

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO AND DECISION OF CABINET ON 21 SEPTEMBER 2020

SUBJECT: Variation to Parking Charges

REPORT AUTHOR: Calvin Baylis – Customer and Parking Services Manager

DATE: September 2020

EXTN: 37649

PORTFOLIO AREA: Neighbourhood Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Councils Medium Financial Strategy assumes that income from all charges should be reviewed. This therefore requires certain parking charges for 2020/21 and 2021/22 to be varied to find the additional income. The purpose of this report is not to make the decision on the charges but to ask for approval to commence the consultation.

In addition, this report reviews other car parks initiatives and services improvements.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Cabinet is asked to approve that:

1. The proposed charges in Appendix A are put out for consultation; and
2. delegated authority is given to the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services to agree any increase following consultation.

1. BACKGROUND:

- 1.1. Arun District Council own and operate 22 Pay & Display car parks. These car parks are located in Bognor Regis, Littlehampton and Arundel.
- 1.2. The car parks are defined as short stay, long stay or seasonal depending upon their location and charging structure. The short stay and long stay car parks are within the town centre while the seasonal car parks are mainly on the seafront and have a summer and winter charging structure.
- 1.3. The Council operates a 2 free hour disc parking scheme in the Fitzleet, Hothampton and Lyon Street car parks in Bognor Regis and St Martins, Anchor Springs and Manor House car parks in Littlehampton. This is funded by the District Council, the Town Councils and the traders. Currently the scheme has been extended to 3 hours due to the pandemic to attract the public into the town centres.

- 1.4. The chargeable car parks all have ticket machines which accept coins. The smallest denomination that can be used is 5 pence. In 7 of our car parks the machines can also take contactless and credit and debit card payments. The Council have also partnered with a company called RingGo which allows our customers to purchase virtual tickets by using the phone or by going on to a website.
- 1.5. The Council participates in the Safer Parking Scheme which is operated by the British Parking Association and the Police. All 22 of our pay & display car parks and 3 free car parks plus a permit holder car park have been awarded the Safe Park mark award.

2. FINANCIAL POSITION

- 2.1. The Council's Financial Strategy requires discretionary charges to be increased by at least the retail price index to avoid income being eroded by inflation. This means that there is a requirement for the income in the car parks budget to increase by 2% in 20/21 and a further increase of 2% in 21/22.
- 2.2. The required increase of income equates to £30,000 in 20/21 and £32,000 in 21/22.
- 2.3. This year the Covid-19 pandemic is having a major effect on town centre car park income. Some of this is being offset by more people taking advantage of the good weather and spending more time parking in the seasonal car parks.
- 2.4. Due to the pandemic all parking charges were suspended in April and May. To encourage more shoppers, it has been agreed that the free parking period allowed by the disc parking schemes is increased from 2 to 3 hours until the 31st December 2020.
- 2.5. It is currently not possible to calculate the loss of parking income due to the pandemic or the free parking and extension to the disc scheme. Central Government are exploring methods of financial support for income losses experienced by Local Authorities as a result of Covid-19.
- 2.6. The support scheme that is being explored is designed to offset irrecoverable income losses that councils have been incurring so that they don't negatively impact on authority's financial sustainability in balancing budgets for the 2020/21 financial year. This is a one-off income loss scheme that will compensate councils for irrecoverable and unavoidable losses from sales, fees and charges income generated in the delivery of services in the financial year 2020/21.
- 2.7. The detailed guidance and criteria for eligible losses has not yet been finalized but indications are that car parking fees and charges will be covered by the scheme, which will broadly compensate for 75% of eligible fees and charges after deduction of 5% from total fees and charges (this definition is yet to be determined) and any other mitigations.

3. FACTORS AFFECTING PROPOSED INCREASES

- 3.1. Due to the timing of this review it is practical to consider both the charges for the current financial year and the next financial year at the same time.
- 3.2. The Parking Charges were last increased in the town centre car parks in 2016 and in the seasonal car parks in 2018.
- 3.3. As to be expected most income from seasonal car parks is taken during the summer season. However, the amount of income can vary greatly depending upon the weather.
- 3.4. Town centre car park income in normal years remains constant throughout the year. However, going forward, we may see a reduction to income due to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 3.5. Even though free parking is offered through the disc system ticket sales have shown that motorists still purchase 1 & 2 hour tickets.
- 3.6. Experience has shown that increases in charges in the past have not stopped the seasonal car parks from being full to capacity on a hot day during the holidays and at weekends.

