

ANNUAL REVIEW OF PARKING CHARGES FOR 2016/17

Direct and Trading Advisory Committee – 6 October 2015

Report of Chief Officer Environmental and Operational Services

Status: For Consideration

Also considered by: Cabinet 15 October 2015

Key Decision: Yes

Executive Summary:

This report is the annual review of parking charges for 2016-17.

It proposes for consultation, revised tariffs in the Council's off-street car parks and in on-street pay and display parking bays.

Helping manage and regulate parking supports the economic vibrancy and viability of Sevenoaks and improves the lives of residents.

This report supports the Key Aim of:

The effective management of Council resources and supporting the local economy.

Portfolio Holder Councillor Matthew Dickins

Contact Officer(s) John Strachan x7310

Recommendation:

That the proposals for revised parking charges for 2016-17 be considered by the Committee and its views be submitted for consideration by Cabinet, prior to consultation.

Reason for recommendation:

To help regulate and manage the use of on and off street parking facilities in the District; to ensure car parking charges are set to support a sustainable local economy; and, to support services for residents as set out in the approved 10 year budget.

Introduction

1 This report considers the setting of parking charges in the Council's car parks and the fees for on-street parking. Amongst other measures, it proposes:

- freezing charges at St Johns, St James, Bradbourne, Sennocke, Bevan Place, Park Road, Station Road, Quebec Avenue and Vicarage Hill;
- freezing charges in Swanley and Knockholt;
- freezing on-street charges in Westerham and protecting the three hours free parking at Darent;
- freezing evening charges;
- freezing on-street Resident Permit, Visitor Voucher and Non-Resident Permit charges;
- freezing Season Ticket charges;
- freezing weekday charges at Buckhurst 2;
- opening of the District Council offices car park for free all day parking on Sundays; and,
- allowing customers to stay longer at Buckhurst 1, South Park and Suffolk Way.

Background

- 2 The Council operates a number of public car parks and on street pay and display facilities in towns and villages in the District. It is important to regulate these finite resources in order to balance the needs of parking users, including: commuters, local businesses, residents, shoppers and other visitors including tourists.
- 3 The Council's approach has been to ensure our parking charges are set to encourage people to visit our towns while at the same time promoting a good turnover of parking spaces for the benefit of businesses and visitors.
- 4 This has resulted in high use of the Council's car parks and on-street parking spaces, benefitting retailers. Past studies by the Local Data Company concluded that Sevenoaks town has one of the healthiest high streets in the country with the fewest number of empty shops for a town of its size. The Council's approach to setting parking charges has contributed to this success.
- 5 Many of the Council's car parks were developed some years ago and the cost of maintaining them is increasing. Surfaces, signs, lines, lighting and furniture are becoming damaged, worn out and obsolete. Further operating costs include business rates, utilities and insurance.
- 6 It is important to re-invest in car parks to ensure these assets remain safe and fit for purpose for residents, businesses and visitors alike. Members may wish to consider additional charge increases to help contribute to such improvements.
- 7 The Council's 10 year budget assumes an increase in the levels of income of 2.5% to enable a balanced budget to be delivered. This includes income from parking.

Background Information

- 8 Appendix A provides information on the current parking charges in neighbouring towns and Southeastern Rail car parks.
- 9 Appendix B presents existing parking charges alongside the proposed charges.

