

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**STREET SCENE and ENVIRONMENT SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD**

**30 October 2019**

**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 existing car parking fees and charges for implementation from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020. The report also seeks approval for the introduction of charges in a number of the Council's smaller car parks, highlights a review of initiatives to improve digital access for customers, highlights the intention to introduce electric charging points, and confirms concessionary parking arrangements for the Blood Transfusion Service and Breast Screening Unit in Tonbridge.**

**1.1 Introduction**

1.1.1 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.

1.1.2 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.

1.1.3 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 with no increase to the 30 minute tariff.
- Residential preferential parking permits to increase from £40 to £45 across the whole borough, with the introduction of a rising scale of charges based on the number of cars per household. New applicants to continue to receive 10 visitor permits free of charge.
- Visitor permits be retained at £12 for 10 permits.
- Country parks – an increase from £1.20 to £1.40 for the first 4 hours. Season tickets for regular users to increase from £40 to £50.
- Long stay parking in Tonbridge to increase by 10p per hour.
- Blue Bell Hill car park – revised charges to reflect the quality and convenience of facilities provided.
- West Malling – an increase in short stay parking charges by 10p per hour with no increase to the 30 minute tariff. An increase in Season ticket charges in Ryarsh Lane from £175 to £255.
- Borough Green – charges in the Western Road car park to increase by 10p with no increase to the 30 minute tariff.
- Introduction of on-street short stay pay & display parking in existing parking bays in the northern end of Tonbridge High Street and Lyons Crescent.
- Sunday and Bank Holiday charging – to continue to be free of charge.

- Peak and Off-Peak Season tickets – increases to reflect market conditions/demand.
- Introduction of parking charges to Aylesford, Martin Square and Snodland car parks, to help address operational issues and offset the costs of running the car parks.
- Business permits/dispensations for on-street – increases applied with the exception of permits for carers. Carers permits reduced.
- Confirmation of concessionary parking for the Blood Transfusion Service and Breast Screening Unit in the Angel East car park, Tonbridge.
- Upgrade of Parking Administration back office system to simplify the way in which motorists are able to apply for and purchase their parking permits.
- Consideration of parking demand in Tonbridge as part of a wider review of the Council's assets in Tonbridge Town Centre.
- A report be presented to the next meeting of this Board on the installation of electric charging points.
- A report be presented to a future meeting of this Board on further changes to the Parking Service to support the Council's Digital and Climate Change Strategies.

1.1.4 It is important for Members to note that the annual review of car parking charges in 2018 did not recommend any increases or other changes. **Consequently there has been no increase in any category of parking charges in the Borough for the last 2 years and for some tariffs such as Residential Preferential Permits no increase for the last 4 years.** It is also worthy of note that a number of the proposals within the report do not involve any increase in the existing charge. This includes no increase in the 30 minute tariff in all short stay car parks, no increase in visitor permits for parking in residential roads, a reduction in charges for carers parking on-street, and most significantly charges on Sundays remaining free of charge.

## 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 this Board in November 2018, 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 £60k has been invested since April 2018 on a range of on- street parking measures across the Borough.
- Improvement works to the value of £55k have been carried out at a number of car parks including the Lower Castle Fields patching, Lamberts Yard island and boundary, West Malling patching, Aylesford bay widening and edge improvements, Tonbridge Pool access lighting and Sovereign Way Mid motor cycle parking.
- The improvement work is underpinned by a continuing and consistent programme of maintenance work to keep the car parks safe, clean, well presented 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 £292,000. Business Rates are around £264,000 each year and to round off this section on maintenance and safety, CCTV provision amounts to £194,000 each year to keep the car parks safe and secure.
- The enforcement service, includes 11 full time CEO's. Staff are patrolling until 8pm at locations across the whole Borough, and the 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. In addition, an external contractor is employed to empty the ticket machines at an annual cost of £50,000.
- 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. At sub-section 1.18 later in this report Members will note that a number of customer facing and back office digital improvements are being considered in line with the Council's recently adopted Digital Strategy. 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. Whilst this is integrated with other parking related work, the average annual cost is iro. £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. Further investment may also be required in the future to meet initiatives brought forward in the context of the Council's Digital and Climate Change Strategies.

