

BRAUNTON PARISH COUNCIL

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Councillor S Hughes,
Cabinet Member for Highway Management
Devon County Council
County Hall
Topsham Road
Exeter
DEVON
EX2 4QD

6th October, 2023

Dear Councillor Hughes

PROPOSED INTRODUCTION OF ON-STREET CHARGING ACROSS DEVON - JOINT REPRESENTATION FROM AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

We write in connection with Devon County Council's (DCC) proposals to introduce on-street car parking charging in seven towns and one parish, and the associated 'pre-consultation' discussions held with District and Town/Parish Councils and, where applicable, representatives of their respective business communities.

This letter is sent following consultation with, and on behalf of, the Mayors of Crediton, Dartmouth, Honiton, Okehampton and Tavistock Town Councils and to express, on behalf of the communities we represent, our collective dismay and disappointment at the lack of rigour that has been adopted by the County Council on this matter.

Whatever the merits, or the drawbacks of the proposals for each community, it is clear the County Council has failed to meet even the most basic standards for an evidence-based approach to the introduction of measures that potentially affect the rights of individuals, the viability of businesses and the vitality of those diverse and sometimes very different towns/communities.

Devon County Council's Highways Officers have made it abundantly clear that the Authority:

- Has undertaken no work, to gather and assess any evidence to demonstrate whether the requirements of s45 Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 would be met.

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- Does not plan to gather any such evidence before proceeding to consultation and Order.

The stated use of retail sector vacancy rates by DCC as a 'proxy' to establish:

- o the 'need for maintaining free flow of traffic',
- o 'the need for maintaining reasonable access to premises' and
- o 'the extent to which off street parking ... is available'

required under the Act is unreasonable and unconvincing. The proposed consultation to establish the views of the public, in the absence of any evidence to support the above, and the lack of opportunity to test that evidence is unacceptable and undemocratic.

We do not believe it is the intention of DCC to disregard the legislation, or the legitimate interests of affected communities. However, as matters stand, that is the effect of its methodology.

In the circumstances, and before matters proceed further, we request that Devon County Council defer the consultation on charging for car parking pending a meaningful exercise to gather and assess evidence for each of the communities concerned, to enable properly informed proposals to come forward for consultation.

Doing so will demonstrate both a commitment to an evidence-based, planned proportionate approach consistent with the legislation, and respect for the communities which DCC, and our own Councils serve.

We would welcome the opportunity to be involved in a credible, robust, and evidence-led review for each of our towns/parishes, which would help to restore trust and confidence both within the local authority family and with our communities.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Marguerite Shapland
BRAUNTON CHAIRMAN

As subscribed to by:

Councillor L Brookes-Hocking
Councillor D Wells
Councillor H Hurford
Councillor A Fisher

Mayor **Crediton Town Council**
Mayor **Dartmouth Town Council**
Mayor **Honiton Town Council**
Mayor **Okehampton Town Council**

Cc: Ms M Booth, Director of Climate Change Environment and Transport – DCC, Clerks to Subscribing Councils, Devon County Councillor Pru Maskell and Mr C Rook Traffic Management Team Manager.

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