

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**STREET SCENE and ENVIRONMENT SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD**

**05 March 2020**

**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 CAR PARKING FEES AND CHARGES – OUTCOME OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

**Summary**

**This report considers the objections and comments received during the statutory consultation period relating to proposed off-street parking charges. The report relates to existing car parks where charges are already in place in Tonbridge, West Malling, Borough Green, Blue Bell Hill and the Council's two Country Parks.**

**1.1 Introduction**

- 1.1.1 At the October 2019 meeting of this Board, Members considered a number of proposals to change the Council's off-street parking charges and made a number of recommendations to Cabinet. At an Extraordinary meeting of Cabinet on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2020 it was agreed that the proposed charges would be approved for consultation in accordance with the requirements of Statutory Regulations. To enable the charges to be introduced a new off-street Traffic Regulation Order is required.
- 1.1.2 Where there is a statutory process a local authority should comply with the process as laid out. In the case of the proposed car parking charges this is under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, following the procedure set out in the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England & Wales) Regulations 1996. Regulation 8 of the 1996 Regulations requires a 21 day consultation period.
- 1.1.3 This report covers proposals for the Council's existing car parks in Tonbridge, West Malling, Borough Green, Blue Bell Hill and the Council's two Country Parks. Proposed charges for the Council's car parks in Martin Square and Aylesford will be reported to the next meeting of this Board on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2020. On Street parking charges (Residents Parking Permits) will be reported to the Joint Transportation Board on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

## 1.2 Consultation

1.2.1 The statutory consultation was carried out between 17<sup>th</sup> January and 9<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

1.2.2 The proposed charges considered in this report are outlined in the Intends Notice, shown at **Annex 1**.

1.2.3 The statutory consultation process followed a number of steps inviting comments or objections as follows:-

- Notices were placed in each car park by each pay and display machine;
- Adverts were placed in the Kent Messenger;
- Letters were sent to each Parish/Town Council and Borough Council Member;
- Letters were sent to all statutory consultees (Police, Fire, Bus operators etc.);
- Consultation documents were placed “on-deposit” for inspection at the Council Offices in Kings Hill and Tonbridge Castle.

The consultation documents were also placed on the Council’s website. In line with the Council’s new Digital Strategy respondents were able to make comments online.

1.2.4 During the consultation period 85 responses were received.

1.2.5 17 of the responses did not relate to the proposals in the Intends Notice, but related to other proposals for the introduction of parking charges in either Martin Square, Larkfield or Bailey Bridge (East and West) car parks in Aylesford. These responses will therefore be incorporated into the consultation on Martin Square and Aylesford car parks, which will be reported to the next meeting of this Board on 9th June 2020.

1.2.6 There were also several responses relating to potential changes to on-street charging. The Council has not yet consulted on proposals for on-street charges but, subject to approval by the Joint Transportation Board on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2020, will be embarking on a consultation exercise in mid March to early April 2020. The responses will be held over for inclusion in that forthcoming consultation.

1.2.7 This leaves 68 responses relevant to this consultation, of which 4 were duplicates.

1.2.8 The 64 discrete responses that related to this consultation raised a number of issues which are outlined below. West Malling and Leybourne Parish Councils

responded to the consultation and their responses are included. The full text of each response (redacted of personal details) is shown at **Annex 2**.