4. COMPARISON WITH OTHER COUNCILS

- 4.1. Appendix B attached compares the most common tariff for Town Centre car parks in each District & Boroughs within West Sussex including charges in multi-storey car parks.
- 4.2. There is no seasonal charging in other Districts and Boroughs, so the comparison does not include our seasonal charged car parks.
- 4.3. The comparison shows that Arun has the third cheapest charges up to 4 hours in the short stay car parks.
- 4.4. Arun has the cheapest charges of the multi-storey car park.

5. PLANNED MAINTENANCE

- 5.1. The Council off street car parks require regular maintenance to ensure that they remain in a good and safe condition to be used by members of the public.
- 5.2. The Council Parking Services Manager together with the Senior Property & Estates Surveyor has recently carried out a Survey of all the car parks within the Councils car parks portfolio.
- 5.3. The surveys aim was to establish what works were required to enable a priority list of work to be done. The survey covered the surface, signage, furniture and planting within the car parks.

- 5.4. A priority list is currently being agreed so that works can be planned over the next 2 years.
- 5.5. Separate to the above, works have previously been identified for the Fitzleet multi-storey car park. These includes the refurbishment of the lifts which is nearly complete, a Fire Detection system and painting and decorating areas such as the stairwells.
- 5.6. In addition, various improvement works to car parks have been completed, such as landscape improvements, replacement of signs, and in the case of Mewsbrook car park the extension and complete refurbishment as work associated with the Wave Leisure Centre.

6. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

- 6.1. The Pay & Display machines in the Council's off-street car parks can be adapted to allow the option of cashless parking. This is a payment option that sits alongside cash and payment by phone. The Parking Services Manager is progressing this option and there are now contactless machines in Gloucester Road, the Regis Centre, West Green, East Green, Mewsbrook, West Beach and Crown Yard. It is envisaged that all the main car parks have a contactless option by the end of 2021.
- 6.2. The Council sells various types of Parking Permit and also provides parking permits to Arun District Council members and staff. Parking Services are in the process of procuring a new back office system for administering parking fines together with a permit system that will allow the Council to provide virtual permits. This work, which includes IT, is expected to be complete this financial year.

7. FREE CAR PARKS

- 7.1. The Parking Services Manager has been tasked with reviewing all the free car parks both within the car parks portfolio and the parks and greenspaces portfolio to see what opportunities there might be to generate future income. This does not form part of the current discussion on parking charges, but a report will be presented to Cabinet with future options within the next 6 months.

8. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1. The benchmarking exercise shows the parking charges in the Arun District Council car parks are generally cheaper when compared with the parking charges in other local authorities in West Sussex. With the level of the proposed charges it would remain the case that ADC charges would compare favourably for those using ADC car parks.
- 8.2. The proposed charges are set out in Appendix A. As set out below (Item 9) a consultation process is required. Once complete it is anticipated that the new charges would be applicable from November or December this year.

8.3. As the increase of charges to the seasonal car parks falls after the summer season it will have a reduced impact of achieving the targeted income for the remainder of this year. However, the proposed increase to the town center charges, and the winter seasonal parking charges this financial year, together with the seasonal summer parking charges next year, will achieve the required increase in income.

9. CONSULTATION

9.1. Under Section 32- 44 of the Road Traffic Act 1984 the Council is required to consult on any proposed variation to the parking charges.

9.2. The proposed charges will be advertised as public notices in the Littlehampton Gazette and the Bognor Regis Observer as well as being advertised on the internet. Notices will be displayed in all the car parks affected. A consultation letter together with a schedule of the proposed changes will be sent to all District Councillors and bodies as listed in Appendix C inviting comments.

9.3. The consultation period will last for 4 weeks from the date that the public notices are published. All responses received will then be collated and passed to the Cabinet Member prior to making a decision as to whether to implement the proposals.

2. PROPOSAL(S):

As shown on Appendix A

3. OPTIONS:

3.1 Approve the charges as shown on Appendix A.

3.2 Do not approve the charges shown on Appendix A and accept that the value of income from the parking charges will not increase in line with the Councils financial strategy.

4. CONSULTATION:

As determined by Road Traffic Act 1984

Has consultation been undertaken with:	YES	NO
Relevant Town/Parish Council		✓
Relevant District Ward Councillors		✓
Other groups/persons (please specify)		✓
5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail at 6 below)	YES	NO
Financial	✓	
Legal	✓	
Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment		✓
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act		✓

Sustainability		✓
Asset Management/Property/Land		✓
Technology		✓
Other (please explain)		✓

6. IMPLICATIONS:

Approval of the proposed charges to meet financial requirements

7. REASON FOR THE DECISION:

Financial – to meet the Council's financial strategy
 Legal process required to increase parking charges

8. EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE DECISION: 30 September 2020

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None