### **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 businesses in Tonbridge (Sainsburys, Waitrose, Iceland and TM Active) are critical in such considerations. Ticket refunds from the aforementioned businesses in Tonbridge amount to £518,000 per annum. Comparative charges do, however, 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 on Sundays or Bank Holidays. 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, and it is anticipated that most other Council's will be bringing forward their own increases in advance of the next financial year.

### **1.4 Current Income Levels**

1.4.1 Income from the Council's car parks is monitored by the Council's Management Team on a monthly basis. This enables any variances against profile to be identified and if necessary action to be taken. Current levels of income have been carefully considered in bringing forward the proposals in this report.

- 1.4.2 After the first 6 months of the current financial year, income is generally in line with profile. Income for short stay parking is marginally below profile, but is balanced by an above profile performance for long stay parking and season tickets.
- 1.4.3 Parking income for the two country parks is monitored separately. Income after the first 6 months is above profile, with a year-end forecast of £105,000 against an original estimate of £85,000.

## **1.5 Tonbridge Car Parking Review**

- 1.5.1 To assist with the review of Off-Street Parking charges in Tonbridge car parks, a review was undertaken on the Council's behalf by specialist consultants, Alpha Parking. Copies of the full Review Report can be made available to Members on request, with the key findings summarised below:-

- Occupancy and Customer Surveys of all the Council's car parks in Tonbridge were undertaken on a Wednesday and Saturday in February/March 2019;
- Car parks as a whole are operating within capacity, peaking at 75% capacity. There are no significant differences between capacities on weekdays and Saturday;
- Short stay demand rises to its highest level between 10am and 1pm and exceeds the capacity of the short stay car parks;
- At peak times several individual car parks are at full capacity, most notably around the Castle Fields area;
- Demand for town centre car parks in Tonbridge is predicted to increase by approximately 10% between 2019 and 2031;
- A comparison of short stay charges with other West Kent Councils shows Tonbridge to be average for a 1 hour stay but below average for a 4 hour stay;
- A comparison of long stay charges with other West Kent Councils shows Tonbridge to be average;
- In terms of purpose of visit, business and commuting is most popular on a weekday, with shopping most popular on a Saturday. Food and drink and use of community facilities feature highly at all times;
- In terms of catchment, half of people parking are from Tonbridge/Hildenborough, with others coming mainly from Tunbridge Wells, Paddock Wood and Sevenoaks.
- There is a very high awareness (92%) and take-up (82%) of the customer refunds provided by the supermarkets in relation to the Angel and Botany car park charges.

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

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

**TABLE 1**

<b>Short Stay</b>		
<b>Period – Hours</b>	<b>Current Charge</b>	<b>Proposed Charge</b>
30 minutes	£0.70	£0.70
1 hour	£1.30	£1.40
2 hours	£2.30	£2.50
3 hours	£3.10	£3.40
4 hours	£3.80	£4.20
<b>Long Stay</b>		
1 hour	£1.30	£1.40
2 hours	£2.30	£2.50
3 hours	£3.10	£3.40
6 hours	£4.70	£5.30
All day	£5.90	£6.70

1.6.2 With the exception of parking for 30 minutes, where no change is proposed (to support local businesses), the proposals represent an uplift in charges by a minimum of 10p, with a 10p per hour increase on each tariff. Members are reminded that the current charges have remained unchanged for the last 2 years. The level of increase proposed recognises the balance between the costs of provision and management of the Council's primary parking stock, and assists in the desire to support the economic sustainability of the town centre.

1.6.3 The proposed all-day tariff (£6.70) does not exceed the current all-day rate of £7.10 in the privately operated Tonbridge railway station car park.

1.6.4 In addition, the Gateway Manager at Tonbridge Castle has suggested that the free of charge spaces available to Gateway users be removed and become staff parking only. This would enable staff coming and going to be able to park close to the offices. The suggestion is based on the constant abuse of the free spaces, time subsequently taken in considering disputed Penalty Charge Notices, and that no other Gateway in Kent offers free parking. An alternative approach, supported by the Parking Team, would be to include all spaces in the Castle Grounds as pay and display to maximise use, and for staff parking to be extended to include Lower Castle Fields car park (staff are already able to park in the Castle grounds and Upper Castle Fields car parks. Existing signage will

require change, and advance notice to the public will need to be given. The Parking Manager has advised that an additional ticket machine will be required.

