

SERVICE UPDATE: PARKING SERVICES

Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee - 13 October 2020

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer, Finance & Trading

Status: For information and discussion

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary: This report updates the Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee about service delivery updates from March to September 2020 for Direct Services.

This reports support the Key Aim of: a green and healthy environment

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Recommendation to Cleaner and Greener Advisory Committee: To note the update.

Reason for recommendation: This is an information and update report and requires no further actions.

Introduction

1 Parking Services:

- Operates a number of off-street car parks across the District
- Patrols and enforces on-street parking restrictions on behalf of Kent County Council.
- Considers, implements and manages parking schemes on behalf of Kent County Council.
- Manages on and off street parking in Tandridge for Tandridge District Council.

2 Figure 1 below shows the team structure.



Parking Management Operations

- 3 2020-21 Parking management operations have been conducted in unprecedented times.
- 4 Covid-19 resulted in a nationwide lockdown in March 2020.
- 5 Busy car parks emptied overnight as town and village centres shut, with shops, restaurants, pubs and offices closed in an effort to stem Covid-19 infections within communities.
- 6 Responding to the crisis, on 23 March 2020 the Council made all of its public car parks and on-street parking facilities “free of charge”.
- 7 The parking team spent a busy couple of days putting signs up at car parks and in on-street pay and display locations, advertising that parking was free.
- 8 This move supported local residents who were in lockdown and key workers who still had to come to towns and villages to work.
- 9 Lockdown saw a national directive to relax parking management including parking enforcement, to help communities in lockdown, including residents who were shielding or who were working from home.
- 10 Parking enforcement operations dealing with dangerous and obstructive parking remained in place, particularly around Knole Estate where we saw unprecedented numbers of visitors and their vehicles.

- 11 On-street resident parking schemes continued to operate in the usual way though with a refocused emphasis on giving advice rather than issuing parking tickets.
- 12 As lockdown has eased, the Council has found it necessary to reintroduce normal parking management including parking charges and enforcement patrols of car parks and on-street pay and display parking bays, as shops and businesses reopened, workers returned, visitor numbers grew.
- 13 All car park and on-street parking charges were reintroduced on 23 June 2020, with the exception of Sevenoaks Town car park, which remained free for a further month to help support the town centre economy and accommodate the high levels of visitors coming to Knole Estate.
- 14 This required advance warning signs in all car parks and on-street pay and display locations and the unwrapping and testing of all pay and display machines.
- 15 Charges recommenced at Sevenoaks Town car park on 23 July 2020.
- 16 With the exception of Blighs car park, we have continued to see reduced numbers of customers across all car parks.

Fees and Charges

- 17 As previously mentioned, all car parks became free on 23 March in response to the Covid-19 lockdown, which “interrupted” planned tariff increases resulting from the Parking Management Review undertaken in 2019.
- 18 From 23 June 2020 new tariffs were implemented as parking charges returned, which required advertising, along with sign changes and programme changes to pay and display machines. This continued with the reintroduction of charges at Sevenoaks Town car park.

Cashless Parking

- 19 Migration of the Parkmobile “cashless” parking service to MiPermit was planned to coincide with the 1 April tariff changes.
- 20 The change brings a more customer friendly interface, innovative add-ons such as virtual permits and seamless interface with our back office systems, making parking enforcement patrolling easier and quicker.
- 21 The deferred changeover coincided with the reintroduction of parking charges in June and July.
- 22 The move to MiPermit has been very smooth, with very few queries to Customer Solutions or the parking team. We now have over 23,000 registered users and a monthly income flow of over £73,000 through the MiPermit system.

Parking Review

- 23 The 2019/20 Sevenoaks Parking Review looking at on street parking in the town commenced in October 2019. The Covid-19 pandemic affected the review and some parts were not be completed because of lockdown.
- 24 The main element of the review which was completed was a public consultation looking at levels of satisfaction in existing parking zones and locations outside of zones identified as having parking problems.
- 25 The findings of the review will be presented to the Cleaner and Greener Advisory Committee and Cabinet.

Emergency Food Distribution

- 26 From March through to the end of July 2020 the parking team played a pivotal role in helping to support vulnerable residents during lockdown, distributing food and prescriptions 7 days a week, 7 am to 7pm.

Re-Opening the High Street

- 27 In July 2020 the parking team helped with the safe opening up high streets in district in Edenbridge, Sevenoaks, Swanley and Westerham. Putting up repeater reminder signs on safe distancing and spraying safe distancing reminders on the footway using stencils.

Special Enforcement Arrangements in Lockdown

- 28 Lockdown saw unprecedented numbers of visitors to Knole House and park, which resulted in significant numbers of illegally, obstructively and dangerously parked vehicles on roads around Knole Park. In response, Kent County Council implemented emergency and temporary restrictions on a number of roads. The parking team deployed cones and parking suspension signs in support of the restrictions and patrolled these to help reduce danger and obstruction.

Key Implications

Financial

There are no financial implications identified within this update report.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

No legal implications.

Equality Assessment

No decisions are being made within this report, so there is low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Conclusions

The Parking Services team has shown flexibility and an ability to respond quickly to the changing circumstances through what has been a challenging 7 months, responding to changing demands for parking in the district, providing an emergency response service helping vulnerable residents and responding to changes in parking patterns resulting from the Covid-19 lockdown.

Appendices
None
Background Papers
None

Adrian Rowbotham

Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - Finance & Trading