

Report to: Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Date of meeting: 14 October 2024

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: Review of On-street car parking charges and tariffs in Rother District

Purpose: To seek approval to consult on the proposed changes to on-street car parking charges.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Lead Member is recommended to:

- 1) Note the proposals to increase parking pay and display charges and the proposed changes to permit charges in Rother District; and
- 2) Agree to consult on the proposals outlined in this report.

1 Background Information

1.1. The Traffic Management Act 2004 allows councils, which are also local traffic authorities, to apply to the Secretary of State for Transport for a Civil Enforcement Area Order that allows the de-criminalising of parking enforcement in their area. Under this arrangement, councils can undertake enforcement of all parking restrictions in their area and retain the income received from parking charges and penalties to help fund the costs of parking services, with any resulting surplus being used within the prescribed parameters under the legislation.

1.2. East Sussex County Council (ESCC) has adopted and operated Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) since May 1999. The areas covered by CPE are Lewes and Rother District, Eastbourne and Hastings Borough. The two Borough and Rother District councils have retained control of their off-street car parks. In Lewes, ESCC manages the off-street car parks on behalf of the District council under an agency agreement. Lewes District Council retains the income from parking charges and parking fines and pays ESCC a management fee.

1.3. The effective management of parking not only addresses local parking problems but helps achieve some of the broader transport objectives set out in our Local Transport Plan (LTP). These include improving road safety, achieving better flows of traffic through town centres improving safety, health and security, improving quality of life, reducing damage to the environment and improving the economic viability of areas through the efficient management and use of parking spaces.

1.4. East Sussex County Council's statutory power to impose parking charges derives from sections 35 and 45 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. Under section 46A of the same Act, East Sussex County Council may vary these charges. The changes can be introduced 21 days after the publication of a notice in a newspaper circulating in the area in which the changes are to be introduced.

2. General context of parking charges and tariffs

2.1. Each of the four Controlled Parking Areas were set up some years apart and with varying types of parking provision to satisfy the particular needs of the local community. There are of course similarities between the four areas, however, there are different levels of charging in each area and the difference is particularly noticeable in the different charges for permits. Appendix 1 shows the current and proposed permit charges and the current and proposed pay and display charges in Rother District, these are subject to change should changes come in on or after April's inflationary increase. Parking charges are set at a level to ensure that at least the costs of managing, enforcing and administering parking controls are met, and hence no financial burden is passed on to council tax payers. As a principle, it also conforms to central government guidance that parking schemes should at least be self-financing.

2.2. The level of charging is a vital tool to manage the demand for parking. Whether this is by type of user (e.g. permit user or pay and display), by location (e.g. differential pricing between on-street parking and off-street car parks) or by type of vehicle (e.g. second residents' permits or lower-emission vehicles).

2.3 The effective control of parking is a crucial element of wider transport strategies as set out in our Local Transport Plan (LTP). It supports the local economy by assisting with the management of congestion and the availability and demand for parking spaces as well as encouraging greater use of more sustainable forms of transport.

2.4 The aims of the scheme include acting as a disincentive to multiple ownership and an encouragement of sustainable alternatives, whilst not limiting the availability of permits for those that need them. As such, it is important that charges are set at a level that has some meaningful effect on parking behaviour.

2.5 Charges for on-street parking in Rother District have not been significantly changed since the start of the scheme in 2020. Charges were increased by a 5% inflation increase in 2024.

2.6 In order to continue to cover the costs of the parking scheme and to continue to give effect to the broader aims of the scheme an increase in charges is proposed.

3. Proposals for changes to parking charges and tariffs options

3.1. Transport planning, traffic management and air quality

Parking management supports a range of transport strategies aimed at influencing travel choice. With increasing car ownership and use, parking pressures add to the traffic management problems experienced by many towns both in terms of congestion on major routes and increases in vehicle-emitted pollutants to the detriment of air quality.

3.2 There is strong evidence that air pollution is a cause of both short-term and long-term health effects in susceptible groups, such as the elderly and those with underlying health problems of heart disease or breathing problems. Long-term exposure to air pollutants decreases life expectancy by around 6 months on average, mainly because of the role that small, sooty particles from vehicle exhaust fumes play in lung cancer and heart disease. Air pollution causes many extra admissions to hospital as well as damaging the natural environment. The annual health costs associated with air pollution are estimated to be £15 billion to UK citizens, which is about the same as the health costs of obesity.

3.3 Air pollution also has effects on the natural environment. Ground-level ozone, a common pollutant in East Sussex in the summer months, is formed when pollutants react in sunlight. It can seriously damage crops and vegetation and affect habitats.

