

## **ANNUAL REVIEW OF PARKING CHARGES 2017-18**

**Direct and Trading Advisory Committee - 1 November 2016**

Report of: Chief Officer Environmental and Operational Services

Status: For recommendation to Cabinet

Also considered by: Cabinet - 10 November 2016

Key Decision: No

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**Executive Summary:** This report is the annual review of parking charges for 2017-18. It proposes for consultation on 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.

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**This report supports the Key Aims of:** Providing value for money, and supporting and developing the local economy.

**Portfolio Holder** Councillor Matthew Dickins

**Contact Officer** John Strachan Ext. 7310

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### **Recommendation to Direct & Trading Advisory Committee:**

That the proposals for revised parking charges for 2017-18 be considered by the Committee, and its views be submitted for consideration by Cabinet, prior to consultation.

### **Recommendation to Cabinet:**

That the proposals for revised parking charges for 2017-18 along with any proposals submitted by the Direct & Trading Advisory be considered, and proposals for consultation be agreed.

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### **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.

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## **Introduction**

- 1 This report considers the setting of parking charges in the Council's car parks and the fees for on-street parking between April 2017 and March 2018 inclusive. Amongst other measures, it proposes:
  - freezing charges in Buckhurst 1, Buckhurst 2, South Park, St Johns, St James, Suffolk Way and Sennocke;
  - freezing charges in Swanley;
  - freezing 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;
  - protecting free all-day weekend use of the District Council's office car park; and,
  - preserving free parking on Sundays with the exception of Blighs.
- 2 A modest rise to one on-street tariff covering three roads in Sevenoaks is proposed, as is the extension of charges to Sundays in Blighs.

## **Background**

- 3 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.
- 4 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. Parking charges are one aspect of effective parking management however others - such as hours of operation and maximum stay periods - are also kept under review.
- 5 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. Indeed the Sevenoaks Economic Needs Study (ENS), conducted by Turley Economics and noted as part of the evidence base for the new Local Plan by the Planning Advisory Committee on 22 September 2016, states that Sevenoaks enjoys a vacancy rate of 6.72% which we believe to comprise those properties which are empty through natural turnover in tenants. This compares favourably with the national average of 11.2%. The Council's approach to parking management has undoubtedly contributed to this success.

- 6 In addition to operational costs such as non-domestic rates, insurance, general maintenance, enforcement and security, it is important to re-invest in the Council's car parks to ensure these assets remain safe and fit for purpose. Improvement works either undertaken or due to be implemented in 2016 include the installation of new safety barriers in South Park; increasing capacity in Darent; resurfacing in Darent and Buckhurst 1; surface improvements in South Park and Suffolk Way; and, the installation of energy-efficient lighting in Blighs.

## **Background Information**

- 7 Appendix A provides information on the current parking charges in neighbouring towns and Southeastern car parks. In considering Appendix A, it is helpful to note that the aforementioned ENS concluded 20% of the market conducts its main comparison shop in Tunbridge Wells, which lies 11 miles to the south of Sevenoaks. Tunbridge Wells has a town-centre vacancy rate of 13% and higher average parking charges than Sevenoaks. At 12% Bluewater was assessed as receiving considerably less business from residents of the Sevenoaks District than Tunbridge Wells, despite being the second most popular shopping centre in the UK, offering a wider mix of retailers and choice of comparison goods, and having free parking.
- 8 Appendix B presents existing parking charges alongside the proposed charges.

## **Sevenoaks Car Parks**

- 9 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.
- 10 There is daily pressure on parking spaces, both on and off street, particularly in Blighs car park which frequently reaches capacity.

## **Blighs**

- 11 In 2014 Sevenoaks District Council enabled the development of a new cornerstone Marks and Spencer at Blighs Meadow, helping to reinforce Sevenoaks as a popular retail hub.
- 12 It is proposed that the tariff currently in place between Monday and Saturday inclusive be extended to also include Sundays.
- 13 It should be noted that free parking on Sundays would be maintained in all the Council's other car parks, including the SDC staff car park in Gordon Road which provides complimentary all-day parking at weekends to assist workers in the town.

## **Buckhurst 1, Buckhurst 2, South Park, St Johns, St James and Suffolk Way**

- 14 There are no proposed changes to the tariffs in these car parks.

## **Bradbourne and Sennocke**

- 15 Bradbourne Car Park closed to the public in August 2016 to facilitate the development of a replacement multi-decked car park which is planned to open in April 2017.
- 16 There is a proposal under separate consideration to develop a much needed hotel on the site of the Sennocke car park to support the local economy and tourism. If this is progressed, the car park will be closed in spring 2017.
- 17 There are no proposed changes to the tariffs in these car parks.

## **Other Car Parks**

### **Bevan Place, Park Road and Station Road (Swanley)**

- 18 There are no proposed changes to the tariffs in these car parks.

### **Darent, Quebec Avenue and Vicarage Hill (Westerham)**

- 19 There are no proposed changes to the tariffs in these car parks.
- 20 To continue to ease pressure on the limited number of on-street spaces, it is proposed that three hours free parking is preserved in the Darent car park.

## **On-Street Parking**

- 21 On street fees apply on twenty roads across the District, covering eight tariffs divided into thirty-three charges.

### **High Street, London Road and South Park (Sevenoaks)**

- 22 Town centre on-street pay and display parking bays operate at capacity throughout the day.
- 23 It is proposed that the tariff covering High Street, London Road and South Park be simplified by bringing it in line with that in Buckhurst 1, South Park and Suffolk Way, albeit with the preservation of a thirty minute charge which is unavailable in those car parks.

## **Other**

- 24 There are no proposed changes to the tariffs on any other roads in Sevenoaks, Swanley, Westerham, Edenbridge or elsewhere.

## **Resident Permits, Visitor Vouchers and Non-Resident Permits**

- 25 No changes are proposed to Resident Permits, Visitor Vouchers or Non-Resident Permits charges.

## **Key Implications**

### Financial

- 26 The Council's 10 year budget assumes a 2.5% increase in the levels of income, including from parking, to enable the delivery of a balanced budget and continued provision of valued services to residents. 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

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

### Equality Impacts

- 28 There is a low risk that the proposals in this report would have any implications under the Equality Act.
- 29 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

- 30 Measured and reasonable parking charges can 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.

### **Conclusions**

Proposals to review the car parking charges for 2017-18 are detailed in the appendices to this report.

<b>Appendices</b>	Appendix A - Parking Charges for Neighbouring Authorities and Southeastern Rail car parks
	Appendix B - Proposals for On and Off-Street Parking Charges

<b>Background Papers</b>	None
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**Richard Wilson**  
**Chief Officer Environmental and Operational Services**