### 1.3 General Responses Received

1.3.1 There were a number of general comments that related to the proposals that were not location specific.

Comment	Times Raised	Officer Response
Consider 30 minute/1 hour free parking to maintain footfall for local businesses	5	There are significant costs associated with the operation and enforcement of the car parks. The effective management of town centre parking is vital to assist the turn-over of spaces for shoppers that supports the local businesses. Proposals apply no increase to 30 minute tariff.
As elected representatives you should do more to help the High Street/local businesses	4	Impact on businesses is taken into account when bringing forward proposals. The Council does not apply charges on Sundays, Bank holidays and evenings to support local businesses.
Parking charges shouldn't have been introduced in the first place	3	There are significant costs associated with the operation and enforcement of the car parks. The effective management of town centre parking is vital to assist the turn-over of spaces. The proposals do not represent significant increases.
Consider charging model at end of stay rather than at beginning	2	A "pay at end" model of parking management has benefits, but also significant problems - the necessary infrastructure is not well-suited to surface car parks, and areas where there are no barrier controls. However, we already offer a "start-stop" method of payment by Parkmobile.
Include exceptions to charges for NHS mobile units e.g. breast screening	1	At the last meeting of this Board Members supported parking concessions for the Breast Screening Unit and Blood Donation Service in Tonbridge.
Increasing charges impacts on the daily lives of people	1	There are significant costs associated with the operation and enforcement of the car parks. The effective management of town centre parking is vital to assist the turn-over of spaces. The proposals do not represent significant increases.
Introduces private finance into another area of public life	1	There are significant costs associated with the operation and enforcement of the car parks. The effective management of town centre parking is vital to assist the turn-over of spaces. The proposals do not represent significant increases.
Why not charge in the evenings too - pubs/restaurants benefit disproportionately?	1	The introduction of an evening charge is something that could be considered in any future review of charges.
Work with KCC and others to increase capacity for free parking in town centres to boost footfall	1	There are significant costs for the operation and enforcement of the car parks. The effective management of town centre parking is vital to assist the turn-over of spaces. Charges are

Comment	Times Raised	Officer Response
		currently free on Sundays, Bank holidays and evenings.
Invest in public transport, particularly the bus service to reduce traffic congestion	1	Improved bus services are important in maintaining sustainable communities and effective parking management. The responsibility for public transport rests with the Bus operators and Kent County Council.
Consultation timeframe is too short to allow all to contribute	1	The consultation period of 21 days is a statutory requirement and is set in the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedures) (England and Wales) 1996.
Public has already paid for roads - shouldn't be charged again for parking on them	1	The Council receives no funding from income raised by the Road Fund License for the management of its car parks. There are significant costs for the operation and enforcement of the car parks, and the effective management of town centre parking is vital to assist with the turn-over of spaces.
No mention of use for monies - so plan is punitive	1	There are significant costs for the operation and enforcement of the car parks.

## 1.4 Responses to proposals in Tonbridge

### 1.4.1 Summary of proposals

- no increase to the charge for parking for up to 30 minutes, remaining at 70 pence;
- an increase of 10 pence per hour on each parking tariff (up to a maximum tariff of £6.70);
- an increase of £20 (to £290) for 12 month off peak car park season tickets;
- an increase of £10 (to £120) for monthly car park season tickets;
- 3 monthly car park season tickets no longer offered;
- 6 monthly car park season tickets no longer offered;
- an increase of £70 (to £1020) for 12 month car park season tickets.

### 1.4.2 Responses

- Only one response was received.

Comment	Times Raised	Officer Response
Negative impact on shops and shoppers - prefer a decrease or alternatively introduce an hour free	1	Impact on businesses is taken into account when bringing forward proposals. The Council does not apply charges on Sundays, Bank holidays and evenings to support local businesses.

## 1.5 Responses to proposals in West Malling High Street

### 1.5.1 Summary of proposals

- no increase to the charge for parking for up to 30 minutes, remaining at 40 pence;
- an increase of 10 pence per hour for parking up to 3 hours;
- no increase to the charge for parking for up to 4 hours, remaining at £3.20.

### 1.5.2 Responses

Comment / Objection	times raised	Response
Detrimental impact on shops / business / displacement of shoppers to other locations/ Kings Hill / supermarkets / Bluewater etc	41	There are significant costs associated with the operation and enforcement of the car parks. The effective management of town centre parking is vital to assist the turn-over of spaces. The proposals do not represent significant increases.
Displacement of parking to local streets affecting residents	10	Residential streets in West Malling that are near to the town centre have in place on-street Resident Parking Permit schemes.
One parking machine not working for three months - long queues for other machine - often in the rain	1	There have been technical issues with the machines which are being addressed with the supplier. Machines will be replaced if necessary.
Impact on pensioners	1	There are no specific age-related concessions offered on parking charges, though we offer free parking for blue badge holders.
Introduce 20 mins free at school drop off/pick up to reduce impact on local streets	1	There is already provision for this - there are arrangements for a "walking bus" from the High Street car park in the morning, and the restrictions in the Ryarsh Lane car park end at 3pm to assist parent parking for school pick-up.
Support increase as this might stop commuters using car parks - but increase proportionally over 4 -5 hours	1	The introduction of an extended charging period (but at higher hourly rates) is something that may add more flexibility to parking arrangements, and may be looked at in any future review.

