

CABINET – 3 NOVEMBER 2011

ANNUAL REVIEW OF PARKING CHARGES FOR 2012/13 AND CHRISTMAS PARKING 2011

Report of the: Community and Planning Services Director

Also considered by: Environment Select Committee - 25 October 2011
Council – 29 November 2011

Status: For Decision

Executive Summary:

This report is the annual review of parking charges. It proposes options for increases in respect to car park and on-street parking charges to meet the budget for 2012/13, and includes consideration of free Christmas parking for 2011.

This report supports the Key Aim of the effective management of Council resources.

Portfolio Holder Councillor Mrs Avril Hunter

Head of Service Head of Environmental and Operational Services – Mr Richard Wilson

Recommendation: It be RESOLVED that:

- (a) Members confirm any proposed increases to car park charges for 2012/13, subject to consultation as noted in the report;
- (b) Members confirm any proposed increases to on-street parking charges for 2012/13, subject to consultation as noted in the report;
- (c) the proposed changes to the on-street tariff structure in respect to Swanley, Knockholt station and the Sevenoaks rail commuter areas be approved;
- (d) free parking be provided in all car parks and on-street parking areas throughout the district for two Saturdays before Christmas Day 2011; the dates to be specified or subject to consultation as noted in the report and to the subsequent agreement of the Portfolio Holder, and that the cost in terms of lost income be funded from Supplementary Estimates.

Introduction

1. Through the Council's budget process, the budget plan increase for parking income from both car park and on-street parking for 2012/13 is set at 2.5%.

2. In addition to achieving the target increases for both of the parking accounts, and for guide purposes in connection with the budget setting process, further options are provided to indicate possible additional income that could be achieved.
3. Included in this report is a suggestion that the Council considers repeating its free parking concession on two Saturdays before Christmas.

Car Parks – Background

4. Because car park ticket machines do not accept bronze coins, and because of the general lack of availability of 5p coins, parking tariffs are usually set to the nearest 10p. This practice is commonly adopted by local authorities. It should be noted that although a tariff increase of 10p may be relatively low in monetary terms, it can be high in percentage terms depending upon the scale of the charge, particularly in relation to lower tariffs.
5. Historic information in respect to increases in the Council's car park charges is shown in the History of Parking Charges for Car Parks and On-Street Parking, attached as Appendix A. This has been taken into account in formulating the proposals and options put forward.
6. For guide purposes, current car parking charges for neighbouring authorities are attached as Appendix B.
7. For information, in relation to parking in the vicinity of rail stations, the current day charge for the station car parks operated on behalf of Southeastern Trains is £6.50 at Sevenoaks and £5.00 at Swanley. Annual season ticket charges at Sevenoaks are £1,176 for Car Park 4 (off Morewood Close) and £1,252.50 for Car Park 1 (adjacent the station).

Car Parks – Proposals for 2012/13

8. The budget increase of 2.5% is £47,051.
9. Proposals and options are provided and attached as Appendix C. This comprises a table showing individual increases proposed and the resultant income for all three options and a second table showing the increases in percentage terms. All income figures quoted are net of VAT.
10. The proposals within each option are not exclusive to that particular option, but can be interchanged or swapped with those in other options to provide a preferred set of proposals should Members so wish. However, care should be taken to maintain the charging differential between the Blighs car park and the other short stay car parks in the town centre.
11. In respect to the Sevenoaks town centre car parks:
 - Option 1 proposes for Blighs car park a 10p increase on the 1, 2 and 3 hour tariffs with the 30 minute tariff being remaining at 50p to encourage short use turnover and, for the other town centre car parks, a 10p increase

is similarly applied to the 2, 3 and 4 hour tariffs, again to encourage shorter stay use by leaving the 1 hour charge at 90p.

- Option 2, in addition to Option 1, applies a larger increase of 20p to the longest period of stay in all car parks (i.e. 3 hours in Blighs and 4 hour in the others).
- Option 3, in addition to Option 1, applies an increase of 20p to the two longest periods of stay in all car parks (i.e. 2 and 3 hours in Blighs and 3 and 4 hours in the others).
- The effect of the re-opening of the new Waitrose store and car park upon patronage of the town centre car parks has been taken into account.