Sevenoaks Car Parks

Blighs

- 10 Sevenoaks town remains a thriving shopping centre, containing many popular high street shops and eateries, and many speciality shops, restaurants and pubs. The town has a busy daytime, weekend and evening economy, supported by the car parks and on street parking amenities.
- 11 In 2014 Sevenoaks District Council enabled the development of a new cornerstone Marks and Spencer at Blighs Meadow, helping to underpin Sevenoaks as a popular retail hub.
- 12 There is daily pressure on parking spaces, both on and off street, particularly in Blighs car park which often reaches capacity throughout the week.
- 13 A moderate increase in some hourly rates is proposed, to encourage greater turnover of spaces within the most popular tariff bands. Extending the maximum period to up to 4 hours (from 3 hours) is also proposed to help support longer stays for customers requiring this and willing to pay a higher amount for that convenience.
- 14 Sundays are trading days with restricted hours. The current regime in Blighs often leads to our most popular car park being full prior to shops opening. This is detrimental to footfall, and to businesses within the town. It is proposed that a four hour limit be implemented to manage parking in Blighs on Sundays, whilst continuing to keep it and all town centre car parks free of charge. Along with opening the District Council car park “free of charge” all day Sunday to help local workers.

Buckhurst 1, South Park and Suffolk Way

- 15 A moderate increase in the “up to 2 hours” charge is proposed to provide linear charging in these car parks and greater convenience in the coins required.
- 16 The introduction of an “up to 5 hours” charge is proposed to ease pressure in other car parks, assist part-time workers and to better cater to those wishing to visit the town for combined shopping and eating trips.

Buckhurst 2

- 17 No changes are proposed to weekday charges.
- 18 A moderate increase in the “up to 2 hours” charge is proposed on Saturdays in line with other Sevenoaks town centre car parks.

St Johns and St James

- 19 No changes are proposed to charges at either car park.

Bradbourne and Sennocke

- 20 No changes are proposed to charges at either car park despite the Council continuing to charge significantly less than Southeastern Rail.

Swanley and Westerham car parks

Bevan Place, Park Road and Station Road (Swanley)

- 21 No changes are proposed to charges at any of these car parks.

Quebec Avenue (Westerham)

- 22 No changes are proposed to charges at this car park.

Darent (Westerham)

- 23 To continue to ease pressure on the limited number of on-street spaces, it is proposed that three hours free parking is preserved in this car park.
- 24 Moderate increases in the “up to 4 hours” and “over 4 hours and all day” charges are proposed to help support the cost of expanding this car park and thus improving parking provision in the town.

On-street Parking

- 25 On-street pay and display parking bays operate at capacity throughout the day.
- 26 Moderate increases are proposed in Sevenoaks on the High Street, London Road and South Park as well as The Vine and Plymouth Drive.
- 27 The two hour maximum stay that operates Monday to Saturday will be extended to Sundays, retaining free parking on Sundays but encouraging turnover in the on-street bays.
- 28 No further on street pay and display charge increases are proposed.

Resident Permits, Visitor Vouchers and Non-resident Permits

- 29 Members may wish to note the higher charge for Tunbridge Wells Borough Council’s Residents’ Permits (£60 against £35. However, no changes are proposed to our residents’ permits, season tickets or visitor permits.

Key Implications

Financial

- 30 The Council’s 10 year budget assumes a 2.5% increase in the levels of income to enable the delivery of a balanced budget and continued provision of valued services to residents – this includes parking income. Members reduced this figure from 3.5% to reflect the authority’s continuing focus on introducing further efficiencies, increasing investment income and to reflect the national economic climate of recent years. The proposed changes in charges would satisfy this requirement.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

- 31 Changes to the car park charges will require amending the on-street Traffic Regulation Order and the off-street Parking Order.

Equality Impacts

- 32 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on users.
- 33 Sevenoaks District Council supports the Blue Badge Scheme allowing free parking in its off-street car parks and in on-street pay and display parking bays.

Community Impact and Outcomes

- 34 Measured and reasonable parking charges encourage the use of more sustainable transport options and healthier lifestyles for journeys to school, work, and visits to shops and other amenities in towns and villages.

Human Rights

- 35 There are no human rights issues or implications.

Conclusions

- 36 Proposals to review the car parking charges for 2016/17 are detailed in the appendices to this report.

Appendices Appendix A – Parking Charges for Neighbouring Authorities and Southeastern Rail car parks

Appendix B – Proposals for On and Off-Street Parking Charges

Richard Wilson
Chief Officer Environmental and Operational Services