

ANNUAL REVIEW OF PARKING CHARGES FOR 2018-19

Cabinet - 9 November 2017

Report of Chief Officer Environmental and Operational Services

Status: For recommendation to Cabinet

Also considered by: Direct and Trading Advisory Committee - 2 November 2017

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary:

This report is the annual review of parking charges for 2018-19.

It proposes for consultation a simpler tariff in the Council's car parks and a reduction in the hours during which fees are payable.

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

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 x7310

Recommendation to Direct & Trading Advisory Committee: That the revised car park management proposals for 2018-19 be considered by the Committee, and its views be submitted for consideration by Cabinet, prior to consultation.

Recommendation to Cabinet: That the revised car park management proposals for 2018-19 along with any proposals submitted by the Direct & Trading Advisory be considered and approved for 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 between April 2018 and March 2019 inclusive. It proposes scrapping the evening charge currently in place in Sevenoaks town centre and reducing the hours during which charges apply.
- 2 This proposal follows a package of successful parking measures implemented over the past few years which have seen Members:
 - freezing the majority of charges in Sevenoaks, Swanley and Westerham;
 - freezing Season Tickets, Resident Permits, Visitor Vouchers and Non-Resident Permits;
 - protecting the three hours free parking at Darent;
 - improving Sunday enforcement;
 - introducing warning notices to national acclaim;
 - introducing dropped kerb enforcement;
 - introducing Safer School Parking Zones;
 - introducing a simple pound per hour structure;
 - extending and maintaining free all day weekend parking in the SDC staff car park in Gordon Road;
 - allowing customers to stay longer at Buckhurst 1, South Park and Suffolk Way;
 - allowing greater choice in Blighs;
 - increasing capacity; and,
 - maintaining over a thousand complimentary spaces on Sundays.

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, stated that Sevenoaks enjoys a vacancy rate of 6.72% which is believed to comprise

those properties which are empty through natural turnover in tenants. This compared favourably with the national average of 11.2%. The Council's approach to parking management - focusing on turnover, efficient management of a limited resource, affordability and customer satisfaction - has undoubtedly contributed to this success.

- 6 In addition to operational costs such as non-domestic rates, insurance, general maintenance, utilities, enforcement and security, it is important to re-invest in the Council's car parks to ensure these assets remain welcoming, safe and fit for purpose. Recent improvements have included installing new safety barriers, increasing capacity, resurfacing, renewing drainage, and upgrading lighting. The Council will also be developing a much needed multi decked car park on the Buckhurst 2 car park in 2018.

Supporting Documents

- 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 conducted its main comparison shop in Tunbridge Wells, which lies 11 miles to the south of Sevenoaks. Tunbridge Wells had 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, eateries, boutiques and speciality stores, as well as the popular Stag Theatre. The town has a busy daytime, evening and weekend 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, Buckhurst 1, Buckhurst 2, South Park and Suffolk Way

- 11 There is currently a £1 charge associated with parking in these car parks from 18.30 to 21.30. This was introduced in 2004 to help improve the management of the car parks through the evening and support the provision of the service. Demand has increased since its introduction but the price has remained the same, meaning the increasing costs of parking provision have been disproportionately borne by those who park during the day. There is no evidence to suggest the charge has dissuaded visitors from visiting the town centre, although feedback has indicated some of those who are unfamiliar

with the setup are occasionally confused by the switch from a linear to fixed charge.

- 12 It is proposed that the tariffs currently in place in these car parks be simplified by scrapping the evening charge and reducing the hours during which charges apply, from 21.30 to 20.30.
- 13 The Portfolio Holder is working with officers to explore how best to further improve the parking experience by allowing more flexible ways to pay for parking and hopes to bring forward proposals at a later date.
- 14 As mentioned in paragraph six, the Council is shortly to embark upon the development of a new multi decked car park at Buckhurst 2. Construction is envisaged to begin in early 2018 for completion by spring 2019. Once complete, the car park will help:
 - provide spaces for the significant number of people currently on the waiting lists for parking permits;
 - ease congestion, reducing the number of motorists driving around in search of spaces;
 - free up parking in short stay car parks and in residential streets; and,
 - support the continued economic success of the town.

St Johns and St James

- 15 For the fourth year running, there are no proposed changes to the tariffs in these car parks.

Bradbourne and Sennocke

- 16 The new Bradbourne Car Park reopened to the public in April 2017, following its temporary closure in August 2016 and redevelopment as a multi decked car park in a multi-million pound improvement which was completed both on time and on budget. Customers now benefit from:
 - comprehensive CCTV coverage;
 - innovative Premium Bays;
 - more flexible payment options;
 - short-stay parking to help local businesses, notably the shops around the station on London Road;
 - low energy LED smart lighting which reduces disturbance for neighbours whilst improving the safety and comfort of customers and their vehicles;
 - electric vehicle charging points;
 - year round protection from the elements for the majority of vehicles;
 - regular patrols; and,
 - the coveted Safer Parking Scheme's Park Mark® status.

- 17 The aforementioned Premium Bays offer a number of benefits besides being on the ground floor, close to the entrance. They are over a metre wider than the national standard used in the rest of the car park and they are numbered and reserved for the exclusive use of the Premium Bay Season Ticket Holder at all times each and every day of the year.
- 18 Sennocke car park has now closed for regeneration as a much-needed new hotel for Sevenoaks. Sennocke customers have been accommodated in the new Bradbourne car park. The Portfolio Holder and officers will be closely monitoring any effect the hotel has on parking demand.
- 19 It is proposed the annual Season Ticket price be frozen for the third consecutive year and in so doing continue to provide an increasingly substantial saving on the price charged by the other station car park operator.

Other Car Parks

Bevan Place, Park Road and Station Road (Swanley)

- 20 For the third year running, there are no proposed changes to the tariffs in these car parks.

Darent, Quebec Avenue and Vicarage Hill (Westerham)

- 21 For the second year running, there are no proposed changes to the tariffs in these car parks.
- 22 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

- 23 On street fees apply on some roads across the District, covering eight tariffs divided into thirty-three charges.
- 24 There are no proposed changes to the tariffs on any roads in Sevenoaks, Swanley, Westerham, Edenbridge, Knockholt or elsewhere.

Resident Permits, Visitor Vouchers and Non-Resident Permits

- 25 For the sixth year running, there are no proposed changes to Resident Permits, Visitor Vouchers or Non-Resident Permits charges.

Key Implications

Financial

As stated earlier, there are a number of cost pressures associated with the operation of both on and off-street parking, these are over and above inflation and investment in infrastructure. For instance, the Government's business rates revaluation necessitated the inclusion of a growth item in last year's budget of

some £30,000 for our car parks, this was net of savings made on other Council assets.

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 uncertain national economic climate of recent years. The proposed changes in charges would satisfy this requirement.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

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

Equality Impacts

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

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

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.

Human Rights

There are no human rights issues or implications.

Conclusions

Proposals to review the car parking charges for 2018-19 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

Background documents None

Richard Wilson
Chief Officer Environmental and Operational Services