12. In respect to other areas:

- Option 1 generally proposes nominal increases for long stay and season ticket charges. In view of the revision to the charging structure implemented as part of the last review to standardise charges in the car parks in the St Johns Hill, Swanley and Westerham areas, there are no proposals to further modify the short stay charges in these areas.
- Options 2 and 3 propose cumulatively larger increases to the long stay and season ticket charges.

13. The cost of altering ticket machines and signing has been taken into account in the budget figures provided.

Car Parks – Evening Charge

14. As for last year, no increases to the evening parking charge are proposed. As Sevenoaks District Council is one of a few Councils in this area of Kent that have an evening parking charge, and taking into account the likely impact any increase may have upon businesses in the Sevenoaks town centre, no increase is proposed as part of this review. However, for illustration purposes, it is estimated that a 10p increase would yield £4,800 income.

Car Parks – Sunday Charges

15. As the situation regarding Sunday parking is largely unchanged. It is not recommended that Sunday parking charges be considered as part of this review for the reasons stated below.

16. A number of Kent authorities (Ashford, Canterbury (in part), Dover, Maidstone, Shepway, Thanet and Tunbridge Wells) have parking charges that apply seven days a week, although Dover's do not apply to all car parks on Sundays. Medway Council also has Sunday parking charges. However, in respect to neighbouring authorities, of those noted in the table of Current Parking Charges for Neighbouring Authorities (Appendix B) only Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells operate Sunday charges.

17. It should be noted that the station car parks operated by Southeastern Rail have a £1.00 charge for Sundays.
18. Whilst it is apparent that a number of people are using our car parks on Sundays, without undertaking detailed surveys it is difficult to know the purpose and quantify the length of stay. Hence, it is not possible to predict the likely, resultant effect of Sunday charges with any degree of confidence.
19. With regards to on-street parking restrictions, apart from double yellow line restrictions which operate for 24 hours each day of the week, most others apply from 8.30am to 6.30 Monday to Saturday. This is the case for many restrictions in Sevenoaks town centre, including the on-street pay and display parking areas, and in surrounding roads where unrestricted parking is available on Sundays. Therefore, if Sunday parking charges were to be introduced, there would be a risk of displacement parking occurring in residential roads on the periphery of the town. The same situation exists in Westerham and Swanley but to a lesser extent.
20. Should Sunday parking charges be considered, it is suggested that the current tariff structure simply be extended to apply for the whole week rather than introduce a different charge or charges. This would help avoid confusion to the public and assist in accommodating the additional information on the car park signs, which may otherwise need enlarging or replacing.
21. Parking enforcement activity takes place over 7 days a week, although enforcement on Sundays is specifically provided through overtime payments as this does not form part of the Civil Enforcement Officers' standard working week. Because of this, Sunday enforcement often takes the form of a shorter working day. Additional enforcement requirements would complicate and stretch the working rotas for the Civil Enforcement Officers who currently work alternate between a 4 day and a 6 day working week. In view of this, and without a renegotiation of contracts, it would not be possible to guarantee that sufficient enforcement resources would be available to meet any needs in connection with Sunday parking charges.
22. It would be possible to introduce Sunday parking charges for a trial period and monitor any effects this may have. Additional income is likely to be low. Experience elsewhere suggests between 5% and 8% of the weekday income could be achieved, which would equate to between £11,000 and £17,000 if applied to all car parks. However, allowing some reduction due to the availability of on-street parking, this could easily reduce significantly and a range of between £5,000 and £10,000 might be more realistic.

Car Parks – Summary

23. Option 1 of the proposals provides 2.6% against the budget target of 2.5%. Options 2 and 3 provide higher levels of income for possible consideration. As stated earlier, individual proposals can be selected from any of the Options to provide a preferred selection should Members wish.

