

PRESS RELEASE

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For immediate release

Shock Results of Business Parking Charges Survey

Midhurst, September 2009

A survey carried out by Midhurst Chamber of Commerce has found that the introduction of parking charges in the town's car parks could lead to the widespread closure of town centre businesses.

A staggering three quarters (77%) of town centre shops and offices who took part in the survey believe that parking charges could threaten their business' future, with 41% specifically considering closing or relocating if charges are introduced.

"We knew that Midhurst's business community were very concerned about the introduction of parking charges" comments Simon Clark, Business Manager for Midhurst Chamber of Commerce, "but even we couldn't have expected the total devastation that this survey predicts.

"What we're talking about is the very real possibility of losing a further 30 or more businesses in the town centre as a direct result of parking charges. And if that happens, then it's hard to imagine how the town can ever recover."

A number of businesses have written to the Chamber of Commerce stating their intention to close or relocate if parking charges are introduced. One of the town's most well-established businesses describes the move as "one more nail in the coffin for Midhurst", whilst another writes: "Midhurst needs all the help it can get at the moment; we need more shops here, not less."

Mr Clark continues: "At the public meeting last week I asked Chichester District Council how many closed-down shops it would consider to be a fair exchange for its £50k a year of profit, and the answer I received was that there is no evidence that a single shop will close. Well now we have that evidence."

The survey also found that the vast majority (91%) of town centre businesses and their staff are considering finding alternative free parking (eg in nearby residential streets) if charges are introduced in the car parks.

"It is hard to imagine a more ill-conceived money-making scheme than this one" concludes Mr Clark. "Many of our businesses are already in a very precarious state, we have empty shops and offices from those that have already closed down, and Chichester District Council has itself identified the town's urgent need of economic regeneration.

"It will cost £44k to implement the scheme, a further £25k a year to run it, and their own consultants are predicting over £600k of lost trade in the town as a direct result. It really does make you wonder how the idea has even got this far."

[ENDS]

About Midhurst Chamber of Commerce

Midhurst Chamber of Commerce represents over 100 businesses in Midhurst and the surrounding area. Background and a list of members can be found at www.midhurstchamber.org.uk.

For further information

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