



## Report to Policy Committee

**Author/Lead Officer of Report: Ben Brailsford,  
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**Report of:** Richard Eyre: Director Street Scene & Regulations

**Report to:** Waste & Street Scene Policy Committee

**Date of Decision:** 27 September 2023

**Subject:** **City Centre Parking Offer at Christmas**

Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
If YES, what EIA reference number has it been given? 2354				
Has appropriate consultation taken place?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has a Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:-				
<p><i>“The (<b>report/appendix</b>) is not for publication because it contains exempt information under Paragraph (<b>insert relevant paragraph number</b>) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).”</i></p>				

**Purpose of Report:**

The purpose of this report is to set out, following a request from the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Committee, options for consideration in terms of parking concessions in the City Centre, seeking to increase footfall to support the Christmas retail and hospitality offer.

**Recommendations:**

The Waste & Street Scene Committee is recommended to:

- Consider the options put forward in this report for discussion and agree whether a Christmas parking offer in the city centre should be implemented or whether no further action is taken in relation to parking provision.
- Note that the Transport, Regeneration and Climate Policy Committee may authorise officers to liaise with the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority to identify potential measures to promote and / or incentivise the use of public transport over the Christmas period, and further recommend that it does so.

**Background Papers:**

*(Insert details of any background papers used in the compilation of the report.)*

Lead Officer to complete:-		
1	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed, where required.	Finance: Adrian Hart
		Legal: Richard Cannon
		Equalities & Consultation: Ed Sexton
		Climate:
<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>		
2	<b>SLB member who approved submission:</b>	Ajman Ali, Executive Director of Neighbourhoods
3	<b>Committee Chair consulted:</b>	Cllr Joe Otten, Chair of Waste and Street Scene Committee
4	I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Committee by the SLB member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.	
	<b>Lead Officer Name:</b> Ben Brailsford	<b>Job Title:</b> Head of Street Scene Services
	<b>Date:</b> 22-9-23	

## **1. PROPOSAL**

### **1.1 Background**

- 1.1.1 The Council, its partners in the Sheffield Business Improvement District, and many City Centre attractions develop a programme of Christmas activity each year in the city centre. The activity is designed to encourage people to visit the hospitality and retail offer at what is a crucial trading period for businesses.
- 1.1.2 This programme encompasses a wide variety of festive activities, supported by the City Council, that take place from mid-November through to the end of December. Plans are still being developed for 2023, but last year saw a number of activities including:
- The largest Christmas Market to date, running from Pinstone Street, through the Peace Gardens, and now down to the bottom of the Moor.
  - Additional Christmas lights and family activities such as Santa's Grotto and an Elf trail.
  - Seasonal music performances and light shows on the cathedral.
  - Pantomimes attracting thousands of people are held at both the Sheffield Theatres and the City Hall.
- 1.1.3 These activities make a positive difference to the footfall in the city centre at this time of year.
- 1.1.4 There are also a number of positive capital investment programmes in the city centre that are nearing completion, such as the Heart of the City II development, which is improving the attractiveness of the city centre as a place to live, work and visit. Some city centre locations, such as Fargate, are undergoing works at the moment which will affect the footfall numbers recorded there in the short-term, but which will ultimately deliver an improved environment and encourage more visitors to the city's retail and hospitality businesses.
- 1.1.5 Footfall in the city centre continues to increase and has improved year on year (see table below). However year to date, it is still 8% lower than that seen in 2019, before the Covid-19 pandemic.