24. The adjustment of car park charges will require an amendment to the Council's Off-Street Parking Places Order. The process requires the Council to undertake statutory public consultation by way of Public Advertisement of the proposals. To enable any revised charges to take effect at the beginning of April 2012, the proposals would need to be advertised in January so that any objections received could be reported to Cabinet for consideration in February to facilitate implementation on, or as soon after, 1st April 2012.

On-Street Parking – Background

25. As a result of last year's review, charges in the various on-street pay and display areas in Sevenoaks were amended to provide standardised tariff structure for the 30 minute, 1 hour and 2 hour periods. However, differential charges remained for the all day periods due to the type of location.
26. However, since the adoption of pay-by-phone for parking charges in July this year, it has become apparent that some modification is needed to the on-street charging structure in Swanley to prevent multiples of the 4 hour charge being bought instead of the higher all day charge being paid.

On-Street – Proposals for 2012/13

27. The target increase of 2.5% is £12,617.
28. Options are provided, attached as Appendix D, for the consideration of increases to meet the budget target and to possibly provide some additional income to the on-street parking account. The proposals are presented in the same table format as for the car park proposals with three options being provided for consideration.
29. The figures shown do not include VAT as this is not applicable to on-street parking.
30. In view of the standardisation of the charging structures last year, only changes to the long stay charge and to permit costs have been proposed, with the exception of a suggested amendment to the Swanley tariff structure as outlined below.
31. As can be seen from the History of Parking Charges for On-Street Parking, the cost of the first and second permits for residents was last amended in 2008, when the Sevenoaks Parking Review was implemented, when the cost of a first permit was reduced from £40 to £30 and the cost of a second permit increased from £40 to £60. Otherwise, all other permit costs were more recently adjusted with effect from April 2010.
32. However, it should be noted that a parking scheme being implemented in the area outside Knockholt Station which, at the time of preparing this report, is due to be implemented at the end of September 2011, will provide additional income to the on-street parking account from year 2012/13 onwards. This is estimated at £59,000 per annum, although income this year is expected to off-

set implementation costs with little or no surplus. The expected income from this scheme exceeds the 2.5% budget target for 2012/13.

33. In respect to the Swanley on-street parking charges, the current charges are 60p for up to 4 hours and £3.00 for all day. These charges were not included in the standardisation of on-street parking charges agreed by Members last year. To address issues with people purchasing multiples of the 4 hour charge by pay-by-phone to obtain all day parking at a reduced cost compared to paying the all day charge (£1.80 as opposed £3.00) and to align the tariff structure for Swanley with others in the district, it is recommended that the tariff structure for Swanley be amended as shown in the table attached as Appendix E. This will have the advantage of offering users in this area of Swanley a greater choice of tariffs to suit parking needs, particularly as the pay and display parking may not be used exclusively in connection with rail travel as it is within residential/office/shopping areas.
34. It has previously been agreed that the charges to be applied for the parking scheme at Knockholt station would be the same as for Swanley. It is recommended that any amendment to the Swanley tariff structure also be applied to the Knockholt scheme even though some of the tariffs might not be suited to rail use, they still offer a choice.
35. In order to improve the choice of parking tariffs in the pay and display areas in the vicinity of Sevenoaks station, it is recommended that a new 4 hour tariff be provided at the same cost rate as Swanley and Knockholt station. This would further standardise the tariffs and would particularly assist those people who wish to park later in the afternoon, perhaps to travel to London and return later in the evening.
36. If the tariff change is implemented in April, the cost to amend ticket machines and signing would be minimal as the ticket machine maintenance agreement includes for a change to the tariff structure.

On-Street – Summary

37. Option 1 of the proposals provides 2.3% against the budget target of 2.5%. Options 2 and 3 provide higher levels of income for possible consideration, although individual proposals can be selected from any of the Options to provide a preferred selection should Members wish.
38. Any on-street proposals would require an amendment to the Traffic Regulation Order. The process requires the Council to undertake statutory public consultation by way of Public Advertisement of the proposals. Any objections would need to be reported to the Sevenoaks Joint Transportation Board (JTB) and then to Cabinet for final consideration. The advertising of the proposals would need to suit the programme for the JTB meetings to ensure implementation at the beginning of April 2012.

