

Council cancels charges for table and chair licences

Any businesses applying to the council for table and chair licences will no longer have to pay a fee for the permission.

If a business wants to expand outside its premises it must apply for a licence, and the necessary conditions must be met, but there is no charge for the period from 1 July to 31 October, and any businesses which have already paid for a permit will receive a refund.

This is part of the council's programme to support local businesses. They recognise that there has been a fall in the number of people coming to the city since the lockdown began. Even now that there are some relaxations in place the reduction in visitors runs to about 85% of previous footfall. The council agreed to set up a local Champions network with representatives from local businesses and community councils. This is to help with both the Spaces for People programme and other economic recovery plans.

Local representative groups have requested that the council reduces or removes the charges in place for tables and chairs permits to allow them to ensure that safe physical distances can be maintained when customers are visiting their premises.

The net loss to the council from waiving this charge is anticipated to be £300,000.

Adam McVey Council Leader said: "As lockdown restrictions have

eased allowing the reopening of outdoor areas for bars and restaurants, we've been speaking to individual businesses and local representative groups who've asked us for additional help in relation to the charges in place for tables and chairs permits to allow them to make sure that safe physical distances can be maintained when customers are visiting their premises.

"We've recognised that city centre businesses need support due to the absence of both office workers and visitors and this will take time to recover. There is an urgent need to support businesses in the immediate term and I'm delighted that Committee has agreed to support them by waiving these charges entirely during this very difficult trading time. This will not only help businesses expand their footprint to help improve trading viability but also help maintain the pedestrian space and access, particularly for families and people with mobility issues or sight impairment."

Cammy Day Depute Leader said: "This is yet another move we can make which will make the coming weeks and months a little less challenging for businesses. For the local economy to recover, we also need to see greater footfall to small businesses and a new campaign will launch next week to draw residents and visitors back to their favourite places for shopping and visiting.

"This is alongside all of the steps we've already taken to support our high streets, like directing £112.5m to businesses in support grants and widening pavements and cycleways to make it easier and more enjoyable to visit town centres. It will also be supported by the local Champions Network which we're setting up to provide us with a direct link to businesses, so that we can monitor the challenges they face and the help they need."

Tables and chairs permits allow anyone who sells food or drink to put tables and chairs on a public pavement between 9am and

9pm, seven days per week.