

CAR PARKING PROPOSALS

Item CE 23/35 referred from Communities and Environment Scrutiny Select Committee of 21 September 2023

Consideration was given to a number of proposed changes to the Borough Council's car parking service. The aim was to balance the management of the car parks to meet the needs of all users, optimise the availability of parking, maximise income subject to market conditions and provide consistency across the borough in a fair commercial and efficient manner. It was also intended to resolve some existing parking issues reported to the Borough Council in specific areas.

In addition, it was proposed that formal public consultation on the proposed changes be undertaken and the outcomes reported to a future meeting of Cabinet.

The significant annual costs associated with the operation of the parking service were outlined. It was noted that these had increased on average by 10% over the last 2 years. A number of proposals were detailed in the report and included the extension of car parking charging periods to Sundays, evenings and Bank Holidays, introduction of new charges in Aylesford, Larkfield and West Malling, changes to charging in Avebury Avenue, Tonbridge, extension of charging at Tonbridge Castle and the introduction of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) at trial locations. Proposed charges were set out in Annex 1.

Particular reference was made to the potential extension of Upper Castle Field in Tonbridge to provide additional parking to support the use of a well-used car park, which was often at full occupancy.

The financial implications of the suggested proposals were detailed in the report, which emphasised that income generation was essential given the context of the Medium Term Financial Strategy, and that the Borough Council sought to ensure that its assets were managed in the most efficient way and costs were recovered and optimised.

Members were advised that proposals in respect of Rocfort Road car park in Snodland would follow once a parking review had been completed to consider a number of complex issues in the town.

Whilst there was overall support of the proposals outlined to be consulted upon, there was some concern expressed at the lack of evidence provided to support the introduction of charging in Martin Square and West Malling High Street and Swan Street and the potential impacts on local businesses in those areas. The Leader of the Council agreed to meet with any local organisations including the local Chambers of Commerce and traders organisations.

Local Members supported the removal of the on-street parking machines in Avebury Avenue, Tonbridge and the move to permit parking only but Councillor Hines proposed, seconded by Councillor Crisp, that permits should be limited to 3 per business in this area. This proposal was supported by the Committee.

RECOMMENDED*: That

- (1) the proposals below be taken forward to public consultation and the outcomes reported to future meetings of the Cabinet:
 - a) parking charges be extended to include Sundays, evenings up to 8pm and Bank Holidays;
 - b) the on-street parking machines in Avebury Avenue, Tonbridge (west of Holford Street) be removed, the area changed to parking permit only to add capacity to the D1 parking area and that the issue of Business On-Street Parking Permits in the D1 area be revised to a maximum of 3 per business to allow more residential parking opportunities;
 - c) parking charges be introduced at Martin Square, Larkfield (as set out in Annex 1);
 - d) parking charges be introduced at both Bailey Bridge car parks in Aylesford (as set out in Annex 1);
 - e) parking charges be introduced to on street parking bays in West Malling High Street and Swan Street (as set out in Annex 1);
 - f) parking charges be introduced to the existing Gateway Visitor parking bays in Tonbridge Castle Grounds (as set out in Annex 1);
- (2) a project to improve the Bailey Bridge East car park be brought forward in the forthcoming Capital Plan Review;
- (3) a scheme to introduce ANPR systems at selected car parks on a trial basis be brought forward in the forthcoming Capital Plan Review;
- (4) a scheme to enable these proposals to be implemented including CCTV, parking machines and signage be brought forward in the forthcoming Capital Plan Review; and
- (5) a scheme to extend the existing Upper Castle Field car park to provide additional parking be brought forward in the forthcoming Capital Plan Review.

***Recommended to Cabinet**