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**CHRISTMAS PARKING AND BUS TRAVEL OFFERS**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Nick Wallis,  
Leisure and Local Environment Portfolio**

**Responsible Director – Ian Williams, Director of Economic Growth**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek Members approval on proposals for seasonal parking and bus travel offers in the town centre to support trading and update Members on the Feethams Development.

**Summary**

2. Season of parking offers at Christmas support local retail trade and encourage both existing and new customers to shop in Darlington. This report proposes two parking offers to run from the Christmas Lights Switch On until 2 January 2018. The first is a third free hour in short stay car parks, and the second is a £2 all day offer in East Street Car Park.
3. Similarly bus travel offers will support retail trade and this report references an offer proposed by Arriva.

**Recommendations**

4. It is recommended that:-
  - (a) The third hour be free in Council short stay off-street car parks from 23 November 2017 until 2 January 2018.
  - (b) East Street car park to operate a £2 offer for all day parking from 23 November 2017 until 2 January 2018.

**Reasons**

5. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-
  - (a) To support seasonal trading in Darlington Town Centre.

(b) To attract existing and new customers to the Council's car parks.

**Ian Williams, Director of Economic Growth**

**Background Papers**

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no implications on crime and disorder.
Health and Well Being	There are no implications.
Carbon Impact	There are no implications.
Diversity	There are no implications.
Wards Affected	The proposals affect Central Ward.
Groups Affected	Town centre businesses and town centre visitors arriving by car.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not recommend a change to the Council's budget or policy framework.
Key Decision	This is a key decision due to the effect that it could have on those who use the town centre.
Urgent Decision	This is an urgent decision as the proposed needs to be implemented in a short time frame.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The recommendations support retail traders in the town centre.
Efficiency	No impact.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers.

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

#### Parking Offer

6. In recent years, the Council has applied concessions on its parking fees in Darlington town centre over the Christmas period to support seasonal trading. Last year the offer was “free after three” and this applied on the four Thursdays leading up to Christmas. In addition all parking was free on Boxing Day and New Year’s Day.
7. On Thursday 23 November 2017, the Christmas lights will be switched on. It is proposed that from this date until 2 January 2018 that two parking offers apply; the first being a free third hour in all short stay car parks (“three for two”) and the second being to charge £2 for all day in East Street car park.
8. Other than East Street, other long stay car parks will remain at their current charge level (£4 a day) and on-street parking will remain at 50p per half hour.
9. Together these proposals present an attractive parking offer being a combination of low cost short stay and long stay parking.

#### Arriva Bus Offers

10. This year Arriva propose to introduce the offer of two discounted tickets to coincide with the dates of the Council’s parking offer. The first Arriva offer will be the Darlington Town Day Ticket which provides unlimited travel within the town all day being offered at two tickets for £5 (normally £3.50 each).
11. The second offer is the wider Borough ticket which covers the rural areas where two tickets will be offered for £8.50 (normally £5.80 per ticket).
12. The Council will include reference to the bus offers in its advertisement and promotion of the parking offer so that members of the public are fully informed and can choose the best option for them to shop in Darlington.

#### Financial Implications

13. In December 2016 East Street operated at £4 per day and throughout that month 7141 tickets were sold. In December 2015 the same car park operated at £2 per day and 12403 tickets were sold. If this year’s offer results in a similar increase and assuming that all of these additional tickets resulted from displacement from other long stay car parks the loss of income to the Council would be £13,380. However, this is a worst-case estimate as in reality the offer will draw in some additional customers (bringing in additional income) and there will be some displacement from short stay (with negligible impact on income). It is difficult to estimate the impact of displacement but it is not unreasonable to assume that the net cost will be less than £13,380 and perhaps will be as low as £10,000.

14. When the two for three offer applied in 2015 the annual cost was estimated at the outset at £175,000. It was difficult to determine the actual cost because of the interplay of other factors (weather, other offers, competition from other parking providers etc). Given December is the busiest month for parking, and estimating for a five week period (to commence from 23 November), a rough estimate of worst case loss of income would be say 12% of this figure, that is £21,000. However, again this is worst case and in reality the offer will pull in some new customers and customers from competing parking providers in the area. This could bring the loss down by 10% or more to around £19,000.
15. Taking the two offers together the estimated loss to parking income is in the vicinity of £30,000. Against this must be balanced the benefit to traders (and therefore indirectly to the Council) of better trading figures by making Darlington a more attractive shopping option over the Christmas period.

### **Practical Implications**

16. A number of practical steps need to be taken to implement this offer. This includes publishing a notice of the Council's intentions to change its parking tariffs, changing the tariffs on the pay machines, providing information at pay points and promoting and advertising the offer to the public and to retailers.

### **Consultation**

17. In part this proposal is in response to requests from retailers to support the Christmas shopping period with an attractive parking offer.