## 1.7 Season Tickets, Tonbridge

- 1.7.1 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. Season tickets are available on a monthly, quarterly, half-yearly and yearly basis.
- 1.7.2 The annual take-up of Season Tickets is good, and there are currently 177 issued. By far the most popular way of paying is annually, with a relatively small number sold monthly. There is no notable demand for half yearly or quarterly tickets and it is therefore suggested these options be removed.
- 1.7.3 The proposed Season Ticket charges at Table 2 takes into consideration the charges applied at the Railway Station car park which has the advantage for commuters of being located immediately next to the Station. The current price of a Tonbridge Station season ticket is £1276.00.

**TABLE 2**

<b>Season Tickets, Tonbridge</b>		
	<b>Current Charge</b>	<b>Proposed Charge</b>
Monthly	£110	£120
Quarterly	£300	N/A
Half-yearly	£550	N/A
Annual	£950	£1020

## 1.8 Off-Peak Season Ticket, Tonbridge

- 1.8.1 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 £270 per year in any of the Council’s car parks. The off peak availability of parking is of particular use to residents living in flats with limited parking in central Tonbridge. There are currently 14 off peak annual season tickets. Members will note from Table 3 below that it is the intention to increase the charge by £20 to £290 per year. Excluding Sundays and Bank Holidays this equates to just £0.95p per day.



**TABLE 3**

<b>Off Peak Season Ticket, Tonbridge</b>		
	<b>Current Annual Charge</b>	<b>Proposed Annual Charge</b>
Off-peak season ticket (4pm-9am & Saturdays)	£270	£290

### 1.9 Off Street Parking in West Malling – Season Tickets and Short Stay Charges

1.9.1 The current Season Ticket for the Ryarsh Lane car park is set at £175 per year, which Members will note from Table 4 equates to 69 pence a day. The car park is primarily used by businesses and retailers in the week for their staff. The car park is also free of charge after 3pm on weekdays to enable parents to collect their children from the local primary school and is free of charge on Saturdays.

1.9.2 Privately managed, alternate long-stay parking is available at West Malling railway 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**

<b>West Malling Long Stay Parking</b>				
<b>Parking provider</b>	<b>Daily Charge</b>	<b>Off peak Charge</b>	<b>Saturday Charge</b>	<b>Annual Charge</b>
South-eastern (West Malling Station)	£5.10	£4.60	£2.60	£907.90 (£3.60 per day)
Kenden (West Malling Station)	£5.00	£5.00	£1.50	£725 (£2.88 per day)
Ryarsh Lane car park	Not available	Not available	Free	£175 (69p per day)

1.9.3 Demand for season tickets in Ryarsh Lane continues to significantly exceed supply and there still remains a tendency for season ticket holders to retain their tickets even when not always required. The car park has 114 spaces and the allocation of tickets is limited to 150. The low cost of the season ticket seems to make this practice worthwhile and prevents spaces being 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 by £80 to £255. Whilst

this increase may be seen as significant in percentage terms, it still offers exceptional value for money for town centre parking at just £1 per day.

- 1.9.4 Detailed in Table 5 below are the current and proposed charges for daily short stay car parking charges in West Malling High Street car park. The proposed increases in each tariff mirrors the approach for short stay parking in Tonbridge detailed earlier in these papers, including no increase for parking for 30 minutes.

**TABLE 5**

<b>West Malling Short Stay</b>		
<b>Period</b>	<b>Current Charge</b>	<b>Proposed Charge</b>
30 minutes	£0.40	£0.40
1 hour	£0.70	£0.80
2 hours	£1.40	£1.60
3 hours	£2.10	£2.40
4 hours	£2.80	£3.20

## **1.10 Blue Bell Hill Car Park**

- 1.10.1 Blue Bell Hill 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.

- 1.10.2 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 in addressing this the Council has introduced on-street parking controls to deter this.

- 1.10.3 The proposed charges are shown in Table 6 below.

