

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD**

**11 June 2012**

**Report of the Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure**

**Part 1- Public**

**Matter for Recommendation to Borough Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)**

**1 PARKING ACTION PLAN**

**Summary**

**This report updates Members on the phased approach to on-street parking management with a focus on the current initiatives, Aylesford Local Parking Plan and phase 6B.**

**1.1 Aylesford Local Parking Review**

- 1.1.1 In recent months the planned review of parking in the village of Aylesford has been taking place. Public consultation on the work was completed in March, the results of which have now been analysed and agreed by the Steering Group and were reported in detail to the Planning and Transportation Advisory Board in May.
- 1.1.2 Over recent years, we have recorded a range of unrelated and relatively discrete parking requests from residents in Aylesford. At the time, we had no opportunity to assess the situation comprehensively. Initial thoughts were influenced heavily by concerns about the risk of transferring problems to neighbouring areas without properly dealing with the underlying causes. This led us to conclude at the time that a parking plan approach was the best way to deal with parking management matters in the village.
- 1.1.3 The review has considered a range of concerns raised by the local community about parking conditions in the village, in particular Rochester Road and neighbouring side roads.
- 1.1.4 The review also included consideration of the use and management of the two public car parks. These are critical assets for the village where many of the old historic buildings do not have their own parking and no scope to create any. Consequently, given the limited on street capacity within the village, many local residents and businesses are completely dependent on the spaces in the public car parks. One of the aims of the review was therefore to explore the desire for some preferential management of the car parks in favour of local people.

1.1.5 The Aylesford Steering Group (made up of local Borough and County Members plus a representative from the Parish Council and Chaired by the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation) has now reviewed the results of the public consultation exercise. There are some clear recommendations emanating from the Group which fall into two distinct categories: on-street proposals and proposals related to the management of the two Borough Council car parks. These are now considered in turn.

## 1.2 On-street proposals

1.2.1 The on-street suggestions in the consultation exercise focused on solutions to parking problems at the following eight locations in the village.

- Powell Close junction with Rochester Road
- Unwin Close junction with Rochester Road
- Rochester Road; adjacent to the Old Church and the village club
- Bush Row junction with Rochester Road
- High Street, adjustments to limited waiting bays
- High Street, near the steps at the west end
- Station Road adjacent to the old bridge
- Forstal Road

1.2.2 The suggested approach for each of these locations is shown on the drawings in **Annex 1**. The response to the consultation exercise for each of the locations is summarised in **Annex 2**. The Steering Group also considered some other feedback from the local community. There were concerns that the height restrictions barriers unnecessarily constrained car park access for drivers with slightly larger vehicles. Also, the lack of any specific provision for motor cycle parking had been raised in the consultation and the Steering Group sought to address this without any adverse impact on car parking spaces. The recommendations of the SG for the on-street proposals are as follows.

Location	SG Recommendation
Powell Close junction with Rochester Road	Details set out on Dwg No DD/559/4/A endorsed.
Unwin Close junction with Rochester Road	Details set out on Dwg No DD/559/3 endorsed.
Rochester Road; adjacent to the Old Church and the village club	Details set out on Dwg No DD/559/5 endorsed.
Bush Row junction with Rochester Road	Leave the area as it currently is. The details set out on Dwg No DD/559/7/A were <u>not</u> endorsed (save for the removal of the redundant disabled parking place)
High Street, adjustments to limited waiting bays	Details set out on Dwg No DD/559/6/A endorsed based on altering the 20 minute bay to one hour/no return within one hour.
High Street, near the steps at the west end	Details set out on Dwg No DD/559/8 endorsed.
Station Road adjacent to the old bridge	Details set out on Dwg No DD/559/2 endorsed.
Forstal Road	Details set out on Dwg No DD/559/1/A endorsed subject to consideration of some further adjustment to facilitate access to the allotments.
Bush Row & Powell Close disabled parking bays	Remove the redundant bays from the Traffic Regulation Order and on-street.
Height restriction barriers	A general presumption in favour of leaving the hrb's open unless there was a localised imminent threat of itinerant incursion.
Motorcycle parking in the car parks	Remodel the currently unused area in the western car park to accommodate motorcycles without the need to reduce the numbers of car park spaces.

### 1.3 Off-street – the Public Car Parks

- 1.3.1 The consultation leaflet posed a question concerning the charging for use of the public car parks. It invited people to comment on whether they thought that people using the car parks should pay directly to do so, or whether they believed that the cost of these car parks should continue to be met by the Borough Council. The question was prompted by two separate considerations.
- 1.3.2 First, there are clear local frustrations about the way these car parks are used. There are occasions when residents are faced with a forced crossing of Bailey Bridge Road to reach the more remote of the two car parks because the one nearest the village centre is full and allegedly, used by many non-locals. If the Borough Council were to introduce an operational policy based on preference for any particular group of drivers such as residents it would require, of necessity, a management approach supported by a charging regime. It is therefore a proper part of the consultation exercise to test the extent to which the desire for resident preferential use in the car parks is matched by an acceptance of the charging that would inevitably be needed to make it work effectively.
- 1.3.3 Secondly, the Borough Council is confronting financial challenges that require consideration of how costs can be abated across all service areas. Car parks require a revenue commitment to support the maintenance and rates. In addition, the costs of providing CCTV, much valued by the local community, are considerable. Car parks therefore cannot be isolated from these wider financial pressures and it is legitimate to consider whether direct users should contribute towards some of the cost of the facilities.
- 1.3.4 As it is, the response on the possible introduction of a charging regime was inconclusive as shown by the following table.

Distributed	Replies		In favour	Not in favour	Neutral replies
	Count	Percentage			
426	86	20%	40	41	5
As a percentage of the replies			46.5%	47.6%	5.8%
As a percentage of the circulated questionnaires			9.4%	9.6%	1.1%

- 1.3.5 Set against this, the Steering Group noted that the Parish Council had expressed itself opposed to any charging in the car parks as had a number of local businesses. Additionally, the Parish Council had organised a public meeting attended by about 70 people during the consultation period and this too revealed little support for the principle of charging.

- 1.3.6 The Steering Group was therefore faced with a difficult set of mutually incompatible aims. It recognised that the wish for a degree of resident preference in the car park nearest the village centre is not supported by any appetite for the management tool, charging, that would enable this to take place. It also acknowledged that the ongoing revenue costs of the car parks in Aylesford amount to approximately £22K per annum. It was not really surprising that those currently benefitting from free use of the car parks would want them to remain free while also wishing to retain the level of maintenance, especially CCTV as this is a high local priority for most residents.
- 1.3.7 Faced with this dilemma, the Steering Group has focused on a particular and further issue raised during the public consultation concerning the need for more parking, as a way of removing pressure on available spaces and how this could be addressed by extending the eastern car park onto what has become effectively an over-flow area. It considered that this could be the catalyst for some innovative partnership working by the Parish and Borough Council to promote a scheme to extend the car park and to bring the Parish Council on board as a funding partner to contribute to the capital cost of the work (estimated at this stage to be approximately £55K) and the annual revenue costs of running the car parks, thereby helping to retain the current free-to-users status.
- 1.3.8 The Steering Group is recommending that this partnership approach be endorsed and explored further. The Parish Council has agreed to consider the principal of a contribution towards the costs associated with extending the eastern of the two Aylesford car parks. Further discussions will be held with the Parish Council to clarify this position and I will update Members on progress with this in due course.

#### **1.4 The Parking Programme**

- 1.4.1 At the time of writing this report the implementation of Phase 6a is almost complete. The parking review for West Malling has been the subject of consultation which will be considered by its local Steering Group in due course and a further report made to the Board.
- 1.4.2 In March the Board endorsed the following ongoing commitments. Revisiting particular aspects of the Local Parking Plans for Borough Green and Snodland followed by the re-addressing of the Zone M (in Tonbridge) petitioners' request for an additional afternoon period of permit-only parking. In practice these will be done concurrently. Following on from the implementation of any changes resulting from these various reviews the locations identified in Phase 6b will then be considered. These are listed in **Annex 3**. I have made one small change to this list by adding Papion Grove in Walderslade. As this is close to Fernbank Close (listed in 6b) and suffers from the same problem of parking by commuters in inappropriate locations it would make no sense not to address these problems at the same time.

- 1.4.3 One particular area of concern worth mentioning is a series of concerns from residents and Snodland Town Council about unacceptable conditions in front the Snodland C of E school in Roberts Road. This will be included within the imminent review of the Snodland Local Parking Plan.
- 1.4.4 Another issue worthy of note is the disordered parking situation following the recent adoption of Annison Street and Bradley Street in the 'Market Quarter' of Tonbridge. This development, which clearly needs some form of parking control, has been adopted as public highway without securing funding from the developer to implement the necessary Traffic Regulation Order. This should have been addressed during the adoption process and the adoption team within KH&T has been alerted so that this situation can be avoided in future developments. These roads have been added to the 'Holding List' (**Annex 4**) for consideration as soon as resources permit.

## **1.5 Legal Implications**

- 1.5.1 The on-street parking service is undertaken by the Borough Council on behalf of the County Council under the terms of the formal legal agreement.

## **1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

- 1.6.1 Funding to implement the parking action plan is provided within existing approved Borough Council Budgets.

## **1.7 Risk Assessment**

- 1.7.1 The assessment and consultation process applied to parking management should provide the assurance that the Borough Council has the will and ability to adapt the Parking Plans in the light of comment and circumstances to ensure that it achieves a best balance of local parking needs. A regular review of the schemes is crucial to ensure that we can correctly and effectively manage on street parking in these areas as the proposals are either introduced for safety reasons or to provide a more appropriate balance of parking needs.
- 1.7.2 A major risk is that scheme proposals encounter significant lack of local support. This risk is mitigated by the considerable effort devoted to ensuring there is widespread consultation on proposals through two stages of informal consultation before any formal stage of consultation is reached. There is also care given to ensuring that schemes are adjusted and adapted in the light of comments and observations received from the local community without compromising safety of the Councils commitment to deal appropriately with identified safety concerns.

## **1.8 Equality Impact Assessment**

- 1.8.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report.

## 1.9 Recommendations

1.9.1 The Steering Group's recommendations for the on-street proposals set out in this report **BE APPROVED**;

1.9.2 That the 'parking programme' as set out in Section 1.4 **BE ENDORSED**.

The Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

contact: Mike O'Brien

Nil

Steve Humphrey

Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	All of the proposals are in line with national guidelines and re-iterates advice set out within the Highway Code. Any such parking that is affected by these changes is already contrary to that advice. There is no established right to park on the public highway, and the proposals all assist the maintenance of the right of access along the highway and to properties.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	Yes	The proposals should ease traffic movements and improve access to properties for all road users.
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		n/a

*In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.*