Comment / Objection	times raised	Response
Detrimental impact on local charity	1	There are significant costs for the operation and enforcement of the car parks. The effective management of town centre parking is vital to assist the turn-over of spaces.

## 1.6 Responses to proposals in Car Park, West Malling

### 1.6.1 Summary of proposals

- an increase of £80 (to £255) for 12 month car park season tickets.

### 1.6.2 Responses

Comment / Objection	times raised	Response
Steep increase on annual charges will impact on staff working in local business. (45%) (68%!) (400% over 4 years!!!)	19	Whilst a significant percentage increase is proposed, the charge is still less than £1 per day. This compares extremely favourably to prices for all-day parking at the station, and the parking charges in the short-stay car park.
Not sufficient parking permits for business	3	There is an existing waiting list for season tickets. We aim to release as many as possible to those on the waiting list, but this relies on current season ticket holders moving on and freeing-up the space.
Those working locally less well paid than those using station car park.	1	The proposed charge is less than £1 per day. This compares extremely favourably to prices for all-day parking at the station, and the parking charges in the short-stay car park.
Consider pay and display for shoppers here as car park has capacity	1	There is demand for long-stay parking in the town and the Ryarsh Lane car park is the only off-street facility the Council has that can meet that demand.

## 1.7 Proposals in Borough Green

### 1.7.1 Summary of proposals

- no increase to the charge for parking for up to 30 minutes, remaining at 20 pence;
- an increase of 10 pence on each further parking tariff, up to a maximum tariff of £5.30;

### 1.7.2 There were no responses relating to the proposals for Borough Green.

## **1.8 Proposals in Blue Bell Hill Commuter Car Park**

### 1.8.1 Summary of proposals

- an increase of 20 pence (to £2.70) for daily parking;
- an increase of £2.00 (to £12) for weekly parking;
- an increase of £5 (to £40) for monthly car park season tickets;
- 3 monthly car park season tickets no longer offered;
- 6 monthly car park season tickets no longer offered;
- an increase of £120 (to £420) for 12 month car park season tickets.

1.8.2 There were no responses relating to the proposals for Blue Bell Hill

## **1.9 Proposals for Leybourne Lakes and Haysden Country Parks**

### 1.9.1 Summary of proposals

- an increase of 20p (to £1.40) to the “up to 4 hour” tariff;
- an increase of £10 (to £50) for 12 month car park season tickets.

1.9.2 There were no responses relating to the proposals for Leybourne Lakes and Haysden Country Parks.

## **1.10 Consideration of Objections**

1.10.1 The reasons and principles for the introduction of the proposed parking charges were outlined in the report to the October 2019 meeting of this Board.

1.10.2 The introduction and management of parking charges have proven effective in maintaining accessible short-stay parking and in managing demand for long-stay parking. This in turn assists in generating availability of spaces for short-stay shopping visits and people working in and commuting from the Borough.

**1.10.3 Given the context of the parking charges proposals, it is recommended that Members note the responses received and set aside the objections.**

## **1.11 Legal Implications**

1.11.1 The consultation on the proposed parking charges followed the requirements of statutory regulations as detailed in sub-sections 1.1.1 and 1.1.2 of the report.

## 1.12 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.12.1 The proposed charges were reviewed within the context of a set of guiding principles, the cost of the parking service to the Council and ongoing investment in the parking management service.

## 1.13 Risk Assessment

1.13.1 The estimated additional income outlined in the report to the October 2019 meeting of this Board was modelled on the basis that future parking patterns and demand match current activity. 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.

## 1.14 Equality Impact Assessment

1.14.1 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.

1.14.2 Blue Badge holders can park free of charge in the Council's car parks for up to 23 hours. 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.

## 1.15 Policy Considerations

1.15.1 Asset Management

1.15.2 Community

1.15.3 Customer Contact

## 1.16 Recommendations

1.16.1 It is **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET** that it **APPROVE** the following actions to be progressed prior to the proposed parking charges outlined in the report coming into effect on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2020:-

- i) the objections to the proposed charges to the off-street parking charges, as detailed in the report, be set aside; and
- ii) the appropriate Traffic Regulation Order be made to facilitate the variation of the off-street parking charges.

Background papers:

contact: Andy Bracey

Annex 1 – Consultation “Intends” notice  
Annex 2 – Redacted consultation responses

Parking Manager

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