**TABLE 6**

<b>Blue Bell Hill Car Park</b>		
	<b>Current Charge</b>	<b>Proposed charge</b>
Daily	£2.50	£2.70
Weekly	£10	£12
Monthly	£35	£40
Quarterly	£100	N/A
6 Monthly	£180	N/A
Annual	£300	£420

1.10.4 Members will note the proposal to remove the quarterly and 6 monthly tariffs as there is no demand. There are currently 41 annual season tickets. Whilst the proposed increase in the annual ticket might appear significant, in percentage terms the proposal equates to all day parking for just £1.67 per day. This is over £1 cheaper than the proposed daily rate, and illustrates that the season ticket has in the view of Officers, been under-priced to date.

### **1.11 Borough Green Western Road Car Park**

1.11.1 The proposed charges for the Western Road car park are detailed below in Table 7 and represent a 10p increase on each tariff with the exception of the 30 minute charge. Charges in this car park are applied to discourage rail commuter parking in support of the local businesses and residents.

1.11.2 Season tickets are also available for the car park but these are restricted to local residents. There are currently just 5 annual season tickets issued.

**TABLE 7**

<b>Borough Green Western Road Car Park</b>		
	<b>Current Charge</b>	<b>Proposed charge</b>
Up to 30 minutes	£0.20	£0.20
30 minutes to 1 hour	£0.30	£0.40

1 to 2 hours	£0.50	£0.60
2 to 4 hours	£1.00	£1.10
4 to 6 hours	£1.50	£1.60
6 to 9 hours	£2.10	£2.20
All day	£5.20	£5.30
Residents Season Ticket	£290	£320

## 1.12 Preferential Permit Parking Scheme

1.12.1 Residents permits across the Borough are currently set at £40 per year and have remained unchanged since 2016.

1.12.2 Having compared our existing charge to a number of other local authorities it is apparent that our existing charge is slightly below the average, with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council charging between £60 - £80 dependent on the road. Other Council's such as Sevenoaks District Council apply a rising scale of charges with those who park more cars on the road, paying more for their permits. The rising scale is designed to help manage road space demand where parking is at a premium. In essence, it seeks to discourage people from parking more cars in the road, unless absolutely necessary. Taking this into account the following annual charging structure is proposed:-

	Current Annual Charge	Proposed Annual Charge
1 <sup>st</sup> car	£40	£45
2 <sup>nd</sup> car	£40	£45
3 <sup>rd</sup> car	£40	£90
4 <sup>th</sup> car	£40	£135

1.12.3 It is also worthy of note, in the context of Climate Change considerations, that other local authorities including Sevenoaks District Council, apply discounts for permits relating to electric/hybrid cars. It is suggested that this is something Members may wish to consider within the future development of the Council's Climate Change Strategy. Any consideration would clearly need to take into account financial implications, with the popularity of electric/hybrid cars continuing to grow.

1.12.4 The Council offers Business and Carers Permits and Dispensations shown below in Table 8.

**TABLE 8**

<b>Business/Carers Permits</b>		
<b>Permit type</b>	<b>Current charge per annum</b>	<b>Proposed charge per annum</b>
Business permit (for businesses located within a permit scheme)	£160	£175
Carers permit	£50	£25
<b>Dispensations</b>		
Property Maintenance	£160	£175
Tonbridge High Street (Banking)	£160	£175
On-street dispensation (for building works etc.)	£10 per day £30 per week	£10 per day £40 per week

1.12.5 Members will note that it is the intention to increase the cost of the permits/dispensations with the exception of the Carers Permit. The Carers Permit has been reduced by £25 to recognise the service Carers provide to vulnerable members of the community.

### **1.13 Visitor Permits**

1.13.1 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 a one-day parking permit.

1.13.2 Visitor Permits currently cost £12 per sheet of 10 permits, and every permit holder is given a free sheet of 10 permits when they first take out their permit.

1.13.3 It is proposed that the charge for Visitor Permits remains unchanged.

### **1.14 Leybourne and Haysden Country Park Car Parks**

1.14.1 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 2018 with charges rising from £1.00 to £1.20 for up to four hours and no change to the charge for over four hours (£4.00). This increase had no impact on the number of visitors to the Park, with usage levels growing year on year. At Haysden

County Park additional parking spaces have recently been built to meet demand.

1.14.2 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 just £25 and is still excellent value for money at £40 per annum. There are currently 508 season tickets.

