

ANNUAL REVIEW OF PARKING FEES & CHARGES 2024/25

Cabinet – 12 October 2023

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

Status: For Decision

Also Considered by: Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee 10 October 2023

Key Decision: Yes

Executive Summary: This report is the annual review of parking management for 2024/25. It proposes for consultation changes to hours of operation and the fees and charges in on and off street parking schemes.

This report supports the Key Aim: pledge to reach net zero carbon emissions produced by the Council and our assets by 2030, providing value for money, and supporting and developing the local economy.

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Recommendation to Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee: That the parking management proposals detailed in this report be considered by the Committee, and its views on the available options be submitted for consideration by Cabinet, prior to consultation.

Recommendation to Cabinet: That the revised parking management proposals along with any proposals submitted by the Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee be considered and the preferred option be 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 hours of operation and the setting of parking charges in the Council's off-street car parks and the fees for on-street parking for the financial year 2024/25.
- 2 This report details options for increasing off-street car parking income and on-street parking fees as part of additional income and growth items.
- 3 While the Council continually work hard to support communities through general cost of living rises, we inevitably face extra cost pressures, within parking.
- 4 Since the recovery from the pandemic, demand for parking spaces has changed across the district. As before the pandemic, the council will endeavour to set charges to reflect local circumstances, provide consistency across the district parking spaces, while supporting high streets and businesses.

Background

- 5 The Council operates a number of public car parks and on-street pay and display facilities in towns and villages across 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. It is also important to ensure all parking fees and charges are set consistently across the district.
- 6 The Council's approach has been to ensure our parking charges are set to encourage people to use parking spaces responsibly 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 and days of operation and maximum stay periods – are also kept under review.
- 7 In addition to rising 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. Improvements have included the installation of contactless payment facility on all of the district's payment machines, new safety barriers, increasing capacity, resurfacing, renewing drainage and upgrading lighting.

- 8 The assumption for parking income increases in the 10-year budget approved by Council on 9 February 2023 for 2024/25 is as follows:

Inflationary Increase	Covid: Assumed 25% reduction in 2021/22, improving by 5% per year	Adjustment for exceeding budget performance in 2022/23	Total
£94,000	£206,000	(£160,000)	£140,000

Options

- 9 Caveat on all options are based on assumptions and estimates in relation to parking behaviour and any potential income that generates.
- 10 There are a number of options on how to try and deal with the car parking income increase assumption, which are detailed below.
- 11 In all Option circumstances, an increase in the costs of bay suspensions, and vehicle access protection (dog bone) markings application and renewals, would be implemented to cover the higher costs of conducting these activities, as detailed in **Appendix A**.
- 12 Details of the parking charges for surrounding Kent district councils is detailed in **Appendix B**.
- 13 Option 1 - Overall percentage increase on all parking fees and charges

This option would require;

- 14 For example, a 4% increase could raise £140,000 (based on Trailing Twelve Month {TTM} average)

- 15 The risk with this overall option is that our customers had to already absorb increases in 2022/23, and another general increase could make us uncompetitive in certain parking schemes across the district, which could decrease the amount of users.

- 16 Option 2 - A smaller percentage increase on all Parking Fees & Charges, with an end to free parking and an expansion of operating hours/days.

This option would require;

- 17 For example, a 1% increase which could contribute to the raising of circa £35,000 (TTM calculation)
- 18 A further contribution from an end to free parking and an expansion of operating hours across the district as detailed in Appendix A. This could contribute to the raising of an additional £140,000 (total £175,000).
- 19 The risks with this option are as per Option 1, plus there could be displacement to permit parking zones and single yellow lines, some of which do not operate on weekends in Swanley, or on Sunday in Sevenoaks and Westerham.
- 20 Option 3 – Zero percentage increase on all parking fees and charges, but an end to free parking and an expansion of operating hours/days across the district.
- 21 This option appreciates that fees and charges were raised to our customers in 2022/23, and that the large majority of the deferred income inflation increase since 2021/22 has been recovered. This could contribute to the raising of £140,000.
- 22 This option robustly supports the Council's Net Zero ambitions, by ending free parking, expanding the operating times for on and off street parking, and actively discouraging town centre driving.
- 23 There is a risk of displacement to permit parking zones and single yellow lines, some of which do not operate on Saturday/Sunday in Swanley, or on Sunday in Sevenoaks and Westerham.
- 24 Option 4 – Do nothing
- 25 This option would not meet the agreed 10-year budget requirements and savings would need to be made in other areas.

Key Implications

Financial

All options that contain financial implications have been detailed within this report.

Parking income in 2023/24 is currently forecast to exceed the budget but the 5% annual increase in the budget to reinstate to pre Covid budget levels is required to continue up to and including 2026/27. Therefore, it is important to continue to make changes each year that deliver additional income.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

All parking fees and charges are subject to statutory public consultation and a notice of variation in accordance with the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and the Parking Places (Variation of Charges) Act 2017.

Equality Assessment

There is a low risk that the proposals in this report would have any implications under the Equality Act 2010.

Sevenoaks District Council supports the Blue Badge Scheme allowing free parking in all of its off-street car parks and in on-street pay and display bays.

Net Zero Implications

Achieving Net Zero carbon emissions is a top priority for the Council as outlined in our Net Zero 2023 action plan and Movement Strategy. It encompasses all aspects of the Council. It incorporates actions on sustainable transport, active travel and air quality. One of the Council's commitments is to encourage, and support our residents and visitors to our District to reduce carbon emissions.

Members are reminded of the Council's stated ambition to be Net Zero concerning carbon emissions by 2030. The decisions recommended in this paper directly impact on this ambition. The impact has been reviewed and there could be a noteworthy decrease on carbon emissions produced in the district because of this decision.

Increasing parking fees and charges, and eliminating free parking, could encourage car park users to find alternative travel and transport options, such as public transport, walking and cycling.

Conclusions

Proposals to review the off-street car parking charges and on-street parking fees are detailed within this report.

Appendices

Appendix A – Dog Bone / Bay Suspension Increases

Appendix B – Comparison table

Background Papers

Sustainable Movement - Greener Travel

<https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/sustainabletravel>

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