

## **Report to the Strategic Working Group**

### **Proposal: Request for Long-Term Lease of Central Car Park, Faversham**

#### **1. Purpose of Report**

This report proposes that Faversham Town Council make a formal request to Swale Borough Council (SBC) for the long-term lease of Central Car Park in Faversham. The lease would enable the Town Council to manage the car park directly, allowing greater flexibility in responding to the needs of residents, businesses, visitors, and community organisations.

#### **2. Background**

Central Car Park is a key asset in Faversham town centre. It serves not only shoppers and visitors but also local businesses, Faversham Pools, and a range of community events. At present, it is managed by Swale Borough Council, with revenues retained at borough level and limited flexibility available to the Town Council in relation to parking policy and local priorities.

The Town Council has already taken on assets from SBC and continues to explore opportunities to ensure sustainable local management and financial resilience.

#### **3. Rationale for Lease Agreement**

##### **3.1 Financial Considerations**

- Income generated through parking charges would contribute towards offsetting the costs of assets and services transferred from SBC.
- Although there will be costs associated with staffing, maintenance, and equipment, projected income would outweigh expenditure.
- Revenues would be used to offset costs from assets and service being devolved from SBC.

##### **3.2 Community and Economic Benefits**

- **Evening Parking:** The Town Council could reinstate free parking after 6pm, alleviating pressure on Preston Street and Court Street and supporting the evening economy.
- **Event Parking:** Recently, the Council and others have been charged £10 per space for events held in Central Car Park. Taking on the lease would eliminate this additional cost and enable more flexible planning for town events.
- **Partnership with Faversham Pools:** We could explore parking refund schemes for pool users, either routinely or for special events, enhancing accessibility to this important community facility.

- **Support for Local Economy:** The Council would have discretion to offer free parking at specific times, such as on Small Business Saturday or selected weekends in December, to support town centre businesses.
- **Coach Parking:** The Town Council could explore reinstating dedicated coach parking within Central Car Park, previously located on the site now occupied by the telephone aerial. Restoring this facility would strengthen Faversham's tourism offer by encouraging more group visits, bringing additional footfall to the town centre and supporting local economic development.

#### 4. Risks and Mitigations

- **Operational Costs:** Staffing, enforcement, and maintenance.
- **Transition Risks:** Clear negotiations with SBC will be essential to ensure a smooth handover of responsibilities, including equipment and existing contracts.
- **Community Expectations:** Introducing flexibility must be balanced with maintaining a consistent revenue stream. A communications plan would help manage public understanding of any changes.

#### 5. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Policy and Resources Committee supports the proposal for Faversham Town Council to make an official request to Swale Borough Council for a long-term lease of Central Car Park.

Securing a long-term lease of Central Car Park would give Faversham Town Council greater control over a vital town centre asset, generating sustainable revenue while offering the flexibility to support residents, businesses, and community groups.