

## **Appendix 1**

### **Think Falkirk:**

#### **Free after Three Car Parking Initiative – Falkirk Town Centre**

### **BACKGROUND**

Given continuing trading difficulties being experienced on Scotland's High Streets, Provost Reid and Councillor Dennis Goldie invited town centre businesses to attend a Think Falkirk open meeting. The purpose of this meeting was to establish how Falkirk Council could better engage and support Falkirk town centre retailers and businesses.

The inaugural meeting was attended by approximately 250 businesses and was followed by the formation of a Think Falkirk working group where key immediate areas of focus and concern could be raised viz:

- Business rates
- Enforcement action at inappropriate development or building/shop front changes
- Enforcement action against illegal street traders, beggars
- Removal of A-boards in line with Council's policy
- Car parking initiative to promote free car parking at specific times of the day

This group is also attended by Council officers and staff from Falkirk Towns Ltd. At the last meeting of the Group on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2013, the businesses, through Falkirk Towns Ltd, requested the introduction of a free car parking scheme to Falkirk town centre car parks.

### **FREE CAR PARKING INITIATIVE**

Traders have been greatly appreciative of the free Christmas parking scheme put in place by the Council during December and early January in previous years. The scheme removes car parking charges over the Christmas festive period with an estimated loss of revenue to the Service budget of £30k.

The businesses seek the introduction of more targeted free car parking initiatives. These would be introduced and promoted to encourage increased footfall into the town centre. The period from 3pm onwards is suggested for the initiative to be introduced in line with examples from other local authorities in the UK.

The Howgate centre is supportive of the introduction of a free car parking initiative and has offered to liaise with the Council to more accurately model and analyse car parking income data.

### **FREE AFTER THREE CAR PARKING PROPOSAL**

The 'Free after Three' initiative is planned in addition to the free Christmas car parking scheme. It is proposed that it run for a trial phase from January to March inclusive, to measure the impact on all parties. It will be actively promoted as a 'Free after Three' initiative.

An evaluation of the initial trial phase would be reported in April measuring agreed town centre and car park use/income indicators.

The projected impact on set-up costs and reduced income receipts of free car parking after 3.00pm are as follows:

- Amendments to car park signs to validate 'Free after Three' – £4.5k.
- 'Free after Three' trial – £11k (January to March inclusive).
- Estimated annual income reduction – £53.7k.

No allowance has been made in these calculations for existing car park users migrating to the 'Free after Three' period which could increase the level of income reduction.

Subject to approval by the Council the scheme will be introduced, in partnership with the Falkirk BID. The trial 'Free after Three' car park initiative will be evaluated in April 2014 with recommendations thereafter for further consideration by the Council.

Introduction of such a measure would be in line with National Review of Town Centres, and the Council's town centre support activity. The initiative will be promoted by the Council in liaison with Falkirk Towns Ltd., using local signage, social media, publications and through events involving retailers.

Trading continues to be reported by the retail sector as extremely difficult and introduction of such a promoted initiative would be seen as a positive support step by the Council towards increased partnership working with the traditional High Street retailing sector.