

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STREET SCENE and ENVIRONMENT SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD

06 November 2017

**Report of the Director of Street Scene, Leisure & Technical Services and
the Director of Finance & Transformation**

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Key Decision

1 REVIEW OF CAR PARKING FEES AND CHARGES

Summary

This report brings forward recommendations for car parking fees and charges for implementation from 1st April 2018.

1.1 Introduction

Fees and charges for parking in the Borough are regularly reviewed in the context of current and planned service improvements and the operational management of the parking service.

In bringing forward the proposals in this report, consideration has been given to the set of guiding principles for the setting of fees and charges established by the Council. The guiding principles can be summarised as follows:

- Fees and charges should have due regard to the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and should reflect the Council's key priorities.
- If there is to be a subsidy from the Council tax payer to the service user this should be a conscious choice.
- The Council should look to maximise income subject to market conditions, opportunities and comparable charges elsewhere, in the context of its key priorities and other corporate aims and priorities.
- Fees and charges should be reviewed at least annually (unless fixed by statute or some other body).
- Fees and charges should not be used to provide a subsidy from the Council tax payer to commercial operators.
- There should be consistency between charges for similar services.

In addition to the above, consideration also needs to be given to a number of specific principles relating to the provision of a successful car parking service. In summary the Council should:-

- Seek to optimise the availability of parking.

- Manage assets in a fair, commercial and efficient manner.
- Implement an appropriate charging regime taking into account the cost of the parking service
- Balance the management of the car parks to meet the needs of all users
- Have in place suitable inspection and maintenance regimes to ensure it provides safe and well maintained opportunities for the public to park their vehicles.

This report considers current and future fees and charges for parking, and following careful consideration of the aforementioned principles, brings forward a number of proposals. In summary the proposals are as follows:

- Short stay parking charges in Tonbridge to increase by 10p per hour including a 10p increase to the 30 min tariff. Introduction of short stay parking charges in the Castle grounds car park on weekdays.
- Residential preferential parking permits be retained at £40 across the whole Borough with new applicants continuing to receive 10 visitor permits free of charge. Free of charge visitor permits to existing holders renewing their permits to be discontinued.
- Visitor permits be retained at £12 for 10 permits.
- Country parks – an increase from £1 to £1.20 for the first 4 hours, and the retention of season tickets for regular users.
- Long stay parking in Tonbridge to increase by 10p per hour, capped to a maximum of £5.90.
- Blue Bell Hill car park – revised charges to reflect the quality and convenience of facilities provided and the cost of the provision to the Council.
- West Malling – an increase in short stay parking charges by 10p per hour including a 10p increase to the 30p minimum tariff. An introduction of a 4 hour tariff in the short stay car park. An increase in Season ticket charges in Ryarsh Lane to reflect the quality and convenience of facilities provided and the cost of the provision to the Council.
- Borough Green – charges in the Western Road car park to increase by 10p.
- On-street permit and pay & display parking in designated areas of North Tonbridge to be investigated.
- Evening and Sunday charging – to continue to be free of charge.
- Peak and Off-Peak Season tickets – increases to reflect market conditions/demand.

- Business permits/dispensations for on-street – increases applied with the exception of permits for carers.

It is important for Members to note that the annual review of car parking charges in 2016 did not recommend any increases or other changes. **Consequently there has been no increase in any parking charges in the Borough for the last 2 years.**

1.2 Investment in the Parking Service

1.2.1 The review seeks to achieve a balance between proactively managing parking on behalf of residents and businesses and an appropriate charging regime taking into account the cost of the parking service. Many items contribute to this cost, such as maintenance of the car parks, enforcement, business rates, lighting, security measures, renewal of signs and lines and a considerable investment in the Parking Action Plan to improve the management and convenience of parking throughout the Borough. Members will also note that car parking charges paid by users are subject to VAT. It is also true to say that many of the Council's car parks are potentially valuable land assets were they not to be given over for parking purposes, representing an 'opportunity cost' to the Council.