City Centre Footfall Year to Date comparison					
	2019	2022	2023	23 c/t 22	23 c/t 19
Jan	1,819,385	1,471,326	1,715,097	16.6%	-5.7%
Feb	2,110,426	1,623,405	2,089,936	28.7%	-1.0%
Mar	2,792,051	2,490,196	2,459,180	-1.2%	-11.9%
Apr	2,191,960	1,815,337	2,014,848	11.0%	-8.1%
May	2,142,050	2,155,255	2,137,260	-0.8%	-0.2%
Jun	2,637,413	2,512,695	2,413,984	-3.9%	-8.5%
Jul	2,258,285	2,017,337	1,959,143	-2.9%	-13.2%
Aug	2,256,315	1,873,110	1,914,377	2.2%	-15.2%
Sep	3,060,073	2,599,093			
Oct	2,665,473	2,288,149			
Nov	2,527,001	2,327,656			
Dec	3,205,233	2,425,775			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29,665,665</b>	<b>25,599,334</b>	<b>16,703,825</b>	<b>4.7%</b> YTD	<b>-8.3%</b> YTD

- 1.1.6 In the past the Council has agreed some form of free parking offer at Christmas in the pay and display parking spaces it controls, in order to support the wider festive offer. The last time a parking offer was made in Sheffield was December 2020 during the recovery from the covid pandemic. A Christmas parking offer was not part of budget proposals agreed when setting the 2023/24 budget.
- 1.1.7 In 2019 the offer provided free all day (defined as the charging hours from 08.00-20.30) parking each Sunday running up to Christmas, starting with the Christmas lights switch on event in mid-November. The offer was devised in consultation with the retail sector, Business Improvement District, and the Council's City Centre Management.
- 1.1.8 However in 2020, the national lockdown imposed between 5 November and 2 December 2020 impacted the benefit of providing a similar offer, so an alternative offer was agreed, allowing free parking on the three weekends immediately prior to Christmas, both in the city centre and across the wider district centres.
- 1.1.9 Sheffield's High Street Forum, which encompasses many of the city centres high street businesses recently raised a question of whether a Christmas Parking offer would be implemented in 2023. The Chair and Deputy Chair of the Waste and Street Scene policy Committee have asked officers to present options relating to free parking in the Christmas period as a means to increase footfall in the city centre. This report sets out the issues and options for the Committee to consider should the Council wish to provide a parking offer to support the city centre Hospitality and retail offer at Christmas.

## **1.2 Outline of subsidised parking options**

1.2.1 The tariffs for parking in the city centre are as follows:

### **1.2.2 On Street**

- Monday to Saturday Zone 1 – £3.00 per hour
- Monday to Saturday Zone 2 – £1.50 per Hour
- Sunday Charges Zone 1 - £1 per hour
- Sunday Charges Zone 2 - £0.50 per Hour

### **1.2.3 Off Street - Monday to Saturday -**

- Broad Lane / Brook Hill / Carver Lane / Eldon Street / Fitzwilliam Street / Silver Street - £1.45 per hour
- Carver Lane / Devonshire Green / Milton Street - £0.90 for first 30 mins, £1.45 per hour, £5.50 all day
- Rockingham Street / Workhouse Lane £1.45 per hour, £7.25 all day
- Ebenezer Street / Stanley Lane / Trinity Street / Windrush Way - £0.90 per hour, £3.60 all day
- Copper Street - £0.90 per hour, £7.25 all day

### **1.2.4 Off Street - Sunday**

- £0.50 per Hour

### **1.2.5 On and off street charges outside of the city centre**

Monday to Saturday

- £0.90 per Hour
- Sunday parking outside of the City Centre is free all year round.

### **1.2.6 Option 1 – Free all-day parking in the city centre on Sundays between 19<sup>th</sup> November and 24<sup>th</sup> December**

1.2.7 Should the committee wish to provide a parking offer in line with the 2019 offer this would encompass free all-day parking in the city centre in on street and off-street spaces on the following six Sundays: 19 November, 26 November, 3 December, 10 December, 17 December and 24 December.

1.2.8 Sundays have lower footfall numbers in the city centre compared to the rest of the week, so would provide most potential benefit from any Christmas promotional activity to attract people to the city centre. The cost to the Council of offering Sunday free parking is significantly less than the rest of the week due to the pricing structure.

1.2.9 The average income of Sunday parking charges in December 2022 for the first 3 weeks was £6,320 per week. Based on this the loss of income will total £37,920 for the six weeks plus £4,080 relating to the costs associated with providing the free parking for 6 Sundays such as enacting the changes with signs and suppliers.

