

Date: 31st March 2022
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Our ref: MO/HGL



Ms S Mynard
Chair of Sidmouth Chamber of Commerce

By email only: chair@sidmouthchamber.co.uk

Dear Ms Mynard,

Petitions re car parking charges

I refer to your letter of 10th March providing two petitions in relation to car parking charges. One was organised by the Chamber of Commerce and had both online and paper versions. The other was organised by Mr Goodman and this was an online petition. You note that collectively the petitions have 1993 signatures. Part 5.6 of the Council's Constitution details how the Council will deal with petitions and I have now had a chance to consider these petitions in accordance with those requirements.

I note that none of the petitions are in the format that the Council petition scheme would advocate and the Chamber of Commerce petition is phrased differently from Mr Goodman's. The Chamber of Commerce petition states that car parking raises should be limited to an increase to £1.20 / hour, whereas Mr Goodman's is not clear whether it is objecting to any increase from £1 or is accepting of the increase to £1.20 / hour. The reason for highlighting this is because arguably the two petitions should be treated separately.

Notwithstanding the above comment, if the petitions are taken together there are still a number of areas where the petitions, or those signing them, do not meet the qualifying criteria detailed in paragraphs 4 and 5, the most important of which are as follows;

1. Only those who live, work or study in East Devon can sign / organise a petition.

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2. Sufficient information to be able to identify that the organiser and signatories live, work or study in East Devon should be provided.

While some of the non-compliance is relatively trivial, which I am happy to waive together with treating them as separate petitions, being able to identify the signatories as local people is fundamental to the legitimacy of any petition. In that regard the petitions contain a number of non-UK residents and out of district signatories and there are also a number who have not provided sufficient information to determine that they meet the relevant criteria.

Once those signatories who do not meet the criteria have been discounted, there are a total of 1476 signatories. In addition there are a number of duplicates across the petitions and you will understand that an individual can only have their signature counted once. I haven't discounted the duplicates in the above number because it would be an extremely time consuming exercise to complete and it won't affect how the matter is dealt with. However, if this exercise were to be completed then it would further reduce the number of valid signatures.

Despite the difficulties identified I am willing to accept the petitions on the basis of a maximum of 1476 valid signatories. This means that what has been presented is an 'ordinary petition' in accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme.

Having determined that this petition does not meet the threshold for Council debate, the Council now has to decide how to respond. Given that the Council approved the increasing of car parking charges at its 23rd February 2022 Council meeting, it is not a matter that can be subject to further consideration at this time. As this matter is Cabinet's responsibility now I have consulted with senior Cabinet Members and there is consensus that it is not appropriate for any further action to be taken on the petitions at this time. Accordingly the Council's position is that the petitions will not be progressed any further. It is noted in passing that there has been a commitment to look at the position in relation to car parking charges later in the year following the Summer period based upon the usual financial monitoring information that Members receive.

Yours sincerely,



Henry Gordon Lennox
Monitoring Officer