1.2.2 Over the period since the previous major review report to the Planning & Transportation Advisory Board in January 2016, the Council has implemented a significant number of parking management initiatives. In the context of this review of fees and charges, it is worth setting these out so that Members as well as local residents and businesses can understand the totality of the parking service beyond the purely financial considerations and obtain a better perspective on the positive impacts that the parking service has on local parking conditions.

- Approximately £60,000 has been invested since April 2016 on a range of on- street parking measures across the Borough.
- Improvement works to the value of £100,000 have been carried out at a number of car parks including the refurbishment of the retaining wall and railings in the Upper Castle Field Car Park, drainage improvements to Wateringbury car park.
- The Council's Capital Plan includes a provision for renewal of equipment in car parks. Earlier this year the Council replaced all the ticket machines to bring them up to an appropriate standard and to be capable of accepting the new £1 coinage. The cost of the new machines was £115,000.
- The improvement work is underpinned by a continuing and consistent programme of maintenance work to keep the car parks safe and convenient for our customers. This programme also includes work on-street to keep all the signs and lines in the

Borough clear and legible to support the enforcement work of the Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO).

Annual provision for this programme of maintenance work is £100,000.

Business Rates are around £260,000 each year and to round off this section on maintenance and safety, CCTV provision amounts to £200,000 each year to keep the car parks safe and secure.

- The enforcement service, including the CEOs has seen a growth in resource with 10 full time CEO's now in employment. This coupled with a change to the shift patterns has resulted in a more effective deployment of the CEOs. In real terms staff are patrolling until 8pm at locations across the whole Borough and income from Penalty Charge Notices has increased as a result. The CEO team are critical to promoting a well ordered parking environment in the Borough that is responsive to local needs and pressures. It is also relevant to note that as demand for parking grows and charges increase, the expectations from the public in terms of levels of enforcement grow as well.
- There is also a need to invest in IT systems to assist both in the effectiveness and responsiveness of our CEOs and the back office IT parking management systems. Mobile technology has advanced and part of the evolving role of the CEOs now includes enforcing 'pay by mobile' systems. It is vital that the handheld devices used by the CEOs are fit for purpose and are renewed and updated to enable them to be as efficient as possible and to limit any errors.
- In addition, there is also a staff cost associated with implementing Local Parking Plans and the phased programme of more ad hoc parking interactions. This is integrated with other transportation related work but the input in an average year comes to about £60,000

1.2.3 Taking all these elements together, they amount to a significant investment by the Borough Council in seeking to provide a comprehensive and integrated parking service on behalf of residents and businesses, and provide an important context for the review of parking fees and charges that follows.

1.3 Comparative Charges

1.3.1 Comparison with the parking fees and charges of other Kent districts and private sector operators should not be the main driver of what might be appropriate in this Borough, since local circumstances, such as the availability of short and long-stay parking, the convenience of the car park locations, and any "through the till" refunds offered by nearby businesses (such as Sainsburys, Waitrose and

Iceland in Tonbridge) are critical in such considerations. However, comparative charges do act as a guide and can be viewed by the public as to what might be considered the 'going rate' for parking. In addition, it is important to note that this Council does not currently charge at times that are now routinely charged for in many other districts such as charging on Sundays, public holidays and evenings. For these and other local reasons comparisons of charges outside the Borough and even within must be carefully qualified.

- 1.3.2 The scope of the review exercise covers consideration of all existing services and charges and includes an assessment of whether current circumstances justify them being maintained as they are or increased. In overview, a comparison of parking charges levied by neighbouring authorities would indicate the proposals are generally in line with others, although it is anticipated that most other Council's will be bringing forward increases in the next financial year.

1.4 Off-Street Parking in Tonbridge – Daily Short and Long Stay Charges

- 1.4.1 Detailed in Table 1 below are the current and proposed charges for daily short and long stay car parking charges in Tonbridge.

