

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

**County Council
24 September 2020**

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Heulwen Hulme, Portfolio Holder for Environment

SUBJECT: Question from County Councillor Gareth Ratcliffe

Businesses in Hay are overwhelmingly positive about the impact that 2 hours free parking has had on trade throughout the month of August, with some businesses attributing between 20 and 30% increases on last year to the fact that visitors and residents can now park for longer, for free. This has been a hugely successful initiative - thank you very much for doing it. With this in mind and with many businesses also stating they need all the help they can get as we go into the quieter winter months, has PCC done any impact on the free parking for businesses in Powys and how are the council looking support businesses through the winter. Also in light of the feed back would Powys County Council extend this at least through winter to give businesses the best possible support? It really could make or break things for some businesses in the town and support is vital to ensure we do not have ghost towns in mid Wales come early 2021?

Response

The decision for free parking over the summer holiday period was made in these unprecedented times to reflect our commitment to the #supportlocalpowys campaign, to promote the re-opening of the high street and support our local businesses. It is pleasing to hear that this was greatly received and helped to achieve positive results for the businesses within Hay on Wye.

With no sound baseline from which to measure in such extraordinary times, and no information of the free use, there is unfortunately no formal assessment or measure that can be made of the impact on car parking numbers or footfall associated with the free parking provided, limiting any assessment to anecdotal or subjective opinions that could be drawn.

You will recall that providing free parking for August would generate an additional budget pressure of £85,000 and that this was agreed to be funded Corporately from reserves. The motion to support the extension of this free parking was tabled at the 30 July meeting of full council where it was resolved not to support its continuance with 23 votes for the motion of extending the free parking for 6 months compared to 30 against, with 3 abstentions.

Given this, there is no clear mandate to give this matter any further consideration.