Christmas Parking 2011

39. Last year, Members of Cabinet approved free parking on the two Saturdays before Christmas to encourage people to shop locally and to help support local businesses in the face of competition from other shopping areas in the region. Members are asked to consider repeating the free parking concession this Christmas.
40. For information, this only applies to Sevenoaks and Westerham as parking charges in Swanley (and now in Halstead outside Knockholt station) only apply Monday to Friday.
41. Christmas Day falls on a Sunday, so the two Saturdays immediately before would be the 17th December and Christmas Eve. However, there may be some doubt as to the benefit of providing free parking on Christmas Eve as opposed to another Saturday earlier in the month and, therefore, consideration could be given to making parking free on, perhaps, Saturdays the 10th and the 17th instead. We are obtaining the views of the Sevenoaks Chamber of Commerce, the Sevenoaks Town Council and Westerham Parish Council on any preferred dates and will give a verbal update concerning any responses received.
42. It should be noted that the provision of free parking will enable people to park up to the maximum period of stay should they so wish, which is likely to reduce the turnover of spaces. All parking areas will be enforced as normal to ensure compliance with general conditions of use.
43. As last year, all ticket machines would be closed-off with suitable signing provided to advise users that they do not need to pay.
44. The parking areas operated by Sencio at the Sevenoaks leisure centre form part of the Suffolk Way car park. Sencio has confirmed that it is happy to support the Christmas free parking concession this year.
45. It is estimated that the loss of income for all car parks and on-street areas throughout the district for each Saturday would be in the region of £7,000. Therefore, the total cost of providing free parking for the two Saturdays is estimated at £14,000. It is suggested that should free parking be made available for Christmas 2011, it be funded from the Supplementary Estimates.

Key Implications

Financial

46. Proposals to increase parking income are required to meet the Council's budget targets set in respect to car park and on-street parking.
47. The financial implications are evident in the report and appendices.

Community Impact and Outcomes

48. The introduction of parking charge increases is likely to have an impact to some degree upon those people from the local community and visitors from outside the district who use the parking facilities, although it is impossible to quantify any likely resultant effect. Rather than pay any higher charges, people may instead decide to park for shorter periods, may lessen the frequency of their visits or may choose to go elsewhere.

Legal, Human Rights etc.

49. As mentioned in the summary sections of this report, any changes to car park charges will necessitate an amendment to the Car Park Order and any changes to on-street parking charges will necessitate an amendment to the Traffic Regulation Order. There are set legal processes to be followed in respect to both of these Orders.
50. There are no human rights issues or implications.

Equality Impacts

51. There is a low risk that any of the options presented will have an adverse impact on people with 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act. There are no apparent issues of direct relevance to parking charges as our car parks are open to use by anyone who chooses to do so. Free parking is generally available in roads just out from the town centres, although in some cases this might be limited to 2 hours. Free parking is offered for those with disabilities who hold a Blue Badge and this remains unaffected. Any issues will be monitored through complaints received. The Parking Enforcement Policy is subject to a separate Equality Impact Assessment and has not identified any substantial issues.

Conclusions

52. The budget proposals to meet the budget targets along with other options for consideration are detailed in the appendices. It is important that the proposals are considered making reference to the History of Parking Charges and the Parking Charges for Neighbouring Authorities, both of which are appended to this report.

Risk Assessment Statement

53. The estimated figures are based upon current levels of patronage taking into account the effect of the recent temporary Waitrose store. The introduction of higher parking charges could lead to reduced patronage and, hence, the under-achievement of the income levels estimated in this report.

Sources of Information: Information from car park ticket machines
Information from neighbouring authorities

Contact Officer(s): Gary Connor Ext.7310

**Kristen Paterson, Community
and Planning Services
Director**