TABLE 1

Short Stay		
Period – Hours	Current Charge	Proposed Charge
30 minutes	£0.60	£0.70
1 hour	£1.20	£1.30
2 hour	£2.10	£2.30
3 hour	£2.80	£3.10
4 hour	£3.40	£3.80
Long Stay		
1 hour	£1.20	£1.30
2 hour	£2.10	£2.30
3 hour	£2.80	£3.10
6 hour	£4.10	£4.70
All day	£5.50	£5.90

- 1.4.2 The proposals represent an uplift in charges by a minimum of 10p (the lowest denomination the pay and display machines accept), and 10p per hour increase on each tariff, with the exception of the all-day tariff. Members are reminded that the current charges have remained unchanged for the last 2 years. This level of increase recognises the balance between the costs of provision and management of the Council's primary parking stock and the desire to support the economic sustainability of the town centre.

- 1.4.3 The all-day tariff is not recommended to exceed £5.90 as this is linked to the current all-day rate in the privately operated Tonbridge railway station car park.
- 1.4.4 At the present time pay & display parking in the Castle grounds is only offered on a Saturday. It is proposed that this be extended to weekdays, to utilise spare capacity in the car park not being utilised by staff. The proposal will maximise use of the car park, generate additional income and create additional parking for the public close to the high street, supporting local businesses in this area of the town. Staff will be consulted and their views sought. The proposal will require the purchase and installation of a new ticket machine at a one-off cost of £4,000.

1.5 Season Tickets, Tonbridge

- 1.5.1 The Council currently offers Season Tickets to park all-day in the Sovereign complex (Sovereign Way East, Sovereign Way North and Vale Road) and Lower Castle Fields car parks. They are available on a monthly, quarterly, half-yearly and yearly basis.
- 1.5.2 The take-up of Season Tickets is good, and we currently have 963 issued. The most popular way of paying is annually (86.4% of current season tickets), then half-yearly (9.4%), then quarterly (2.4%) and the remainder (1.8%) are monthly.
- 1.5.3 The current Season Ticket tariff provides an incentive to purchase annually, with shorter periods being weighted to reflect the additional administration required. The price of the Season Tickets take into careful consideration the charges applied at the Railway Station car park which has the advantage of being located immediately next to the Station. The current price of the Tonbridge Station season ticket is £1160.00.

TABLE 2

Season Tickets, Tonbridge		
	Current Charge	Proposed Charge
Monthly	£100	£110
Quarterly	£275	£300
Half-yearly	£500	£550
Annual	£900	£950

1.6 Off-Peak Season Ticket, Tonbridge

- 1.6.1 The Council offers an “Off-Peak Season Ticket” in Tonbridge that allows anyone to park between 4pm and 9am the next day (and all day Saturdays) for £260 per year in any of the Council’s car parks. The off peak availability of parking is of particular use to residents living in central Tonbridge. Members will note from Table 3 below that it is the intention to make an appropriate increase in the charge to £270 per year.

TABLE 3

Off Peak Season Ticket, Tonbridge		
	Current Charge	Proposed Charge
Off-peak season ticket (4pm-9am & Saturdays)	£260	£270

1.7 Off Street Parking in West Malling – Daily Short and Long Stay Charges

- 1.7.1 The current Season Ticket for the Ryarsh Lane car park is set at £150 per year. Privately managed, alternate long-stay parking is available relatively nearby at West Malling station. Although it is recognised that this is less convenient for the town, the comparative cost of the parking is shown below in Table 4.

TABLE 4

West Malling Long Stay Parking				
Parking provider	Daily Charge	Off peak Charge	Saturday Charge	Annual Charge
South-eastern (West Malling Station)	£4.70	£4.20	£2.60	£807.50 (£3.17 per day)
Kenden (West Malling Station)	£4.00	£4.00	£1.50	£640 (£2.50 per day)
Ryarsh Lane car park	Not available	Not available	Free	£150 (60p per day)

- 1.7.2 Despite an increase from £50 to £150 in May 2016, demand for permits in Ryarsh Lane continues to exceed supply and there remains a tendency for businesses to retain permits even when not always required. The relative low cost of the permits seems to make this practice worthwhile and prevents spaces to be resold to those on the waiting list. It is, therefore, suggested that the

season ticket price be increased. The proposal is to increase the cost of the season ticket to £175.