**1.2.10 Option 2 – Free all-day parking on Saturdays and Sundays in all council pay and display bays across the city between 2 & 3 December and 16 & 17 December 2023**

1.2.11 The Council could offer free parking on three weekends in December in line with the Christmas offer that was implemented in 2020. Based on income received in December 2022, the average cost in uncollected income per weekend would be approximately £27,883. This is forecast to cost approximately £84,000 for the 3 weekends in total, plus £4080 in costs to enact the free parking such as signs and suppliers. This would include parking provision outside of the City Centre.

**1.2.12 Option 3 – Do nothing**

The Council could choose to maintain its current tariffs throughout the festive period, having regard to the points in paragraphs 1.3.2 to 1.3.4.

**1.3 Other Considerations**

**1.3.1** Any decisions to provide free parking will only apply to the Council's pay and display parking, not to any other private operators. The Council only manages approximately 18% of the available parking in the city centre. Private operators therefore manage the large majority of parking space in the city centre.

**1.3.2** The Council has a duty to consider Traffic Management impacts under the Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984. December is one of the busiest months of the year, with most of the Council managed city centre spaces taken up at peak periods. Due to the available capacity, the parking offer is likely to result in free parking for a visitor who may have already planned to use (and pay for) a Council parking place, rather than attracting significantly more cars.

**1.3.3** Free parking may result in more circulating vehicles looking for the free of charge spaces. However Sunday's lower footfall indicates there will be sufficient capacity in private off-street car parks to accommodate any additional circulating vehicles, and render any traffic management impacts to be minimal. It is not therefore felt that free parking would have an adverse effect on traffic flows in the city.

**1.3.4** Given the above however free parking in the Council's car parks is unlikely to attract significant many more motorists who otherwise may have used alternative means to travel to the city centre or who would have used private car park provision.

## **2 HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE ?**

- 2.1 The operation of on and off-street parking spaces, the management of parking through the introduction of parking restrictions and use of parking permits contribute to the management of traffic in the city. Traffic management is a key part of the Sheffield Transport Strategy published in March 2019.
- 2.2 Traffic management, through parking restrictions and their enforcement, also enables the Council to help deliver the strategy, by investing in facilities to enable people to make informed choices about the way they travel and helping transport contribute to the social, economic and environmental improvements we want to happen in the City.
- 2.3 The priority in spending any surplus parking income is the provision and maintenance of off street parking spaces. Income may also be used to fund public transport improvements, new highway schemes, highway maintenance, reducing environmental pollution and maintaining and improving public open spaces.
- 2.4 The Council recognises the importance of supporting public transport and active travel and is in the process of working with partners on exploring and developing options to increase the usage of public transport and increase active travel.

## **3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?**

- 3.1 The Council is not required to consult on changes of this nature, but the Business Improvement District Manager and Chair of the High Street Forum in the City Centre have indicated support for a Christmas parking offer.

## **4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION**

### **4.1 Equality Implications**

- 4.1.1 Overall there are no significant differential, positive or negative, equality impacts from these proposals. There may be a small positive financial impact for visitors by encouraging them to shop and visit the city centre and district centres at a key time of year. This should then have a positive impact in supporting local businesses and jobs.
- 4.1.2 The EIA assessed that, as the proposal is commercially-driven to support retailers at their more important time of year, impacts of the proposal in religious terms are considered limited. Moreover, it is an established shopping period which people of all faiths and no faiths take part in.

4.1.3 Any free parking scheme will obviously only be of benefit to residents and visitors who have access to a car. Alternative measures to improve access to the city centre for those residents and visitors who do not have access to a private car may need to be considered in conjunction with this report.

4.2 Financial and Commercial Implications

4.2.1 A Christmas parking offer was not part of the budget proposals agreed by Council during the 2023/24 budget cycle. There is therefore currently no provision within the parking budget for 2023/24 to fund any offer that may be agreed. Any decision made would therefore need to consider the impact of lost income and the identification of mitigating actions to offset any costs.

4.2.2 The table below shows the month 5 position in terms of Parking Service’s budget, together with the forecast out-turn position.