1.14.3 Members may be interested to note that the current charging structure in relation to Kent County Council's (KCC) Country Parks is:

- £1.30 to £2.00 (park dependent) flat rate Monday to Friday
- £2.00 to £3.00 (park dependent) flat rate weekend and Bank Holidays
- £50 season ticket (covers nine sites across Kent)

1.14.4 The existing charges, together with the proposed charges, are detailed below in Table 9. The proposals take into account the charges at the KCC Country Parks, the value of the season ticket for regular users (under £1 a week) and current demand.

**TABLE 9**

<b>Haysden/Leybourne Lakes Country Parks</b>		
<b>Period</b>	<b>Current Tariff</b>	<b>Proposed Tariff</b>
0-4 Hours	1.20	1.40
4+ Hours	4.00	4.00
Annual Season Ticket	40.00	50.00

1.14.5 The higher parking rates charged by KCC are for its largest sites, which are comparable in size to Haysden and Leybourne Lakes Country Parks. 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.

## **1.15 Tonbridge On-Street Pay and Display**

1.15.1 The Council currently operates some 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 short stay parking that is convenient to customers of local businesses, with a regular turn-over of spaces.

1.15.2 The proposed on-street pay and display parking charges are shown in Table 10 below, and are identical to the proposed short stay parking charges in Tonbridge reported earlier in these papers at sub-section 1.5.1.

**TABLE 10**

<b>On-Street Pay &amp; Display</b>		
	<b>Current Charge</b>	<b>Proposed charge</b>
Up to 30 minutes	£0.70	£0.70
Up to 1 hour	£1.30	£1.40
Up to 2 hours	£2.30	£2.50
Up to 3 hours	£3.10	£3.40

1.15.3 It is also proposed to introduce the above charges to a total of 18 existing parking bays in the northern end of Tonbridge High Street and Lyons Crescent, to encourage more regular turnover of the current spaces. Maps showing the location of the proposals are shown at **Annex 1**. The proposal, if confirmed by Cabinet, will be considered by the Joint Transportation Board as part of Phase 11 of the Parking Plan. The introduction of these charges will also require the purchase of new ticket machines and signage, which will be brought forward as part of the Capital Plan review. The Capital Plan evaluation will confirm any ongoing revenue costs and annual capital renewals provision.

### **1.16 Charging Period**

1.16.1 With the exception of the two Country Parks, the current charging times within the Council's car parks do not extend beyond 6pm and do not include Sundays or Bank Holidays. It is not the intention to amend this approach at the present time.

### **1.17 Existing Free for Use Car Parks**

1.17.1 At its meeting in February 2016 Cabinet agreed the introduction of car parking charges in West Malling and noted that a future review of other smaller Council owned car parks would be progressed. The introduction of charges in West Malling was supported in order to improve the availability of parking to the public.

1.17.2 The introduction of car parking charges in West Malling generated significant public and media interest, with concerns expressed by residents and shop owners over the potential impact on the economic viability of the town, and the possibility of cars parking in residential streets nearby rather than paying to park.

These concerns have not materialised and the charges have allowed more flexibility in the management of the car park, focussing on encouraging short stay and relatively quick turnover of spaces to optimise availability. The income generated has also helped address the cost of running the car parks.

1.17.3 Taking the above into account it is now felt appropriate to extend this approach to other car parks and specifically to introduce car parking charges to the Council owned car parks in Martin Square, Larkfield, Snodland and Aylesford. Each of the car parks have particular operational issues which the introduction of charges will help address.

1.17.4 Detailed below is a brief summary of each car park, the operational issues and the proposed charges.

i) Martin Square, Larkfield	
Location	ME20 6QL
Number of spaces	94
Operational issues	The car park is free to park all days with a maximum stay of 23 hours. The car park serves the local shops in the Square, together with community facilities including the Library and Health Centre. With no charge in place the car park is often full due to people parking for long periods. This restricts the opportunity for people using the shops and the other facilities to find a space and deters people from visiting the Square. The introduction of modest charges will result in improved turnover of the parking spaces.
Proposed charges	The proposed charges are based on those proposed for the Borough Green Western Road car park. The charges will apply Mon-Sat with free parking on Sundays and Bank Holidays Up to 30 minutes – 20p 30 minutes to 1 hour – 40p 1-2 hours – 60p 2-4 hours – £1.10 4-6 hours – £1.60 6-9 hours – £2.20 All day - £5.30
ii) Snodland	
Location	Rocfort Road, ME6 5NQ



