

Discussion Paper 1 Proposals for a revised policy for campervan and motorhome parking

We continue to see increasing numbers of campervans and motorhomes on our highways and in our public car parks. Most recently on 4 March 2015 Cabinet approved a policy that prohibited the parking of motorhomes and campervans in our car parks between the hours of 22:00h and 08:00h the following day. This, in my view is now in need of a revision to recognise both the demand for short term overnight pitches for campervans and motorhomes – and to acknowledge that measures to carefully and sensitively fulfil this demand (rather than continuing to treat overnight parking as a “parking contravention” or some form of “anti-social behaviour”) may well have benefits for both our town economies and for our own revenue. It is also the case that our own residents are choosing small and medium sized camper vans as either their main or second vehicle and in some cases our own policy currently prevents them from parking overnight in public car parks close to their own homes.

Some years ago we used to have simple rule in our Parking Places Order that specified “no overnight sleeping”, and that has widely been acknowledged in the industry as being almost impossible to enforce. In more recent years we have seen a new problem emerge – with our inexpensive permit tariffs (just £100 per year) we were inadvertently encouraging local motorhome and campervan owners to use some of our car parks as a cheap storage facility for their vehicles – with consequent lack of parking availability for visitors and town centre shoppers. Accordingly Cabinet considered papers that I had prepared and made decisions that this Council:

- (a) wished to encourage day visitors in motorhomes and campervans – so these vehicles are currently allowed to use any car park on any day but only between 08:00h and 22:00h daily)
- (b) was interested in a pilot scheme whereby we would consider the impact of allowing overnight “camping” for up to 3 consecutive nights in specified car parks in Exmouth (this pilot is about to enter its third season at the request of Exmouth Town Council) and
- (c) that overnight parking of any campervan or motorhome would not be allowed in any other car park (to prevent both storage and overnight camping).

The Exmouth pilot has been interesting and I would ask Members to endorse the following principles and to allow the detailed policy to then be developed by Officers in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader.

1. The Exmouth pilot has been broadly successful and there is a significant and growing demand from our visitors for short duration “aire” style facilities throughout East Devon. The Council will in consultation with Ward Members seek to introduce a revised policy that welcomes over-night stays in specified car parks across East Devon unless there are local circumstances that would mean that there would be an unacceptable negative impact in the vicinity.
2. Motorhome and campervan customers will NOT be eligible for purchasing our standard car park permits and will only be permitted to use our pay and display car parks on a “pay as you use” basis. The hourly, daily, 3 day, 5 day, weekly and overnight tariffs will be reviewed and will recognise the value of the car parking asset alongside other facilities available locally and will ensure that larger vehicles pay for the number of parking bays that they occupy (including any spaces that they prevent other vehicles from occupying (due to their size).
3. The tariff will allow an overnight stay in approved car parks (where no other facilities are provided) of one, two or three consecutive nights only (with no return permitted within 24 hours).
4. Residents will still be unable to purchase a parking permit to use our public car parks for long term storage of motorhomes and campervans when they are not in use. However, we will

on a case by case basis consider “exemption” permits for residents who can demonstrate that they rely on a small campervan as their regular daily transport and that they do not have suitable alternative off-street parking facilities available elsewhere. One safeguard that we can introduce is to make it a condition that the exemption will only apply in areas where the resident lives in close proximity to the car park in question and where the vehicle is registered and insured in their name at that home address.

5. Finally Officers would also like to explore the possibility of creating dedicated motorhome / campervan pitches within a site with appropriate facilities to allow longer stays and for which a premium overnight rate of say £30 per night could be expected.

We would propose beginning a formal consultation process with local Members and Natural England this winter to consider the impact of such a development on the site of Exmouth’s former lorry park adjacent to the Estuary. The implementation of this would be subject to further consideration by Members in due course in terms of financial investment decisions and may also need to be the subject of a planning application depending on the exact details of the change from “lorry park” to “camp site”