party would take place on Monday 15 July 2024 at 6.00pm.

(The meeting concluded at 7.29 pm)