

POLICY COMMITTEE

11 NOVEMBER 2020

- Subject:** Proposed Changes to Charges and Conditions in Council Car Parks
- Head of Service:** Richard Moore, Head of Transportation & Environment
- Decision Issues:** These matters are within the authority of the Policy Committee
- Classification:** This report is open to the public
- CCC Ward(s):** **All**
- Summary:** *The report sets out proposed changes to charges and conditions in the Off Street Parking Places Order (OSPPO), and other operational changes*
- To Resolve :**
- (a) That proposal references 1-10 and 14, as set out in Appendix 1, are taken to public consultation**
 - (b) That proposal references 12 and 13, as set out in Appendix 1, are developed and options presented for consideration**
 - (c) That the operational changes, references 11 and 15 as set out in Appendix 1, are implemented**
- Next stage in process:** Public Consultation on the OSPPO proposals will be undertaken.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Parking tariffs and operational aspects of council car parks are considered in the context of the district's parking and transportation strategies. The current parking strategy is set out in Chapter 6 of the Transport Strategy which was adopted by the council in 2017.
- 1.2 Parking tariffs are set out in the Off Street Parking Places Order (OSPPO). These can be agreed on an annual basis or set in advance for future years. In the 2019/20 OSPPO, the council agreed tariff changes for a 2-year period and the changes that are currently due to come into effect on 1st April 2021 are as follows :-

All main car parks in Canterbury, Herne Bay and Whitstable : +10p on the hourly rate tariff, business user permits: +10%, all other permits: +2%

- 1.3 The council is facing significant and unforeseen challenges due to the impact on our finances caused by the covid-19. Therefore it is considered both necessary and justified to reconsider the OSPPO decisions made last year in order to balance the need to ensure essential council services can still be delivered, whilst giving the district the best opportunities to recover.

2. Canterbury

2.1 Canterbury Tariffs

The table below shows the recent tariff changes in Canterbury along with the current agreed increase for 21/22.

	Historic and Proposed Hourly Rate Tariffs				Cost Per Vehicle
Year	Whitefriars	Central Premium	Central	Wincheap	Park & Ride
2018/19	£1.90	£1.80	£1.70	£0.80/£2.20	£3.50
2019/20	£1.90	£1.80	£1.70	£0.80/£2.20	£3.50
2020/21	£2.00	£2.00	£1.90	£1.00	£3.50
2021/22	£2.10	£2.10	£2.00	£1.10	£3.50

- 2.2 The nationwide lock-down and subsequent recovery period have provided a considerable amount of insight into people's travel behaviour. This information combined with the real-time data we get from ANPR car parks has suggested that a different 'demand based' tariff approach would be beneficial in achieving four main aims :-
- To maximise the efficient use of our parking supply by redistributing demand to car parks that always have spare capacity
 - To reduce congestion and traffic delays that occur at the busiest car parks
 - To encourage greater use of Park & Ride
 - To maximise revenue opportunities whilst helping the city to recover
- 2.3 The justification for a change in approach was starkly highlighted from the middle of June as the city started to re-open following full lockdown. Whilst every other car park in the city was at approximately 25% of pre-covid usage, Watling Street car park was at capacity every day and the council were receiving complaints about delays getting in and out due to traffic congestion.
- 2.4 This clearly demonstrated that people will always park in the most convenient location, even if it means queuing. Also that the current price differential of 10p per hour between the most and least expensive car parks in the city needs to be significantly widened if cost is to become an influencing factor in decision making.
- 2.5 This would lead towards a demand based tariff structure where we can use ANPR data to calculate the average percentage occupancy rate in each car park and use this information to designate car parks into high, medium or low demand tariff bands.

High demand car parks would be those car parks that always reach 100% capacity, medium demand car parks would reach between 50-100% and those car parks reaching below 50% capacity would be classified as low demand.