Number of spaces	73
Operational issues	This town centre car park is currently used by residents, businesses, commuters and visitors. The free use of the spaces does not currently encourage/generate turnover. The introduction of car parking charges will help address this, but needs to be timed to take into account the planned Parking Review for the town, approved by the Joint Transportation Board. It is essential that a 'joined up' approach to parking in the town is considered.
Proposed charges	The proposed charges are based on those proposed for the Borough Green Western Road car park:- Up to 30 minutes – 20p 30 minutes to 1 hour – 40p 1-2 hours – 60p 2-4 hours – £1.10 4-6 hours – £1.60 6-9 hours – £2.20 All day - £5.30 The charges will apply Mon-Sat with free parking on Sundays and Bank Holidays
iii) Aylesford	
Location	Bailey Bridge West & East ME20 7AU
Number of spaces	Bailey Bridge West – 75 Bailey Bridge East - 51
Operational issues	The car park is used by a variety of users including residents, businesses and visitors to the village. Resident use is high as the car parks currently provide free parking for homeowners who do not have enough parking with their properties. The Bailey Bridge East car park is also growing in popularity at weekends with people using the new cycle route for Aylesford through to Maidstone.
Proposed charges	The proposed charges based on those proposed for the Borough Green Western Road car park:- Up to 30 minutes – 20p 30 minutes to 1 hour – 40p 1-2 hours – 60p 2-4 hours – £1.10 4-6 hours – £1.60

	<p>6-9 hours – £2.20  All day - £5.30  The charges will apply Mon-Sat with free parking on Sundays and Bank Holidays  In addition, it is proposed to offer Season tickets as follows:-  Residents Season tickets £100 per annum  Business Season tickets £200 per annum  Season tickets allow parking at all times in either car park.</p>
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- 1.17.5 If Members are minded to support the introduction of the above charges, an Amendment Order to the Council's On and Off-Street Parking Traffic Regulation Orders will be required. The procedures set out in the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England & Wales) Regulations 1996 will be used to progress this, including at least a statutory 21 day period of consultation. This formal consultation period will enable residents, businesses, Parish/Town Councils and local Borough Council Members to express their views to the Council. Parish/Town Councils will be alerted on the consultation timescale as soon as it has been set. The outcome of the consultation relating to off-street charges will be reported to a future meeting of this Board, and the outcome relating to on-street charges to the Joint Transportation Board (as such matters are considered in that forum).
- 1.17.6 If the charges are approved by Cabinet, capital investment in the car parks will be required primarily relating to the purchase of ticket machines, new signage and subject to the outcome of Overview & Scrutiny Committee, the provision of CCTV. Consideration also needs to be given to the Bailey Bridge East car park as a proportion of the parking area is not currently tarmacked or formally marked out. It is therefore the intention to bring forward a capital plan evaluation to the Finance, Innovation & Property Advisory Board. The capital works need to be completed in advance of the new charges being formally applied so a 'fast track' evaluation will be required. The evaluation will take into account any associated revenue costs.
- 1.17.7 The Council's Estates Manager has advised that there is no existing provision for parking within the leases for tenants at Martin Square.
- 1.17.8 Taking into account the extent of work associated with the introduction of the charges, it is not envisaged that the new charges for the current free for use car parks will be introduced until Autumn 2020.

## **1.18 Digital Agenda**

- 1.18.1 Cabinet recently approved a new Digital Strategy for the Council with a Vision “To become an authority where the communities and businesses we serve are able to engage and transact with us responsively and seamlessly, irrespective of the services they access.”
- 1.18.2 One of the Digital Strategic Priorities is to become a ‘Smart Borough’. With the assistance of external consultants and the Council’s IT Manager, work has begun within the Parking Service to review current business processes and the technologies that are being used to underpin them. In accordance with the Digital Strategy this process is due to be completed by March 2020, which will then be followed by a process of reengineering, solution development and testing.
- 1.18.3 Parking has been identified as a priority service to be reviewed and solutions delivered, and liaison is also being undertaken with the Digital Team at Canterbury City Council, which has won a number of awards for its digital approach to Parking Services. A number of areas being considered include convenient payment methods such as contactless, applications to enable users to monitor availability in car parks, low cost sensors and the potential to move to a cashless payment service.
- 1.18.4 A report will be presented to a future meeting of this Board on proposals to move towards a ‘Smart Parking Service.
- 1.18.5 In the immediate short term there is a need to upgrade the existing back office software. With regard to both enforcement and the issuing of permits. The upgrade is required to ensure the system remains fully supported by the supplier (Imperial) and offers improvements to users by simplifying the process. Following liaison with the supplier, IT Services and Canterbury County Council, the system will be upgraded to ‘Permit Smarti’ at no additional annual revenue cost.

