

Item 10 – Annual Review of Parking Fees and Charges

The attached report was considered by the Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee on 11 November 2024. The relevant Minute extract is below.

Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee (11 November 2024, Minute 26)

The Head of Direct Services presented the report, which set out the annual review of parking management for 2025/26. The service budgeted for an inflationary increase of 2.5%, and the requirement to offset the assumed 25% reduction in parking in 2021/22, improving by 5% per year. This totalled an assumed parking increase of £306,000. Of this, £206,000 was adjusted for exceeding budget performance, efficiencies, and increased usage and enforcement. It was proposed that the remaining £100,000 be offset through a 3% increase on all parking fees and charges.

In response to questions, the officer explained that, should the inflationary increase be agreed, the service would undertake work to create an average 3% uplift across all parking fees and charges, to ensure the increases are sensible and easily payable. Cash payments for car parking were in decline, and accounted for roughly 20% of the service's income. The increases would be distributed across all fees, including season tickets.

Members discussed the proposed increases, and emphasised that the increases should be sensible and to round numbers. They further discussed the comparisons between the prices of the district's car parks and those in other districts. They expressed concern that the premium car park in Blighs was more expensive than premium car parks in other, larger, towns, noting that it may have a negative effect on local businesses. They further expressed concern that increases in parking fees may negatively impact people that travel into town centres for work. The officer explained that demand had increased by 8% since the last annual review, and that on-street parking was free in many areas close to the town centre. Permits were also available for people that required daily parking in towns.

Members further discussed the possibility of a park-and-ride scheme for the major towns within the district. They were advised that one such scheme had previously been operated in Sevenoaks during the redevelopment of Blighs, but that it was largely unviable, as travel into the town centre did not come from one direction on the whole.

Members expressed a desire for a holistic parking management strategy, considering economic development and residents' needs as well as revenue generation. The officer advised that this was already in development, and that it would be presented to the Advisory Committee in March 2025. It was

moved and duly seconded that it be recommended to Cabinet that a comprehensive Car Parking Strategy be created. The motion was put to the vote and it was

Resolved: that

- a) It be recommended to Cabinet that Option 1 – an average of 3% increase in parking fees and charges, be approved.
- b) That it be recommended to Cabinet that a Car Parking Strategy be created.