

## **Car Parking Prices for 2007**

### **Sedgemoor District Council Executive Meeting 20<sup>th</sup> December 2006**

For over four years Axbridge Town Council has been trying to achieve a reduction in car parking charges in the Moorland Street and Meadow Road car parks which are run by Sedgemoor District Council. The efforts of the Town Council have been supported by surveys conducted by the Axbridge Action Group. Sedgemoor District Council Executive decides each December on the level of charges for the coming year and I was permitted to present the case for a reduction in residents' parking permit fees at the meeting held on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> December.

I pointed out that the facts about residents parking fees were established largely through two surveys conducted by Axbridge Action Group. The first survey took place in March 2004 and was aimed at discovering the concerns of Axbridge residents. The major problems were:

1. Anti-social behaviour. Now being tackled by the Town Council and the police together with the County Council Youth department.
2. Speeding cars. A community Speedwatch Team has been formed.
3. Car parking. It was decided that a further survey was required to establish more facts.
4. Dog mess. This was handed to the Town Council !!

The second survey looked specifically at parking problems and was conducted in July 2004. It indicated that almost 50% of residents of Axbridge were unaware that they could buy a season ticket for parking in the Meadow Street car park. The cost at that time was £150 per annum and 80% of those questioned thought it was far too high. When asked what they felt would be a reasonable charge the majority suggested £50 to £60 would induce them to buy a season ticket. As a result of the survey the Action Group organised a petition which highlighted the feelings of residents that Sedgemoor District Council were charging too much for parking in our small Town. Unfortunately that petition and subsequent correspondence to Sedgemoor District Council from the Town Council has all fallen on deaf ears.

Speaking as a resident I indicated that most of us use our cars for work during the week and Saturday is usually the only day when parking is paid for. It is therefore more cost effective for most residents to pay for the odd days parking and even a couple of fines a year is still more cost effective than an annual season ticket.

Sedgemoor insists that they must charge the same in all communities in the District but it was pointed out that Axbridge is unique as a medieval town where very few older houses have garages and street parking is very limited. Residents have to rely on public car parks. Furthermore, Sedgemoor is not consistent with fees across the district because seasonal charges apply in Cheddar and Burnham. The executive were reminded that the £225 per annum residents parking fee is more expensive than inner London areas such as Kensington and Knightsbridge and, therefore, not appropriate for rural Somerset.

In the survey conducted by the Action Group in July 2004 they found that of 80 residents questioned only four had purchased a parking season ticket for £150 (the price at the time) giving Sedgemoor District Council an advance income of £600. If

the 21 respondents who indicated that they would buy a reduced price parking ticket all purchased one for £50 the advance income to Sedgemoor District Council would be £1,050, an increase of £450 or 75%.

All of the above data has been corroborated by the recently completed Axbridge Parish Plan.

Sedgemoor District Council's own figures confirmed that when they increased the price of a parking season ticket by 13% in April 2005 their income actually fell by 14%.

District Councillors were given an opportunity to provide residents of Axbridge with cheaper parking season tickets and increase Sedgemoor's income at the same time. This would have been a real win/win situation. In spite of the facts our District Council still maintains that Axbridge is not a special case and the only way to increase their income is to increase charges. In fact the charges will stay at the same level but only because, if fees are increased by RPI, it will cost more to adjust the parking ticket machines than they estimate it will bring in with any increase in income.

Please remember that parking fees (and most of your council tax) is set by Sedgemoor District Council. Your Town Council will continue its efforts to improve parking in the Town and get residents parking fees reduced.

Barry Hamblin  
Axbridge Town Council