## **1.19 Climate Change**

- 1.19.1 At the meeting of Council on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2019 Members approved a Motion in regard to Climate Change and a commitment to a sustainable low-carbon future. Included in the Motion was specific reference to a review of the provision of electric charging points across the Borough, “so that it becomes one of the most welcoming places in the country for driving electric and hybrid vehicles”.

1.19.2 Council recently agreed that Officers would progress a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan by May 2020, which will be reported to this Advisory Board. There is no doubt that the provision of electric car charging points will be a key feature of the new Strategy together with other appropriate initiatives. The Alpha study of car parks in Tonbridge supported the installation of electric car charging points. It is therefore proposed that a report be considered at a future meeting of this Board on the installation of electric charging points in the Council's car parks.

## **1.20 Blood Transfusion Service/Breast Screening Unit**

1.20.1 Members may recall media coverage back in March 2019 regarding parking arrangements for NHS staff and members of the public using the Angel Centre for Blood Donation.

1.20.2 Following investigation it is apparent that an informal arrangement has been in place for a number of years whereby staff and users of the service display a paper sign, issued by the Blood Transfusion Service, in their car windscreen advising they are exempt from car parking charges.

1.20.3 In order to avoid any future misunderstandings and mis-use of the concession, it is felt that the arrangement should now be formalised. The Regional Manager of NHS Blood & Transplant has requested staff exemptions for a lorry, minibus and approximately 2 cars, together with exemptions for donors. The service is provided once a month at the Angel Centre.

1.20.4 If Members are minded to approve the request brought forward and offer free use of the car park to staff and donors, the Car Parking Manager will make the appropriate arrangements and issue formal permits.

1.20.5 In addition to the above, Members may be aware that the NHS also locate a Breast Screening Unit in the Angel East car park every couple of years. The Unit takes approximately 8 parking bays and permits are issued to the NHS staff delivering the service. The Unit can be in place for 9-12 months at a time. Once again it is felt appropriate to formalise this arrangement. A separate electrical supply is provided for the Unit so this cost is met directly by the NHS.

## **1.21 Castle Fields/Sovereign Way East Car Parks, Tonbridge**

1.21.1 Alpha Parking in its study identified a strong demand for parking in the Castle Fields car parks owing to their proximity to Tonbridge Castle, Tonbridge Pool, Tonbridge Juddians RFC and the Racecourse Sportsground. Surveys undertaken by Alpha Parking showed peak occupancy levels close to or above 100% on both weekdays and Saturdays. Alpha also identified relatively low capacity in parts of the Sovereign Way car parks.

1.21.2 It is therefore suggested that the demand for car parking in Tonbridge is something Members may wish to consider further in the future within the context of a wider review of the Council's assets in Tonbridge Town Centre.

## **1.22 Timescale**

1.22.1 With the exception of the charges for the existing free for use car parks (see sub-section 1.17), all other off-street charges will be introduced from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020. Immediately following this Board there will be an Extraordinary meeting of Cabinet to consider the recommendations. Following the 'Call in Period' an 'Intends Advert' will be placed giving notice of a 21 day period of consultation. The outcome of the consultation will be reported to the next meeting of this Board in February, with a recommendation to Cabinet to make a Legal Order.

1.22.2 With regards to the on-street parking proposals these will be reported through the Joint Transportation Boards in November 2019 and March 2020, with a final decision taken by Cabinet at its meeting in March 2020. Subject to Kent County Council progressing the sealing of the Order after Cabinet, the on-street charges will also be introduced from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020.

### **Legal Implications**

1.22.1 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.

1.22.2 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.