3.4 Alongside strategies that aim to encourage more sustainable modes of travel (e.g. car sharing, public transport, cycling or walking), the 'rationing' of the supply of parking can contribute to wider transport planning objectives. The main way in which parking controls are rationed has tended to be by limiting the supply of spaces available to those who elect to commute by car and thereby need to park longer term (often referred to as 'all-day' parking). Highway authorities have traditionally achieved this by means of on-street parking schemes with controls on who is able to park (e.g. short-period single yellow lines or residents-only schemes), maximum stay (e.g. time-limited restrictions) or by pricing (e.g. discourage parking by making it a more expensive option than alternative travel modes). Pricing also tends to be set at a level to encourage use of nearby off-street car parks first and foremost.

3.5 In Rother, all-day parking is already limited in central parking spaces as charges are levied by means of pay and display or pay by phone. Increases in tariffs are therefore considered to be an important component of continuing support for general transport strategies aimed at encouraging more sustainable forms of travel and to assist with tackling air quality issues generally.

3.6 Parking tariffs in Rother were set significantly lower than other areas when the scheme was introduced. The charging regime is therefore having a reduced impact as a demand management tool on influencing travel choices. It is proposed that initially parking tariffs are increased as detailed in Appendix 1 to influence driver behaviour and encourage them to use alternative sustainable forms of transport.

3.7 Permit prices to encourage lower emission vehicles

Increasing concerns about reductions in air quality are leading to many local authorities setting higher parking prices for higher emission vehicles and some authorities are also investigating traffic management schemes that prohibit certain vehicle emission types altogether in city centres. In Hastings, Eastbourne, Lewes, and to some extent Falmer, the permit price arrangements already include differential pricing to encourage lower emission vehicles for residents' permits, however this is not the case in Rother. Officers recommend a consistent approach is introduced across the four towns with an increasing differential to encourage lower emission vehicles. It is recommended that the resident permit tariffs charged in Rother are changed to follow the Lewes District and Eastbourne model for resident permit charges. See Appendix 1 for the detail of the proposed new permit tariffs.

3.8 Visitor and other permit price variations in different towns

Historically the four parking schemes were designed to provide parking provision to satisfy the needs of the local community, this has resulted in a wide variety of different charges and differing arrangements for visitor permits. It is proposed to increase the visitor and other permit tariffs as detailed in Appendix 1 to influence driver behaviour and encourage them to use alternative sustainable forms of transport.

3.9 Future Tariff Changes

In order to achieve our objective of influencing driver behaviour and encourage people to use alternative sustainable forms of transport, additional tariff increases are likely to be required. It is proposed that any further increases to Parking Tariffs will be reviewed as part of the annual review of fees and charges.

4. **Surplus Income**

4.1. Any surplus income generated, after operating costs, can be used on transport and highway initiatives which are qualifying expenditure as governed by Section 55 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, as amended from October 2004 by Section 95 of the Traffic Management Act 2004.

4.2. In East Sussex, surplus income after direct running and maintenance costs contributes towards the part funding of the supported bus network, Real Time Passenger Information signs, concessionary bus fares and local transport schemes costs.

4.3. With the ongoing pressure on Council budgets, any future Parking Surplus, excluding existing commitments, could be used as a further contribution towards the County Council's public transport costs. The investment in these activities is complementary to the objectives of our LTP in the provision of sustainable transport which assists in reducing congestion and improving air quality in the County.

5. **Proposed Consultation**

5.1. The consultation will seek to understand people's views on the Council's proposed approach to the management of parking demand in Rother through the increase in on-street pay and display parking tariffs and parking permit charges. The consultation will also look to better understand whether these proposed changes will encourage drivers to use sustainable forms of transport and/or to use vehicles that emit lower levels of pollutants.

5.2. The consultation will be available on the Council's consultation hub website, which will be promoted to stakeholders, residents and traders.

5.3. The feedback received through the consultation process will be presented alongside an Equalities Impact Assessment, to inform the Lead Member's final decisions about the proposals.

6. **Conclusion**

6.1 The Lead Member for Transport and Environment is recommended to note the proposed increases to parking pay and display charges and the changes to permit charges, as detailed in Appendix 1 and to agree that a consultation is undertaken. Feedback from the consultation and an Equalities Impact Assessment will then be considered as part of the decision-making process on the proposals.

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LOCAL MEMBERS

All members whose electoral divisions are within areas with on-street parking charges in Rother District.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None