

Plans approved to introduce parking charges in North Berwick

Plans to introduce parking charges in an East Lothian seaside town have been approved despite hundreds of objections from local residents.

East Lothian councillors backed the revised plans for new traffic orders covering North Berwick to to be introduced.

And they dismissed calls from Conservative colleagues for a public hearing to be held insisting the proposals would make the town a 'safer' place to live and visit.

Local ward councillor Jeremy Findlay accused council officials of treating objectors as 'children in a playground' by making amendments to traffic orders as he put forward a motion calling for a public hearing.

He said: "The council is taking the role of school teacher to children in the playground effectively saying here are a few more sweets now go away and be quiet and let the grown ups deal with it."

He and fellow Conservative councillor Lachlan Bruce, who seconded his motion, both accused the council of a 'cash grab' saying the scheme did not benefit the town or its residents.

However his motion was defeated after fellow councillors insisted people had been consulted and opportunities given.

Council leader Norman Hampshire told the meeting of the full

council "These changes are needed or North Berwick will die."

Initial plans to introduce parking charges, residential permits and controlled parking zones across the town were withdrawn by officials before four revised Traffic Regulations Orders were put forward in August.

At the meeting today officers added amendments to the orders after considering representation from the public and they urged councillors to set aside outstanding objections and agree to continue the process to introduce the regulations.

Among changes to the orders were reducing charging in three car parks – Glebe, the Lodge and Imperial, from all year round to between April and October only.

Waiting restrictions for car parks at the town library and community centre were also amended to allow church goers to use the community centre car park on Sundays and councillors also agreed to amend the order which covers 11 controlled parking zones across the town with permits and charges to allow them to be monitored and reviewed as needed.

It also saw the chargeable hours on the High Street shortened to between 10am and 4pm during the week and 1pm to 4pm on Sundays. Plans to introduce parking charges and waiting restrictions in Glasclune Gardens and Greenhead Road were withdrawn and it was recommended to cover parking in Westgate with the same charges as the High Street.

The meeting heard that income from the charges would help fund five new parking attendants to police the new orders in the town.

SNP council leader Lyn Jardine put forward a motion asking that the new parking system is reviewed after a year in use to ensure it was working.

Provost John McMillan said he believed people had been

consulted and there had been opportunities for everyone to have their opinion heard during the process.

Councillor McMillan backed the SNP amendment for a review saying he thought it was important to review the scheme. It was unanimously supported by councillors who went on to approve the officers revised orders by 16 votes to three with the Conservative councillors opposing it.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter