

CABINET – 8 NOVEMBER 2012

ANNUAL REVIEW OF PARKING CHARGES FOR 2013/14 AND CHRISTMAS PARKING 2012

Report of the: Deputy Chief Executive and Community and Planning Services Director

Also to be considered by: Environment Select Committee 23 October 2012

Status: For Decision

Executive Summary:

This report is the annual review of parking charges. It proposes options for increases in respect to car park and on-street parking charges to meet the budget for 2013/14, and includes consideration of free Christmas parking for 2012.

This report supports the Key Aim of the effective management of Council resources.

Portfolio Holder Councillor Mrs Avril Hunter

Head of Service Head of Environmental and Operational Services – Mr Richard Wilson

Recommendation: It be RESOLVED that:

- (a) Members confirm the proposed increases to car park charges for 2013/14, subject to consultation as noted in the report;
- (b) Members confirm the proposed increases to on-street parking charges for 2013/14, subject to consultation as noted in the report;
- (c) free parking be provided in all car parks and on-street parking areas throughout the district for two Saturdays before Christmas Day 2012; with the preferred dates to be confirmed and confirmation that the cost in terms of lost income be funded from Supplementary Estimates.

Introduction

1. Through the Council's budget process, the budget plan increase for parking income from both car park and on-street parking for 2013/14 is set at 3.5%.
2. In addition to achieving the target increases for both of the parking accounts, and for guide purposes in connection with the budget setting process, the options provided indicate additional income that could be achieved.
3. Included in this report is a suggestion that the Council considers repeating its free parking concession on two Saturdays before Christmas.

Background

4. Because car park ticket machines do not accept bronze coins, and because of the general lack of availability of 5p coins, parking tariffs are usually set to the nearest 10p. This practice is commonly adopted by local authorities. It should be noted that although a tariff increase of 10p may be relatively low in monetary terms, it can be high in percentage terms depending upon the scale of the charge, particularly in relation to lower tariffs.
5. Historic information in respect to increases in the Council's car park charges is shown in the History of Parking Charges for Car Parks and On-Street Parking, attached as Appendix A. This has been taken into account in formulating the proposals and options put forward.
6. For guide purposes, current car parking charges for neighbouring authorities are attached as Appendix B.
7. For information, in relation to parking in the vicinity of rail stations, the current day charge for the station car parks operated on behalf of Southeastern Trains is £6.50 at Sevenoaks and £5.50 at Swanley. Annual season ticket charges at Sevenoaks are £1,176 for Car Park 4 (off Morewood Close) and £1,345 for Car Park 1 (adjacent the station).
8. The Annual Review of Parking Charges was considered by the Environment Select Committee on 23 October 2012 and, for information, the Committee's recommendations to Cabinet are summarised in Appendix E.

Car Park Proposals for 2013/14

9. The budget increase of 3.5% is £68,075.
10. Proposals and options are provided and attached as Appendix C. This comprises a table showing individual increases proposed and the resultant income for all three options, and a second table showing the same increases in percentage terms. All income figures quoted are net of VAT.
11. The proposals within each option are not exclusive to that particular option, but can be interchanged or swapped with those in other options to provide a preferred set of proposals should Members so wish. However, care should be taken to maintain the charging differential between the Blighs car park and the other short stay car parks in the town centre.
12. In Option 1, a straight 10p increase has been applied to most tariffs except to some longer period tariffs where a 20p increase may be more appropriate. In the Swanley, Westerham and St Johns Hill, Sevenoaks car parks only the most used, longer period tariffs have been included.
13. In Option 2, slightly higher increases have generally been applied in order to preserve the current charges for 30 minutes parking in Blighs and for 1 hour in the other town centre car parks. This is suggested to encourage turnover of spaces in the town centre.

14. In Option 3, the application of a higher set of increases to the short stay tariffs in the Sevenoaks town centre car parks, excluding the shortest periods, obviates the need to consider increases in the other car parks. This approach would avoid increasing day charges, which tends to mostly effect town centre workers, and would avoid increasing season ticket costs for town centre and station car parks where the take-up of season tickets has tended to drop-off over recent months.
15. Although not shown in the options, there may be scope to consider increasing the day charge in the Bradbourne and Sennocke car parks by 30p to £6.50. This would bring it in line with the current charge in the other station car parks which is the policy normally followed. The rail operator usually reviews its parking charges in the Spring.
16. The two-day ticket in the Bradbourne car park will be automatically adjusted so that its twice the day ticket rate.
17. All of the options shown achieve the budget target of 3.5%, but in different ways. As stated earlier, individual proposals can be selected from any of the Options to provide a preferred selection should Members wish.
18. The cost of altering ticket machines and signing has been taken into account in the budget figures provided.
19. The adjustment of car park charges will require an amendment to the Council's Off-Street Parking Places Order. The process requires the Council to undertake statutory public consultation by way of Public Advertisement of the proposals. To enable any revised charges to take effect at the beginning of April 2013, the proposals would need to be advertised in January so that any objections received could be reported to Cabinet for consideration in February to facilitate implementation on, or as soon after, 1st April 2013.

Car Parks – Evening Charge

20. As for last year, no increases to the evening parking charge are proposed. As Sevenoaks District Council is one of a few Councils in this area of Kent that have an evening parking charge, and taking into account the likely impact any increase may have upon businesses in the Sevenoaks town centre, no increase is proposed as part of this review.

Car Parks – Sunday Charges

21. Because of the likely impact upon surrounding residential streets, the consideration of Sunday parking charges is not included in this review. Should members feel this is something which should be considered, it is recommended that a separate review be undertaken.

On-Street Proposals for 2013/14

22. The target increase of 3.5% is £18,455.

23. Last year's on-street review concentrated upon changes to permit costs along with a few adjustments to the long stay charges as shown in the History of Parking Charges, Appendix A.
24. This year's review does not effect permit charges, but suggests increases to the longer periods of pay and display to achieve the budget target. In addition, a revision to the charges in Westerham are proposed to continue the standardisation of tariffs which featured in last year's review.
25. It is noted that the charges in Swanley were amended to the standard tariff last year. However, it is considered appropriate to include this area in the options so that it is kept in line with the other areas within the District.
26. In respect to the parking scheme outside Knockholt station, as this was only implemented last year and is subject to a scheme review, it has not been included in this review.
27. Options are provided, attached as Appendix D, for the consideration of increases to meet the budget target. The proposals are presented in the same table format as for the car park proposals with three options being provided for consideration. The figures shown do not include VAT as this is not applicable to on-street parking.
28. In Option 1, a nominal increase of 10p has been applied to the various all day charges. The opportunity is taken to continue the standardisation of tariffs embarked upon last year by amending the tariff structure for the parking areas in Westerham so that it falls in line with others in the District. However, without considering other increases, this selection falls short of the budget target of 3.5%.
29. Option 2 builds upon the approach taken in Option 1 of increasing the longer stay periods by including a 10p increase on the 4 hour charge and by increasing the day charges by 20p. This, with the inclusion of the standardisation of the Westerham tariffs, gives 3.7%.
30. A different approach has been taken in Option 3 where apart from the standardisation to the Westerham charges, the only increase proposed is a 10p increase to the shortest 30 minute period. Although the increase would be high in percentage terms, as the charge is doubled, the cost of 30 minutes parking would still be relatively low at 20p. Ignoring the income from the standardisation of the Westerham tariffs, the 10p increase achieves just under 3.6%, but with the Westerham adjustment achieves 5.7% in total.

Christmas Parking 2012

31. Last year, the Council provided free parking on the two Saturdays before Christmas to encourage people to shop locally and to help support local businesses in the face of competition from other shopping areas in the region. Members are asked to consider repeating the free parking concession this Christmas.
32. This only applies to Sevenoaks and Westerham as parking charges in Swanley (and now in Halstead outside Knockholt station) only apply Monday to Friday.

33. This year, Christmas Day falls on a Tuesday. We have obtained the views of the Sevenoaks Chamber of Commerce, the Sevenoaks Town Council and the Westerham Town Council regarding preferred dates for the free parking concession. The views received are as follows:
- The Sevenoaks Town Council have commented: “Should the District Council agree to the provision of free parking for 2 Saturdays prior to Christmas, the Town Council would suggest Saturday 15 & 22 December. Many thanks for consulting with us.”
 - The Clerk to Westerham Town Council has commented: “I do not think there are any strong preferences, it seemed to work well last year so perhaps the same!”
 - The Administrator of the Sevenoaks and District Chamber of Commerce has commented: “Thank you so much for offering the free parking again for the Christmas season. Looking at the calendar, I think perhaps Saturday 8th & 15th December would perhaps be best, as I don't know if there will be a lot of people coming in on the Saturday 22nd but would be interested to see what the Town Council feel.” However, it has more recently been confirmed that they would be happy to go along with the Town Council's preference of 15 & 22 December.
34. It should be noted that the provision of free parking will enable people to park up to the maximum period of stay should they so wish, which is likely to reduce the turnover of spaces. All parking areas will be enforced as normal to ensure compliance with general conditions of use.
35. As last year, all ticket machines would be closed-off with suitable signing provided to advise users that they do not need to pay.
36. The parking areas operated by Sencio Community Leisure at the Sevenoaks leisure centre form part of the Suffolk Way car park. Sencio has confirmed that it is happy to support the Christmas free parking concession again this year.
37. It is estimated that the loss of income for all car parks and on-street areas throughout the district for each Saturday would be in the region of £7,500. Therefore, the total cost of providing free parking for the two Saturdays is estimated at £15,000. It is suggested that should free parking be made available for Christmas 2012, it be funded from the Supplementary Estimates.

Christmas Lights Events 2012

38. Members are advised that the provision of free parking in connection with the Christmas Lights events being held in Sevenoaks on 30th November (free parking from 6pm) and in Westerham on 29th November (free parking from 5pm), has been approved by the Council's Portfolio Holder and that the Council is pleased to support these events. It should be noted that the Sevenoaks event is also being supported by Sencio Community Leisure.

Key Implications

Financial

39. Proposals to increase parking income are required to meet the Council's budget targets set in respect to car park and on-street parking.
40. The financial implications are evident in the report and appendices.

Community Impact and Outcomes

41. The introduction of parking charge increases is likely to have an impact to some degree upon those people from the local community and visitors from outside the district who use the parking facilities, although it is impossible to quantify any likely resultant effect. Rather than pay any higher charges, people may instead decide to park for shorter periods, may lessen the frequency of their visits or may choose to go elsewhere.

Legal, Human Rights etc.

42. As mentioned in the summary sections of this report, any changes to car park charges will necessitate an amendment to the Car Park Order and any changes to the on-street parking charges will necessitate an amendment to the Traffic Regulation Order. There are set legal processes to be followed in respect to both of these Orders.
43. There are no human rights issues or implications.

Equality Impacts

44. There is a low risk that any of the options presented will have an adverse impact on people with 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act. There are no apparent issues of direct relevance to parking charges as our car parks are open to use by anyone who chooses to do so. Free parking is generally available in roads just out from the town centres, although in some cases this might be limited to 2 hours. Free parking is offered for those with disabilities who hold a Blue Badge and this remains unaffected. Any issues will be monitored through complaints received.

Conclusions

45. The budget proposals to meet the budget targets along with other options for consideration are detailed in the appendices. It is important that the proposals are considered making reference to the History of Parking Charges and the Parking Charges for Neighbouring Authorities, both of which are appended to this report.

Risk Assessment Statement

46. The estimated figures are based upon current levels of patronage. The introduction of higher parking charges could lead to reduced patronage and, hence, the under-achievement of the income levels estimated in this report.

Sources of Information:

Information from car park ticket machines

Information from neighbouring authorities

Contact Officer(s):

Gary Connor Ext.7310

**Kristen Paterson, Deputy Chief
Executive and Community and
Planning Services Director**