1.7.3 Members will I am sure recall that in May 2016 the Council introduced charges to the short stay car park in West Malling for the first time. The aim of the charges was twofold:-

- Firstly the charges were introduced to assist in the management of the car park. Setting charges was felt to allow more flexibility in the management of the car park, focussing on encouraging short stay and relatively quick turnover of spaces to optimise availability.
- The second aim was to generate income to address the costs of running the car park and the car parking service.

The introduction of the charges generated significant interest from the general public with a petition against the proposal considered by Members at full Council. Members of the public, the local Parish Council and traders were concerned about the potential impact on local businesses, congestion in the High street and visitors parking in surrounding residential roads where parking is free. It is felt that the introduction of the charges has met the Borough Council's original aims and the concerns of the public, local Parish Council and traders have not had the significant impact they feared.

A meeting to review the charges has taken place with the local Parish Council, representatives from businesses and the Cabinet Member for Street Scene & Environment Services which raised a number of issues. It has been agreed that the Borough Council's original proposal to include a 4 hour tariff in the short stay car park should be introduced as soon as is possible. This it is hoped will assist a number of specific traders in the High Street. It is also recognised that there is significant over demand from traders for staff parking. The local Parish Council are pursuing the identification of land to provide a new long stay car park and are in liaison with the Council's forward planning department.

The traders and local Parish Council have requested that the first hour of parking becomes free to help those people "just popping into" the town. This is not felt appropriate in operational terms and would in our view, be a major backward step with regard to parking management within the town. Members will also be aware that the parking bays in the High Street are free of charge to support the businesses. It is recognised, however, that any action to make it easier for visitors to pay would be welcome and it has been agreed to investigate the introduction of contactless card payment in the short stay car parks on a trial basis. With regard to enforcement there has been a significant increase in enforcement hours since the charges were introduced. It has also been agreed with the traders to meet to discuss priority areas for enforcement to help ensure that our resources are used most efficiently.

The Parish Council did organise a survey of local traders in the town. Of the 26 responses received the majority did indicate a loss of trade compared to before the charges were introduced. It is recognised that there is a wide range of factors that can impact on trading and Members will note that the 26 responses only represent the views of 14% of traders in the town.

- 1.7.4 The proposed parking charges for the High Street car park to operate Monday to Saturday, 8am to 6.00pm are shown in Table 5.

TABLE 5

West Malling Short Stay		
Period	Current Charge	Proposed Charge
30 minutes	£0.30	£0.40
1 hour	£0.60	£0.70
2 hours	£1.20	£1.40
3 hours	£1.80	£2.10
4 hours	£2.40	£2.80

- 1.7.5 Following liaison with Shepherd Neame, one of the freeholders of part of the car park, we have had to release 11 spaces within their ownership for the sole use of their business.

1.8 Blue Bell Hill Car Park

- 1.8.1 Blue Bell Hill car park is a commuter car park in the north of the Borough that is easily accessible and has good onward coach links towards London via the M2. The car park is 'Park Mark' accredited and as such it offers high-quality parking opportunities with a good surface, lighting and CCTV.
- 1.8.2 Parking charges apply, Monday to Saturday. The existing charges are relatively low and act as an incentive for commuters to use the car park rather than to park in nearby residential areas. However, since the establishment of the car park there has still been some on-street commuter parking in nearby residential areas, and to assist the Council has introduced on-street parking controls to deter this.
- 1.8.3 The proposed charges are shown in Table 6 below.

TABLE 6

Blue Bell Hill Car Park		
	Current Charge	Proposed charge
Daily	£2.40	£2.50
Weekly	£8.40	£10
Monthly	£32	£35
Quarterly	£85	£100
6 Monthly	£150	£180
Annual	£265	£300

1.9 Borough Green Western Road Car Park

1.9.1 The proposed charges for the Western Road car park are detailed below in Table 7 and represent a 10p increase on each tariff.

TABLE 7

Borough Green Western Road Car Park		
	Current Charge	Proposed charge
Up to 30 minutes	£0.10	£0.20
30 minutes to 1 hour	£0.20	£0.30
1 to 2 hours	£0.40	£0.50
2 to 4 hours	£0.90	£1.00
4 to 6 hours	£1.40	£1.50
6 to 9 hours	£2.00	£2.10
All day	£5.10	£5.20

1.10 Residential Preferential Parking Scheme (Residents Permits)

1.10.1 Residents permits across the Borough are currently set at £40 per year.

1.10.2 Having compared our existing charge to other local authorities and taking into account the £5 increase in 2016, it is not proposed to make any change to this charge.

1.11 Business Permits and Dispensations

1.11.1 The Council offers a variety of “business permits” and dispensations shown below in Table 8.

TABLE 8

Business Permits & Dispensations		
Permit type	Current charge	Proposed charge
Business permit (for businesses located within a permit scheme)	£150	£160
Carers permit	£50	£50
Dispensations		
Property Maintenance	£150	£160
Property Maintenance (with yellow lines)	£150	£160
Tonbridge High Street (Banking)	£150	£160
On-street dispensation (for building works etc.)	£10 for 2 weeks	£10 per day, £30 per week

1.11.2 Members will note that it is the intention to increase the cost of the permits/dispensations with the exception of Carers, to recognise the service they provide to vulnerable members of the community. A substantial increase in charges for builders parking on street is also proposed. This is to reflect that our existing charge is significantly below the market rate for this dispensation.

1.12 Visitor Permits

- 1.12.1 The Council has a system of issuing Visitor Permits to holders of Residents permits to enable their visitors to park within the restricted area. The Visitor Permits effectively operate as one-day permits.
- 1.12.2 Visitor Permits currently cost £12 per sheet of 10 permits, and every permit holder is given a free sheet of 10 permits when they take out or renew their permit.
- 1.12.3 It is proposed that the charge for Visitor Permits be retained at £12 for 10 permits, the offer of 10 free Visitor Permits for new applications be retained, but the offer of 10 free Visitor Permits for renewals be discontinued.

1.13 Leybourne and Haysden Country Park Car Parks

- 1.13.1 Members will be aware that charging is in place for car parking at both of the Council's Country Parks. The last increase was applied in 2016 with charges rising from 80p to £1.00 for up to four hours and from £3.00 to £4.00 for over four hours.
- 1.13.2 In addition to the charges above, an annual season ticket can also be purchased which provides parking at both Country Parks. The season ticket was introduced in 2008 at an annual charge of £25 and was increased to £30 in 2016.

The existing charges, together with the proposed charges, are detailed below in Table 9.

TABLE 9

Haysden/Leybourne Lakes Country Parks		
Period	Current Tariff	Proposed Tariff
0-4 Hours	1.00	1.20
4+ Hours	4.00	4.00
Annual Season Ticket	30.00	40.00

- 1.13.3 Members may be interested to note that the current charging structure in relation to Kent County Council's (KCC) Country Parks is:
- £1.50 to £2.00 (park dependent) flat rate Monday to Friday
 - £2.00 to £3.00 (park dependent) flat rate weekend and Bank Holidays
 - £40 season ticket (covers eight sites across Kent)

- 1.13.4 It can, therefore, be seen that in comparison to the charges applied by KCC, this Council's proposed charges continue to offer excellent value for money in terms of the market.

1.14 Tonbridge On-Street Pay and Display

- 1.14.1 The Council currently operates some very limited on-street pay and display parking in Tonbridge up to a maximum stay of 3 hours. The purpose of on-street pay and display is to provide relatively short stay parking that is convenient to customers of local businesses, with a regular turn-over of spaces.
- 1.14.2 The proposed on-street pay and display parking charges are shown in Table 10 below.