- 2.6 The comparison tables shown in Appendix 2 show that most cities have an hourly rate differential between their highest and lowest priced car parks ranging from 50p to £2.30. For Canterbury it is considered that a differential of £1.00 per hour between high and low bands might be appropriate in order to use cost to influence choice and help redistribute demand away from the busiest car parks.
- 2.7 It is also proposed to introduce a daily cap on charges that would be payable in any 24 hour period in order to give certainty to drivers on their maximum parking charge - this is aimed at encouraging longer stays, including overnight.
- 2.8 In order to achieve the above, some car parks would see price increases and car parks that have spare capacity would see price decreases. In total, the cost of parking at 1020 spaces (39% of the overall parking supply in the city) would be reduced.
- 2.9 The changes to the previously agreed hourly rates that would have come into effect on 1st April 2021, would be as follows:

Canterbury	Proposed Change	Revenue change to 21/22 budget provision £
Band 1 : High Demand Watling Street, Queningate (265 spaces)	Increase agreed hourly tariff in 21/22 from £2.10 to £2.80	+348,820
Band 2 : Medium Demand Whitefriars, Pound Lane, St Radigunds, North Lane, Northgate, Longport, Castle Row, Millers Field (1331 spaces)	Increase agreed hourly tariff in 21/22 as follows :- Whitefriars £2.10 to £2.30, others £2.00 to £2.30	
Band 3 : Low Demand Castle Street MS, Holmans Meadow, Station Road West MS (1020 spaces)	Decrease agreed hourly rate in 21/22 as follows :- Holmans Meadow £2.10 to £1.80, others £2.00 to £1.80	
Introduce a maximum 24hr charge To provide certainty of the total cost of parking per day	Maximum charge in any 24 hr period Bands 1 & 2 £20 per day Band 3 £10 per day	-£13,681 -£12,150

2.10 Park and Ride

It is proposed to increase the cost of Park & Ride from £3.50 to £4.00 per vehicle. The cost has been £3.50 since April 2018 and provided usage (less 5% abstraction) returns to pre-covid levels, this tariff increase would reduce the financial subsidy required to operate the service to under £20k per annum (assuming diesel buses euro 6 are used in the next contract).

The comparison tables in Appendix 2 show that this cost, which is per vehicle (up to 6 passengers), is still one of the most reasonably priced services.

Proposed Change	Revenue change to 21/22 budget provision £
Increase tariff from £3.50 to £4.00 per vehicle	+£121,714

3. Whitstable

- 3.1 Parking data from Whitstable car parks has shown a significant increase in demand throughout the summer period. The two main car parks used by tourists are Gorrell Tank and Keams Yard and these were at capacity almost every day.
- 3.2 It was agreed in the previous OSPPO to increase all of the main car parks in Whitstable by 10p per hour from April 2021. In addition, it is now proposed to add an additional 40p to Gorrell Tank and Keams Yard in the seasonal peak (April to September) to maximise income from visitors to the town.
- 3.3 All the main car parks in Whitstable have benefited from free parking between 8.30am to 10am for several years. This was primarily introduced to reduce congestion around the 3 primary schools in the town and also to provide a short free parking period for parents to shop after children had been dropped off. Consultation has previously been undertaken to remove this free period as it could be viewed as encouraging parents to drive their children to school, but this has not been supported. However it is now proposed to modify it so that the free period only applies on weekdays and excludes the school summer holiday period at Gorrell Tank and Middle Wall ANPR car parks.

Proposed Changes in Whitstable	Revenue change to 21/22 budget provision £
Create a high demand seasonal tariff for Gorrell Tank and Keams Yard (April to Sept) which would increase the agreed hourly rate from £2.10 to £2.50 per hour	+£77,496
Remove the current free parking period 8.30am-10am, Mon-Sun in Gorrell Tank, Keams Yard, Middle Wall, Gladstone Road, Shaftesbury Road, Victoria Street	+£22,000
Allow free parking 8.30am-10am at all 6 car parks, but on Mondays - Fridays only and excluding the school summer holiday period at Gorrell Tank and Middle Wall ANPR car parks.	-£13,445

