

# ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

## REPORT TO AND DECISION OF CABINET ON 11 JANUARY 2021

**SUBJECT:** Variation to Parking Charges

**REPORT AUTHOR:** Calvin Baylis – Customer & Parking Services Manager

**DATE:** December 2020

**EXTN:** 37649

**PORTFOLIO AREA:** Neighbourhood Services

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Council's Medium Financial Strategy assumes that income from all charges should reviewed. This therefore requires certain parking charges for 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:

- (1) Approve that the proposed charges in Appendix A are put out for consultation; and
- (2) Seek delegated authority for agreeing the increase via the Cabinet Member following consultation.

### 1. BACKGROUND:

- 1.1. Arun District Council owns and operates 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, Hothamton 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 was a requirement for the income in the car parks budget to increase by 2% in 20/21 and a further increase of 2% is required in 21/22.

2.2. As there has been no increase in charges for 20/21 there will be a requirement to increase the car park income by 4%.

2.3. The required increase of income equates to £62,000 in 21/22.

2.4. 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.

2.5. 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.

2.6. 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. The Parking Charges were last increased in the town centre car parks in 2016 and in the seasonal car parks in 2018.

- 3.2. In view of the impact of the Cov'd pandemic on the Town Centre's it is recommended that the increase in park income be found by increasing Seasonal Parking Charges.
- 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. 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. PLANNED MAINTENANCE**

- 4.1. The Council's 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.
- 4.2. The Council's Parking Services Manager together with the Senior Property & Estates Surveyor has recently carried out a Survey of all the car parks within the Council's car parks portfolio.
- 4.3. The survey's 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.
- 4.4. A priority list is currently being agreed so that works can be planned over the next 2 years.
- 4.5. Separate to the above, works have previously been identified for the Fitzleet multi-storey car park. These include the refurbishment of the lifts which is now complete, a Fire Detection system and painting and decorating areas such as the stairwells.
- 4.6. 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.

#### **5. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS**

- 5.1. 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.
- 5.2. 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.

## **6. FREE CAR PARKS**

6.1. 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.

## **7. CONCLUSIONS**

7.1. The proposed charges are set out in Appendix A. As set out below (Item 8) a consultation process is required. Once complete it is anticipated that the new charges would be applicable from the 1<sup>ST</sup> April 2021.

7.2. The proposed increase in Seasonal parking charges, will achieve the required increase in income.

## **8. CONSULTATION**

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

8.2. 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 B inviting comments.

8.3. 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.

<b>4. CONSULTATION:</b>		
As determined by Road Traffic Act 1984		
Has consultation been undertaken with:	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Relevant Town/Parish Council		✓
Relevant District Ward Councillors		✓
Other groups/persons (please specify)		✓
<b>5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail at 6 below)</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
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)		✓
<b>6. IMPLICATIONS:</b>		
Approval of the proposed charges to meet financial requirements		
<b>7. REASON FOR THE DECISION:</b>		
Financial – to meet the Council's financial strategy		
Legal process required to increase parking charges		
<b>8. EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE DECISION: 20 January 2021</b>		
<b>9. BACKGROUND PAPERS:</b>		
None		