TABLE 10

On-Street Pay & Display		
	Current Charge	Proposed charge
Up to 30 minutes	£0.60	£0.70
Up to 1 hour	£1.20	£1.30
Up to 2 hours	£2.10	£2.30
Up to 3 hours	£2.80	£3.10

1.15 Charging Period

- 1.15.1 With the exception of the two Country Parks, the current charging times within the Council's car parks do not extend beyond 6pm or apply on Sundays or Bank Holidays. No changes to this policy are proposed.

1.16 Legal Implications

- 1.16.1 The powers allowing the Borough Council to carry out parking management activity are contained in the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, supplemented by formal agreement with Kent County Council as the Local Highway Authority, in respect of its powers under the Traffic Management Act 2004. In particular, section 122 of the Road Traffic Regulation 1984 Act imposes a general duty on local authorities exercising functions under the Act to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic

(including pedestrians) and the provision of safe and adequate parking facilities on and off the highway.

- 1.16.2 Changes to parking charges should be made via an Amendment Orders to the Council's on and off-street parking Traffic Regulation Orders, using the procedures set out in the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.
- 1.16.3 Part 2 of The Civil Enforcement of Parking Contraventions (England) General (Amendment) Regulations 2015 introduced a statutory requirement for a 10 minute "grace" period to time limited parking, whether on-street or off-street, including Pay and Display, regardless of the intended duration of stay, effectively adding the facility to park for an additional 10 minutes to all parking periods.

1.17 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.17.1 This review has examined parking fees and charges within the context of a set of guiding principles, the cost of parking service to the Council and ongoing investment in the parking management service. It is anticipated that the recommendations outlined in this report will generate additional income of £210,000, net of VAT and refunds. This estimate is based on the assumption that current usage and refund levels remains constant and that ticket sales remain uninfluenced by price increases and that there is a similar distribution of tickets in each pricing band. As outlined in sub-section 1.4.4. a new ticket machine will be required for the Castle grounds at a one-off cost of £4,000.

1.18 Asset management

- 1.18.1 It is worthy of note that many of the Council's car parks represent a significant asset in terms of resale and for development. It is essential given the context of the Medium Term Financial Strategy that the Council seeks to ensure that the assets are managed in the most economically advantageous way and may in some cases include disposal of the asset.

1.19 Risk Assessment

- 1.19.1 The estimated additional income is modelled on predicted future parking patterns and demand matching what currently takes place. It does not reflect any potential adverse customer reaction or the possibility of increased take up of the dual ticketing arrangement in Angel and Botany car parks.

1.20 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.20.1 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.

1.21 Policy Considerations

1.21.1 Asset Management

1.21.2 Community

1.21.3 Customer Contact

1.22 Recommendations

1.24.1 It is recommended to Cabinet that it **APPROVE** the following proposals with effect from 1st April 2018;

- 1) Introduce the schedule of charges for short and long stay parking in Tonbridge shown in Table 1.
- 2) Introduce week day short stay car parking charges to the car parking bays in the Tonbridge Castle grounds, including the purchase of a new car parking ticket machine.
- 3) Adopt the schedules of Peak and Off-Peak Season ticket charges in Tonbridge shown in Tables 2 and 3.
- 4) Increase Ryarsh Lane annual season ticket charges to £175.
- 5) Introduce the schedules of charges for short stay parking in West Malling shown in Table 5, including a new 4 hour tariff.
- 6) Introduce the schedule of charges for Blue Bell Hill car park shown in Table 6.
- 7) Introduce the schedule of charges for parking in Borough Green Western Road car park shown in Table 7.
- 8) Retain Residents permits at £40.
- 9) Introduce the schedule of charges for business permits and dispensation shown in Table 8.
- 10) Visitor permits to be retained at £12 for a book of 10 permits, with the current offer of 10 free permits limited to new applicants only.
- 11) Introduce the schedule of charges for Haysden and Leybourne Lakes country parks shown in Table 9.
- 12) Introduce the schedule of charges for on-street pay & display parking in Tonbridge shown in Table 10.
- 13) Investigate the potential introduction of on-street permit and pay & display parking in designated areas of North Tonbridge.

The Director of Street Scene, Leisure & Technical Services confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

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Nil

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