4. Herne Bay

- 4.1 Similar to parking demand in Whitstable, the coastal car parks at Neptune and Reculver have also seen significant increases over the spring and summer period. A seasonal premium of 40p per hour is already applied at Neptune (April to September) and it is now proposed to apply this seasonal premium to the Reculver Country Park and Reculver Towers car parks to reflect the popularity of this tourist destination.
- 4.2 It is also proposed to remove the free parking period 6pm - 8pm in William Street car park as this has not been effective at encouraging people to use the car park in the evenings. The most recent ANPR data shows that an average of 15 (non white-listed) vehicles entered the car park during this 6pm-8pm period in September.
- 4.3 However instead of having this short period of free evening parking in William Street, it is proposed to have free evening and overnight parking from 6pm-9am for registered ANPR account holders only. This could help to reduce on-street overnight parking problems in the area, as well as providing a benefit for some Active Life users.
- 4.4 There are only four public car parks in the district that are free to use and they are located at Reculver Drive, Ocean View, Hampton and Swalecliffe Avenue.

In the 19/20 OSPPO, consultation was undertaken on a proposal to introduce parking charges in these four car parks to help recover the cost of operating these sites. However following a number of objections, the Policy & Resources Committee resolved to defer the decision pending a wider review of the sites. A short review of each site is set out in Appendix 3 and in conclusion it can be seen that none of the sites appear to have the potential for an alternative use.

Parking demand at all these coastal car parks increased significantly over the spring/summer period resulting in the need for additional maintenance work at Reculver Drive and Ocean View. It is therefore proposed that a modified charging regime is introduced as follows :-

A flat rate charge of £1.50 per weekday and £3 at weekends/bank holidays to be payable between 10am and 4pm only in the period April-September. The remainder of the year would remain free to use.

It is also proposed that these four car parks become the first 'pay by phone' (RingGo) only car parks in the district to avoid the associated costs of maintaining ticket machines and cash collection.

4.5 Summary of Proposed Changes in Herne Bay

Proposed Change	Revenue change to 21/22 budget provision £
Introduce seasonal charges (Apr-Sept) at Reculver Towers and Reculver Country Park to increase the agreed hourly rate from £1.40 to £1.80 per hour.	+£18,100
Remove free period 6pm - 8pm in William Street Allow free evening/overnight parking between 6pm-9.00am for ANPR account holders	+£12,000 -£4,500
Introduce seasonal charges (Apr-Sept) at 'free' car parks (Hampton, Reculver Drive, Ocean View, Swalecliffe Avenue) between 10am and 4pm in the period April-September £1.50 per day £3.00 per day (weekends and bank holidays)	+£6,000

5. District Wide Parking Incentives

- 5.1 The other main parking objective this year is to introduce measures to help the city and town centres recover following the impact of covid-19.
- 5.2 It is proposed to amend the overnight charge that was introduced last year so that it is fairer and to encourage visitors in the evening. We will also work closely with the retail and business sectors to develop ideas to provide parking discounts and incentives as described below:-

Proposed Change	Revenue change to 21/22 budget provision £
Amend the overnight charge : the introduction of a £2 overnight charge has had some unintended consequences resulting in high charges for some short duration parking acts. As such it is proposed to amend the overnight charge so that it becomes a £2 cap once the usual hourly rate charge has reached this amount, rather than an additional £2 flat rate charge.	-£20,000

<p>Parking discounts linked to spend</p> <p>We will investigate the most appropriate way to be able offer parking discounts linked to a minimum spend in stores and restaurants etc.</p>	<p>-£x Loss will depend on detailed proposal</p>
<p>Parking discount periods</p> <p>We will investigate the most appropriate ways to offer parking and park & ride discounts on certain days (or parts of the day) in order to attract customers into our towns and city.</p>	<p>-£x Loss will depend on detailed proposals</p>
<p>Targeted discounts/offers from retailers</p> <p>We will investigate the most appropriate way to be able to inform our ANPR account holders (with their prior consent) of retail discounts or offers as they arrive in particular car parks.</p>	<p>Neutral</p>

