

CONSULTATION RESULTS - ANNUAL REVIEW OF PARKING FEES & CHARGES 2024/25

Cabinet – 14 March 2024

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive & Chief Officer, Finance & Trading

Status: For Decision

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary: This report updates members of the statutory public consultation on parking fees and charges for 2024/25.

This report supports the Key Aim: pledge to reach net zero carbon emissions produced by the Council and our assets by 2030, providing value for money, and supporting and developing the local economy.

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Margot McArthur

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Recommendation to Cabinet: That the statutory consultation results be considered and the preferred option be approved.

Reason for recommendation: To help regulate and manage the use of on and off street parking facilities in the District; to ensure car parking charges are set to support a sustainable local economy; and, to support services for residents as set out in the approved 10-year budget.

Introduction

- 1.0 This report considers the statutory consultation results on the proposed changes to parking fees and charges for 2024/25.

Background

- 2.0 The Council operates a number of public car parks and on-street pay and display facilities in towns and villages across the District. It is important to regulate these finite resources in order to balance the needs of parking users, including commuters, local businesses, residents, shoppers and other visitors including tourists. It is also important to ensure all parking fees and charges are set consistently across the district.
- 3.0 The Council's approach has been to ensure our parking charges are set to encourage people to use parking spaces responsibly while at the same time promoting a good turnover of parking spaces for the benefit of businesses and visitors. Parking charges are one aspect of effective parking management; however, others – such as hours and days of operation and maximum stay periods – kept under review.
- 4.0 In addition to rising operational costs such as non-domestic rates, insurance, general maintenance, utilities, enforcement and security, it is important to re-invest in the Council's car parks to ensure these assets remain welcoming, safe and fit for purpose. Improvements have included the installation of contactless payment facility on all of the district's payment machines, new safety barriers, increasing capacity, resurfacing, renewing drainage and upgrading lighting.
- 5.0 The assumption for parking income increases in the 10-year budget approved by Council on 9 February 2023 for 2024/25 is as follows:

Inflationary Increase	Covid: Assumed 25% reduction in 2021/22, improving by 5% per year	Adjustment for exceeding budget performance for 2022/23	Total
£94,000	£206,000	(£160,000)	£140,000

Preferred Option

- 6.0 Zero percentage increase on all parking fees and charges, but an end to free parking and an expansion of operating hours/days across the district.
- 7.0 This option appreciates that fees and charges were raised to our customers in 2022/23, and that the large majority of the deferred income inflation increase since 2021/22 has been recovered. This could contribute to the raising of £140,000.
- 8.0 This option supports the Council's Net Zero ambitions, by ending free parking, expanding the operating times for on and off street parking, and actively discouraging town centre driving.

Statutory Consultation Results

- 9.0 Statutory public consultation ran from the 4th December 2023 until the 5th January 2024. This consisted of advertised public notices in the press, communication with the town & parishes councils, partner agencies, including Kent County Council, social media and an on line consultation survey on the councils website.
- 10.0 Sixty-two (62) consultation responses were received, of these, 58 were in the negative and four (4) neutral or positive. The 58 negative responses are broken down as follows:

Concern	Number of responses
Concerns for the effect of businesses/shops on the high street and town centres.	30
Generally not in favour of the proposal.	21
Multiple reasons stated against the proposal	4
Concerns for Churchgoers on Sundays.	3
Total responses against the proposal	58

Key Implications

Financial

All options that contain financial implications have been detailed within this report.

Parking income in 2023/24 currently forecasted to exceed the budget but the 5% annual increase in the budget to reinstate to pre Covid budget levels is required to continue up to and including 2026/27. Therefore, it is important to continue to make changes each year that deliver additional income.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

All parking fees and charges are subject to statutory public consultation and a notice of variation in accordance with the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and the Parking Places (Variation of Charges) Act 2017.

Equality Assessment

There is a low risk that the proposals in this report would have any implications under the Equality Act 2010.

Sevenoaks District Council supports the Blue Badge Scheme allowing free parking in all of its off-street car parks and in on-street pay and display bays.

Net Zero Implications

Achieving Net Zero carbon emissions is a top priority for the Council as outlined in our Net Zero 2023 action plan and Movement Strategy. It encompasses all aspects of the Council. It incorporates actions on sustainable transport, active travel and air quality. One of the Council's commitments is to encourage, and support our residents and visitors to our District to reduce carbon emissions.

Members are reminded of the Council's stated ambition to be Net Zero concerning carbon emissions by 2030. The decisions recommended in this paper directly impact on this ambition. The impact reviewed and there could be a noteworthy decrease on carbon emissions produced in the district because of this decision.

Increasing parking fees and charges, and eliminating free parking, could encourage car park users to find alternative travel and transport options, such as public transport, walking and cycling.

Appendices – Appendix 1 – Consultation Responses

Background Papers – Cabinet, 12th October 2023, item 37.
<https://cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=120&MId=3081&Ver=4&J=2>

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