

Report to: Lead Member for Transport & Environment

Date of meeting: 18 July 2022

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: Introduction of Car Parking Charges in Millbrook Car Park, Ashdown Forest

Purpose: This report seeks agreement from Lead Member to support changes to car parking arrangements at the A22 Millbrook Hill car parks, Ashdown Forest

RECOMMENDATION:

The Lead Member is recommended to agree the introduction of parking charges on East Sussex County Council land at Millbrook Hill, Ashdown Forest

1 Background Information

1.1 Ashdown Forest is the largest public open space in the south east of England and currently attracts more than 1.5 million visitors each year. The Forest is owned by the Ashdown Forest Trust, of which East Sussex County Council (ESCC) is the sole Trustee. The Forest is managed by the Conservators of Ashdown Forest under the Ashdown Forest Act 1974.

1.2 The object of the Ashdown Forest Trust is to promote the conservation of Ashdown Forest as a quiet and natural area of outstanding beauty and as an amenity and place of resort for members of the public.

1.3 The Board of Conservators of the Ashdown Forest identified significant budget pressures in managing the Forest and sought alternative means of raising revenue subsequently agreeing, in July 2021, to explore the potential and feasibility of charging for the use of Forest car parks. The Conservators then undertook a six-week consultation from October to December 2021 to seek views on the proposal to introduce parking charges.

1.4 On 31 January 2022, following the conclusion of the consultation, the Board of Conservators voted unanimously to introduce charges for parking in the car parks located on Ashdown Forest and operated by the Conservators.

1.5 The Ashdown Forest Act 1974 includes a requirement to submit details of their proposed car park charges to the County Council for approval. On 28 April 2022, Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change approved the proposal for car park charging by the Conservators on land owned by the Ashdown Forest Trust

1.6 The proposed parking tariffs are yet to be finalised pending a tendering process to procure a parking management contractor to install parking machines, signing and to manage the car parks. However, the Conservators have indicated that parking charges will be in the range:

- £1.50 to £2.00 for up to 1 hour
- £2.50 for up to 2 hours
- £4.00 for up to 4 hours
- £5.00 to £6.00 for an all-day pass (16 hours) – no overnight parking
- £80 to £100 for an annual parking pass.

2 Supporting Information

2.1 Within the car parks managed by the Conservators, there are some areas of ESCC land. This includes land adjacent to the A22 on Millbrook Hill (Appendix 1, Plan 1) which is not managed by the Conservators. The Millbrook car parks are open areas of hard standing to the east and west of the carriageway (Appendix 2, Photographs 1 and 2). However, the parking areas are oversized, and the surface is currently in poor condition. A scheme to introduce more formal parking arrangements is programmed for delivery in summer 2022 which includes a reduction in the car parks size and new surfacing to reduce ongoing maintenance costs (Appendix 1, Plan 2).

2.2 As part of these works, and in line with the Forests wider management of parking, the small car park 650m north of the Millbrook car parks on the west side of the A22 known locally as Vachery car park will be closed.

2.3 The Millbrook car parks are situated on land owned by both ESCC and the Ashdown Forest Trust on an approximate 50/50 basis (Appendix 1, Plan 3).

2.4 In line with the Conservators' plans to introduce car parking charges, it is proposed that ESCC should therefore permit a tariff to be charged for parking on land owned by ESCC in the Millbrook car parks. This would provide a single combined area of charging. The Conservators would manage the parking using a consistent approach across the Forest.

2.5 The net car parking income from the Millbrook car parks would be shared on an equal basis between the Conservators and the Council. The net parking income would be the parking tariff less the fee charged by the parking management contractor.

2.6 The Council's share of the income stream would contribute to the cost of maintenance of the Millbrook car parks, supporting the Council's priority of making the best use of resources in the short and long-term.

2 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 The Board of Conservators explored the potential for introducing parking charges and have deemed that these charges are necessary for the long-term preservation, use and enjoyment of the Ashdown Forest as an amenity space for the public.

3.2 The introduction of parking charges at the Millbrook Car Parks will provide a consistent approach to managing parking across the Ashdown Forest. The ESCC share of revenue generated by the tariffs will contribute towards to maintenance of the Millbrook car parks.

3.3 The Lead Member for Transport and Environment is therefore recommended to grant the approval of parking charges at Millbrook Car Parks subject to the finalising of specific charging tariffs on completion of the tendering process referred to in 1.6 above.

RUPERT CLUBB

Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Contact Officer: Karl Taylor

Tel. No. 01273 482207

Email: karl.taylor@eastsussex.gov.uk

LOCAL MEMBERS

All members whose electoral Divisions are within areas covered by the Ashdown Forest

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

[Agenda for Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change on Thursday, 28th April, 2022, 2.00 pm](#)