5.3 Two other district wide changes are proposed as follows :-

Proposed Change	Reason	Revenue change to 21/22 budget provision £
<p>Reduce the free parking period for blue badge holders in public car parks from 3 hours to 2 hours</p>	<p>The 3 hour free period is not a statutory requirement but matches the period allowed on the public highway. At least 42 Local Authorities have either reduced or removed this provision. Blue badge holders can pay for additional time as required.</p>	<p>+£30,000</p>
<p>Restrict applications for the Faith & Community permit to existing users only</p>	<p>There are only 23 users of this permit which is resource intensive to administer. It should gradually be phased out</p>	<p>Neutral</p>

5.4 In order to compare all these proposed tariff changes with other towns and cities, benchmarking data is shown in Appendix 2. It should be noted that apart from Ashford, Canterbury is the only authority that has a linear rate tariff system. This in itself is a much fairer system for customers as they only pay for the time they use, whereas in all the other benchmark towns and cities customers pay the maximum charge in the relevant time band period.

6. Relevant Council Policy/Strategies/Budgetary Documents

These proposals are relevant to the following council policies and documents : the corporate plan, the local plan, the Canterbury district transport strategy, the air quality management

area plan. The financial implications are relevant in the context of the council's overall budget position.

7. Consultation planned or undertaken

Public consultation will be carried out between 23rd November and 11th January. The minimum statutory consultation period for changes under the Road Traffic Regulation Act is 3 weeks. However it is recommended that this period is extended to 6 weeks to be in line with the council's annual budget consultation and to provide an additional week in January for the retail sector to respond after their busy christmas period.

The proposals will be formally advertised in the 'Kentish Gazette', and public notices will be displayed in all of the affected car parks. The views of the Regeneration Committee will be sought and reported to the Policy Committee in due course.

8. Options available with reasons for suitability

- a. That the proposals shown in Appendix 1 are taken to public consultation.
- b. That amendments are made to the proposals shown in Appendix 1 and public consultation is undertaken.
- c. That none of the proposals shown in Appendix 1 proceed to public consultation.

Option (a) is recommended as it is important that all the implications of all these proposals are subjected to public consultation before any decisions are made to implement.

9. Implications

(a) Financial

The financial implications are set out in Appendix 1 and summarised in the main body of the report.

(b) Legal

The proposed changes will require amendment to the Off Street Parking Places Order and these are made under the provisions of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984

(c) Equalities

An Equalities Assessment relating to these proposals is attached in Appendix 4

(d) Climate Change Assessment

A climate change assessment relating to these proposals is attached in Appendix 5

10. Conclusions

Although parking increases for 21/22 were agreed last year, it is considered both necessary and justified to review those decisions in light of the unforeseen financial challenges now facing the council.

As such the additional proposed changes have three main aims :-

- To redistribute parking demand in the city, encourage greater use of car parks in Canterbury where there is spare capacity and reduce congestion at car parks that are full every day. The hourly rate tariffs in some car parks (39% of the total parking supply in the city) will be reduced so that there is a £1.00 per hour differential between the highest and lowest priced car parks. This should mean that cost becomes a greater influencing factor in the choice of where to park, and drivers pay a premium for convenience.
- To work with the retail and business sectors to introduce parking and park & ride discounts and incentives that will encourage people back into our town and city centres
- To generate additional revenue that will help maintain essential council services.

The next stage will be public consultation and all representations received will be reported to the Policy & Resources Committee in February 2021.

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Appendices

- Appendix 1 Summary of all proposed parking changes and their financial implications**
- Appendix 2 Benchmarking data from comparator towns/cities**
- Appendix 3 Short review of 'free' car parks in Herne Bay**
- Appendix 4 Equalities Impact Assessment**
- Appendix 5 Climate Change Assessment**