1.22.3 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.

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

1.23.1 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 estimated gross income of £336,000 net of VAT and refunds in a full year. 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. Some of the proposals will incur additional ongoing revenue costs which will be identified through the forthcoming budget cycle. Such costs will need to be taken into account to determine net income associated with one or more of the proposals.

1.23.2 Within the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy additional income from parking charges of £140,000 is budgeted every two years. As outlined in the report capital investment will be required in the Council's car parks in Snodland, Martin Square, Aylesford, Tonbridge Castle grounds, Tonbridge High Street and Lyons Crescent if the introduction of car parking charges is approved. At this stage it is anticipated that a capital cost of between £200,000 to £250,000 will be required.

## **1.24 Asset Management**

1.24.1 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. The Sovereign Way East car park has been identified as an asset that should be reviewed in the future due to current low occupancy rates.

## **1.25 Risk Assessment**

1.25.1 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.

1.25.2 It is important that the Parking Service develops in line with customer needs and expectations, particularly with regard to the digital agenda and growth in electric/hybrid vehicles.

## **1.26 Equality Impact Assessment**

1.26.1 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.

1.26.2 Blue Badge holders can park free of charge in the Council's car parks for up to 23 hours. For Blue Badge holders living in a parking permit area, a Resident Parking Permit is not required as long as the valid Blue Badge and clock is correctly displayed. The Blue Badge scheme has recently been extended by Central Government to include people with "hidden disabilities". This includes people with learning disabilities, autism and mental health conditions.

## **1.27 Policy Considerations**

1.27.1 Asset Management

1.27.2 Community

1.27.3 Customer Contact

1.27.4 Climate Change

## **1.28 Recommendations**

1.28.1 It is RECOMMENDED TO CABINET that it **APPROVE** the following proposals with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020;

- 1) Introduce the schedule of charges for short and long stay parking in Tonbridge shown in Table 1;
- 2) Revise the parking arrangements at Tonbridge Castle to maximise public use whilst still retaining appropriate parking arrangements for staff;
- 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 £255;
- 5) Introduce the schedules of charges for short stay parking in West Malling shown in Table 5;
- 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) Increase Residents Permits to £45 per year, and introduce a rising scale of charges for those parking more than 2 car in the road;
- 9) Introduce the schedule of charges for Business Permits and dispensations shown in Table 8;

- 10) Visitor permits be retained at £12 for a book of 10 permits, with the current offer of 10 free permits to new applicants retained;
- 12) Introduce the schedule of charges for Haysden and Leybourne Lakes Country Parks shown in Table 9;
- 13) Introduce the schedule of charges for on-street pay & display parking in Tonbridge shown in Table 10, and incorporate the existing parking bays in the northern end of the High Street and Lyons Crescent; and
- 14) Parking charges on Sundays and Bank Holidays remain free of charge.

1.28.2 It is further RECOMMENDED TO CABINET that:-

- 1) Car parking charges be introduced to the Council's existing car parks in Aylesford, Martin Square Larkfield and Snodland as outlined in the report, and a period of formal consultation be undertaken in accordance with the requirements of Statutory Regulations;
- 2) A Capital Plan evaluation be undertaken for consideration at the Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board for the provision of new parking machines, CCTV (subject to the outcome of Overview & Scrutiny Committee), signage and improvements in Aylesford, Martin Square Larkfield and Snodland car parks, Tonbridge Castle Grounds and on street parking bays in Tonbridge High Street and Lyons Crescent;
- 3) A report be presented to a future meeting of the Board on initiatives to support the priorities outlined in the Council's Digital Strategy;
- 4) The Parking Service back office administration system be upgraded with the existing suppliers;
- 5) Parking initiatives to support the Council's commitment to a sustainable low-carbon future be incorporated in the emerging Climate Change Strategy, with a report on the introduction of electric car charging points across the Council's car parks being considered at a future meeting of this Board;
- 6) The parking concessions for the Blood Transfusion Services and Breast Screening Unit outlined in the report be approved;
- 7) The possibility of additional parking provision in the Castle Fields area of Tonbridge be investigated; and
- 8) The long term future of the Sovereign Way East car park be reviewed as part of a future review of assets in Tonbridge Town Centre to determine the best use of the site.



Background papers:

Nil

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