Car Parking Type	Month 5 YTD Variance	Forecast Year Variance
Off Street	£63,470 adverse	£119,350 adverse
On Street	£77,908 adverse	£117,486 adverse
Overall Parking Account	£(670,889) favourable	£(1,238,595) favourable

4.2.3 Whilst the overall position is a significant budget surplus, the majority of this is related to Bus Lane enforcement. Parking income from both on and off-street car parks is currently underachieving income against forecast expectations.

4.2.4 It is also worth noting that, at the end of the first quarter of 2023-24, the Council’s overall revenue budget shows a forecast overspend of £17.6m.

4.3 Legal Implications

4.3.1 Section 45 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (‘the Act’) gives the Council a power to designate parking places on a highway; to charge for the use of them and to issue parking permits for a charge.

4.3.2 Section 46 of the Act enables a Local Authority to exempt from the payment of any charge any vehicle left in a parking place in such circumstances as may be specified in a traffic order, and for treating any vehicle so exempted as having been left there, and the charge from which it is exempted as having been paid, at such time as may be so specified. This would include the proposal recommended in this report.



4.3.3 Section 122 of the Act imposes a general duty on the Council to exercise its functions under the act to “secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic (including pedestrians) and the provision of suitable and adequate parking facilities on and off the highway”. Collectively, these criteria may be referred to as ‘traffic management purposes’. The Council must consider those traffic management purposes so far as it is practicable while also considering:

- (a) the desirability of securing and maintaining reasonable access to premises;
- (b) the effect on the amenities of any locality affected and (without prejudice to the generality of this paragraph) the importance of regulating and restricting the use of roads by heavy commercial vehicles, so as to preserve or improve the amenities of the areas through which the roads run;
- (bb) the strategy prepared under section 80 of the Environment Act 1995 (national air quality strategy);]
- (c) the importance of facilitating the passage of public service vehicles and of securing the safety and convenience of persons using or desiring to use such vehicles; and
- (d) any other matters appearing to the Council to be relevant.

4.3.4 Where the Council may exercise the powers under sections 45 and 46 – including where the Council chooses to exempt a vehicle from a charge for leaving that vehicle in a parking place – it must first have regard to this duty and consider those traffic management purposes. This report demonstrates that this exercise has been carried out.

#### 4.4 Climate Implications

4.4.1 Any Christmas parking offer would be limited in the number of days it would be applied and is not therefore felt to have a significant direct negative impact in terms of climate change.

4.4.2 There is no significant spare capacity in the Council’s parking provision during the Christmas period to attract more vehicles to the city centre. There is therefore the potential that an offer would result in traffic potentially circulating while searching for a free of charge space. This could have a slight negative impact on carbon emissions.

4.4.3 Sheffield City Council has declared a climate emergency and set out a route map to decarbonisation, including the promotion of public transport and active travel. Whilst the provision of limited free parking is unlikely to impact directly in terms of climate change, the promotion of city centre parking could be perceived as being out of line with the Council’s ambitions in this area. There are potentially other options for improving accessibility of the city centre that might be considered by the Council, including the promotion or subsidy of public transport.

4.5 Other Implications

4.5.1 There are no other implications.

**5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

5.1 The Council could choose to support a public transport offer to promote the use of public transport and/or active travel in partnership with transport operators and the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority. It could alternately make a decision to invest in the cost of supporting offers to increase public transport take up.

It should however be noted that this would be a matter for the Transport, Regeneration and Climate Policy Committee. A decision from that committee would be required so as to take such a proposal forward.

On that basis, this Committee may therefore wish to consider making a recommendation to the Transport, Regeneration and Climate Policy Committee that it authorises officers to liaise with the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority to identify potential measures to promote and / or incentivise the use of public transport over the Christmas period.

**6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1 This report sets out options for consideration in terms of parking concessions in the City Centre, seeking to increase footfall to support the Christmas retail and hospitality offer. Any decision to implement such an approach should be made in the context of the potential cost and impact on footfall of the proposed approach.