

ANNUAL REVIEW OF PARKING MANAGEMENT 2021/22

Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee - 13 October 2020

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

Status: For decision

Also considered by: Cabinet - 15 October 2020

Key Decision: Yes

Executive Summary: This report is the annual review of parking management for 2021/22.

It proposes a freeze on all parking charges across the district, in light of the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on parking supply and demand for parking across the district. A freeze will help support local businesses and economies, stabilising services over the next 12 months.

This reports support the Key Aim of: Providing value for money, and supporting and developing the local economies.

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Margot McArthur

Contact Officer(s): John Strachan, Ext 7407

Recommendation to Cleaner and Greener Advisory Committee: That the Committee considers the 2020/21 parking management proposals and its views be submitted for Cabinet's consideration.

Recommendation to Cabinet

That the views of the Advisory Committee be considered and the parking management proposals for a freeze on all parking charges for 2021/22 be agreed.

Reason for recommendation: To help support local communities and economies in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. Managing on and off-street parking facilities in the District, ensuring car parking charges support the recovery of local economies that have suffered as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Introduction

- 1 The Council undertakes an annual review of parking charges in its car parks and on-street parking, helping to effectively manage and regulate parking demand and supporting a 10-year balanced budget.
- 2 This year the review process is been significantly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has had the effect of reducing demand for parking across the District and the revenue income from parking.

Background

- 3 The parking management review for 2021-22 is conducted in unprecedented times.
- 4 Covid-19 resulted in a nationwide lockdown in March 2020. Town and village centre economies shut down as shops, restaurants, pubs and offices closed in an effort to stem Covid-19 infections within communities.
- 5 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”.
- 6 This move supported local residents who were in lockdown and key workers who still had to come to towns and villages to work.
- 7 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.
- 8 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.
- 9 On-street resident parking schemes continued to operate in the usual way though with a refocussed emphasis on giving advice rather than issuing parking tickets.
- 10 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.
- 11 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.
- 12 Charges recommenced at Sevenoaks Town car park on 23 July 2020.
- 13 With the exception of Blighs car park, we have continued to see reduced numbers of customers across all car parks.
- 14 Town centre car parks including Buckhurst 1, Sevenoaks Town, South Park and Suffolk Way are operating at around 50% capacity. Bradbourne car park serving commuters at Sevenoaks Station is operating at less than 10% of its normal capacity.

Resident Permits, Visitor Vouchers and Non-Resident Permits

- 15 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.
- 16 Any changes to on-street resident parking await the outcome of the parking review.

Electric Vehicle Charging

- 17 The Council has provided Electric Vehicle (EV) charge points in two car parks and has a draft programme to provide charge points in other car parks districtwide, subject to securing funding.
- 18 The current policy is that the service provider BP Chargemaster's network and subscription charges apply, the Council provides the charging electricity "free of charge". Vehicles need to be on charge when they park in the charging bays and normal parking charges apply.

Conclusions

- 19 Revenue income from parking has been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, which is likely to continue to impact on the 10-year balanced budget for 2021-22
- 20 As lockdown has eased parking usage has remained very low in particular in the Bradbourne commuter car park serving Sevenoaks Station.
- 21 With low occupancies, there is no compelling argument to increase parking charges for parking management reasons.
- 22 A freeze on all parking charges for 2021/22, would allow parking patterns to normalise and stabilise. This would also help support local communities, which may suffer from the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic for some time to come.
- 23 The Council should explore other alternative revenue streams from car parks that are currently under-utilised for parking.

Key implications

Financial

The Covid-19 pandemic had a detrimental impact on parking income and its contribution to the Councils 10-year balanced budget. The impact is likely to continue in subsequent years.

The parking income increase that was previously included in the 10-year budget for 2021/22 was £118,000. This will be required to be offset by savings or alternative additional income to ensure that the Council continues to have a balanced 10-year budget.

Equality Impacts

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 end users.

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

The annual parking management review helps to ensure that car parks and on-street parking facilities continue to support local communities and the Council's 10-year balanced budget.

Appendices
None
Background Papers
None

Adrian Rowbotham

Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer Finance and Trading