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**REPORT TO: ECONOMIC GROWTH, HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL  
SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE ON 24 AUGUST 2021**

**SUBJECT: FREE AFTER 3**

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND  
FINANCE)**

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the opportunity to provide a Free After 3 parking promotion in December 2021.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

**2.1 Committee is asked to consider and agree:**

- (i) the provision of 'Free After 3' parking in the St Giles Centre Multi Storey Car Park from the switching on of the Christmas lights to Saturday 1 January 2022 (inclusive); and
- (ii) giving delegated authority to the Head of Environmental and Commercial Services to implement Free After 3 for future years as outlined in this report unless Officers consider that circumstances have changed which would then prompt a report to this Committee for reconsideration.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 For the last six years the Council has offered free parking in certain car parks after 3pm in the run up to Christmas.
- 3.2 The initial trial in 2015 was for an extended period of 6 months starting in June 2015. In 2015 the parking ticket machines were altered to issue a nil-value ticket so the quantum of use could be assessed.
- 3.3 Following the first year the findings of officers was that the scheme did not generate sufficient economic benefits to offset the financial impact to the Council to warrant maintaining the scheme on a permanent basis (report to Economic Development and Infrastructure Services Committee on 8 March 2016, para 9 of the minute refers).

- 3.4 An evaluation report by Elgin Business Improvement District in 2016 gave only three quantitative examples of impact on either footfall or transactions, which did not incorporate other factors that could impact on footfall, such as weather or annual economic growth / decline. It was, however, clear from the evaluation report that the campaign was positively received. At the time the occupancy of the car parks in the scheme increased, however, occupancy of car parks not included in the scheme decreased.
- 3.5 For the last five years the car park ticket machines have not been reprogrammed in order to mitigate the cost of the scheme. This means that there is no data available to demonstrate the financial impact of 'Free After 3'. Based on the 2015 scheme, there was a direct cost to Council in relation to loss of car parking income up to £2,500. As the decision was taken in 2016 to minimise costs by not reprogramming the ticket machines, this can only be an estimate.
- 3.6 In line with previous years and given the financial impact, it is recommended that the scheme is promoted for the St Giles Multi Storey Car Park only.
- 3.7 It is recommended that the Free After 3 campaign is introduced from the switching on of the Christmas lights to Saturday 1 January 2022 (inclusive).

#### **4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

**a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))**

The proposals relate to the Corporate Plan priority of Sustainable Economic Development by promoting and developing infrastructure.

**(b) Policy and Legal**

There are no policy or legal implications.

**(c) Financial implications**

If the additional spend (loss of income) recommended in this report is approved, this will increase the savings targets by up to £2,500. While in isolation these figures may not be significant, the cumulative impact of all new pressures will require to be taken into account for future years. If the committee recommends additional budget to be allocated this recommendation will be considered in the next quarterly budget monitoring report in the context of the current overall financial position of the council and in particular in the overall context of spend beyond affordable limits that impinges on the Council's reserves policy position.

**(d) Risk Implications**

There are no material risks in relation to this proposal.

**(e) Staffing Implications**

There are no staffing implications arising from this report.

**(f) Property**

There are no property implications.

**(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact**

There are no equalities implications and no material socio-economic impacts.

**(h) Consultations**

The Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), Legal Services Manager, Equalities Officer, Principal Accountant (P Connor), and Committee Services Officer (L Rowan) have been consulted and their comments incorporated into this report.

**5. CONCLUSION**

**5.1 Committee is asked to consider a Free After 3 promotion for 2021 restricted to St Giles Multi storey carpark, and for future years.**

Author of Report:	Nicola Moss, Transportation Manager
Background Papers:	
Ref:	SPMAN-524642768-479