

## TOWN COUNCIL WELCOMES COACHES TO NEWBURY

The Town Council has rejected proposals from West Berkshire Council to increase the charges for coaches using the new bus interchange at The Wharf.

“Rather than increasing charges for coaches bringing visitors and business to our Town Centre, we call on the District Council to remove them entirely,” said Councillor Tony Vickers, Chairman of the Town Council’s Planning and Highways Committee.

The Town Council was responding to a consultation from the District Council, setting out proposals to increase the charges for visiting coaches from £2 to £6 for an overnight stay (6pm to 8am) and reducing the time allowed for the £4 day charge from 2 hours to one and a half hours. The consultation sets out only the proposed increased charges but does not give any explanation why the District Council felt they were needed.

Prior to the meeting the Town Council had sought this information from the District Council, but no further explanation was available. Cllr Tony Vickers continued, “The coaches bring important and valuable business to Newbury and we should be doing all we can to encourage them to use The Wharf. This Council is concerned that the District Council’s approach will only lead to more coaches using the M4 service stations and by-passing Newbury.”

Newbury BID (Business Improvement District) which works to improve the Town Centre economy, is also against the proposed increases. Laurie- Jane Cann, Newbury BID CEO said, “At Visit Newbury we recognise that Local Authorities continue to face unprecedented budget pressure and wish to support them in any way we can but we support the Town Council’s response and urge the District Council to re-think this move. The popularity of Newbury continues to grow as a tourist destination thanks to hit TV shows such as Downton Abbey and The Great British Bake Off.”

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Town Hall, Market Place, Newbury, RG14 5AA

 (01635) 35486     [towncouncil@newbury.gov.uk](mailto:towncouncil@newbury.gov.uk)  
 (01635) 40484     [www.newbury.gov.uk](http://www.newbury.gov.uk)  
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Newbury Town Council is committed to continuing to make Newbury a better place to live, work and visit.

She continued, “We should be doing all we can to encourage tourism in the area. Since 2010 Tourism is the fastest growing sector in the UK in employment terms, the more we encourage visitors to the area the more it benefits the local economy”.

Cllr Martin Colston, the Leader of Newbury Town Council, said it is an objective of the Town Council to work with coach operators who bring visitors to the Town, “Newbury is a frequent stopping place for coach drivers because of its central position on the national coach network, and we should encourage close relationships with operators. The Newbury Town Plan proposes that suitable facilities should be provided to welcome visitors and accommodate the needs of coach drivers and companies”.

He continued, “While the District Council did not provide any explanation for this move, we reckon that the small increase in income from raising these charges could jeopardise valuable business for the Town Centre. It sends out the wrong message to coach operators who use our Town Centre facilities. That’s why we are calling on the District Council to abandon this proposal and think about how we can all work together to grow this business for Newbury”.

The consultation can be viewed on West Berkshire District Council’s website and closes for responses on 5 September.

END

Note for Editors: For information, a copy of the current charges and the proposed charges is attached

Contact:

Cllr Martin Colston, Leader of the Council 01635 36591 [martincolston@icloud.com](mailto:martincolston@icloud.com)

Cllr Tony Vickers, Chairperson NTC Planning & Highways Committee 07413 480080 [tonyvickers@phonecoop.coop](mailto:tonyvickers@phonecoop.coop)

Hugh Peacocke, CEO, Newbury Town Council ([Hugh.Peacocke@newbury.gov.uk](mailto:Hugh.Peacocke@newbury.gov.uk)) 01635 35486

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