

Report to: Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Date of meeting: 27 January 2025

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: Proposal for increases to parking charges across Rother District

Purpose: To consider the outcome of the public consultation regarding proposed increases to on-street parking charges and permit charges across Rother District.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Lead Member is recommended to:

- (1) Note the response to the public consultation on increasing on-street parking charges and the proposed changes to permit charges; and**
 - (2) Approve the proposals to increase on-street parking and permit charges as detailed at Appendix 2 of the report; and**
 - (3) Agree that parking and permit charges across the county will be reviewed annually.**
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1 Background

1.1. The management of on-street parking supports a range of transport strategies aimed at influencing travel choice, reducing congestion and improving air quality in East Sussex. 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.

1.2. In January 2020 the Lead Member for Transport and Environment approved the alignment of permit charges in Eastbourne and Hastings Boroughs to an emission-based structure already used in Lewes District. As well as approving an increase to paid for parking charges in Eastbourne and Hastings Boroughs and Lewes District, to encourage the use of alternative sustainable travel choices.

1.3. As Rother District's Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) Order had not yet been introduced it was not affected by these changes from this decision.

1.4. Alongside strategies that aim to encourage more sustainable modes of travel (for example 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 over who is able to park (for example short-period single yellow lines or residents-only schemes), maximum stay (for example time-limited restrictions) or by pricing (for example 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.

1.5. In Rother District, parking tariffs have been increased once since the implementation of the scheme in 2020, this was an 8% inflationary rate in 2024. The charging regime is therefore having a reduced impact as a demand management tool on influencing travel choices. It is therefore proposed that parking tariffs are increased to influence driver behaviour and encourage them to use alternative sustainable forms of transport.

1.6. There is strong evidence that air pollution is a cause of both short-term and long-term negative health effects in susceptible groups, such as older people and those with underlying health problems of heart disease or breathing problems.

1.7. 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 Eastbourne, Hastings, 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 CPE areas with an increasing differential to encourage lower emission vehicles. Therefore, it is recommended that the resident permit tariffs charged in Rother are changed to follow the model for resident permit charges in other East Sussex schemes. This links the cost of a resident permit to the carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from the vehicle the permit covers, with owners of low emission vehicles paying less than those with higher emissions.

1.8. The effective management of parking not only addresses local parking problems, but it also contributes to the delivery of some of the broader transport objectives and approaches set out in the East Sussex Local Transport Plan 4 2024 - 2050 (LTP4).

1.9. The Traffic Management Act 2004 allows councils to 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. Any resulting surplus can be used within the prescribed parameters under the legislation.

1.10. The expenditure and income for the existing CPE schemes is published in the Annual Parking Report. Income is received from the sale of parking permits, parking charges, and penalty charge notices.

1.11. 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 Supporting Information

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. Although there are similarities between the four areas, there are different levels of charging in Rother District, the difference is particularly noticeable in the charges for permits. Parking charges are set at a level to ensure that at least the costs of managing, enforcing and administering parking controls are met, and 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 (for example permit user or paid for parking), by location (for example differential pricing between on-street parking and off-street car parks) or by type of vehicle (for example second residents' permits or lower emission vehicles).

2.3. The East Sussex LTP4 Policy D5: Parking, specifically highlights the vital role of parking as a demand management tool, through the availability, design, controlled provision and pricing of on- and off-street parking for vehicles in having the ability to influence travel behaviour and incentivising travel choices towards more sustainable travel modes.

2.4. The aims of the proposals include acting as a disincentive to multiple vehicle ownership and a move to encourage greater use of sustainable alternatives, whilst not limiting the availability of permits for those who 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 have not been increased significantly since the Rother scheme was introduced in 2020. Since then, the Retail Prices Index (RPI) has increased by the order of 32.3 %.

2.6 At the Lead Member for Transport and Environment's decision-making meeting on 14 October 2024, it was agreed to hold a public consultation on the proposed changes to parking charges in Rother. Appendix 1 contains the consultation analysis for the proposals. Appendix 2 provides the current and proposed changes to permit and parking charges.

2.7 The consultation ran from 8 November to 29 November 2024. Appendix 3 provides the public consultation questionnaire. The changes proposed, which were consulted on are:

- standardising the price of residents permits across all four permit areas for the first time
- linking the cost of residents' permits to the CO2 emissions of pollution from the vehicle the permit covers
- that the cost of visitor and day permits should be higher to encourage people to make more sustainable travel choices
- increasing the cost of on-street paid for parking charges to encourage people to use alternative sustainable forms of transport, which will help reduce congestion and improve air quality in our towns.

Public consultation

2.8 The consultation sought to understand the views of residents, businesses, visitors, and stakeholders on the Council's proposed approach to the management of parking demand across the county through the increase in on-street parking and parking permit charges. The consultation also looked to better understand whether these proposed changes would encourage drivers to use sustainable forms of transport, and or to use vehicles that emit lower levels of pollutants. Appendix 1 contains the consultation analysis for the proposals for Rother District parking charges.

2.9 Most of the feedback to the consultation was submitted via the Consultation Hub but responses were also received via the post. Copies of all the verbatim responses received as part of the consultation have been placed in the Members' room. 878 responses were received through the consultation hub and four written.

2.10 When considering the environmental aspects of the consultation:

- 41.04% of respondents indicated they strongly agreed or agreed the Council should take measures to reduce congestion in town centres.
- 38.21% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed the Council should take measures to improve local air quality and reduce vehicle emissions.
- 28.34% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed the Council should take measures to encourage the use of more sustainable modes of transport and use vehicles that emit lower levels of pollution.

2.11 When considering parking habits and the cost of parking in town centres:

- 75.97% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the cost of parking charges influence where people park.
- 37.19% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that East Sussex County Council should restrict parking in town centres to only allow short stay, to encourage people to use off-street car parks for long term parking.
- 58.96% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed the cost of off-street parking should be lower than that of on-street parking.
- 23.35% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that less polluting vehicles should pay less for a resident permit compared to 59.41% who disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- Only 10.43% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed permit charges should be aligned with those in Lewes District and Eastbourne and Hastings Boroughs compared to 56.12% who disagreed or strongly disagreed and 33.45% neither agree nor disagreed.

2.12 The consultation also proposed changes to day permits with 5.9% of respondents indicating they strongly agreed or agreed the cost should increase compared to 68.82% respondents indicating they disagree or strongly disagree.

2.13 The consultation sought to understand local opinion on proposed increase to on-street parking charges, 8.62% of respondents indicated they strongly agreed or agreed with 81.98% of respondents indicating they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposed increases.

2.14 The questionnaire responses also indicated 23.36% of the respondents were resident permit holders.

2.15 The consultation received 882 responses, with 666 people leaving 1,410 different comment themes.

2.16 All of the responses, comments and feedback received as part of the consultation process have been read and considered to help inform the recommendations in this report.

2.17 Proposals relate to on-street parking in Rother District, they do not extend to off-street car parks. As the Highway Authority, the Council encourages the use of off-street car parks to help minimise journeys, congestion and any environmental impacts within town centres. The proposed increase in on-street parking charges will also help to encourage greater use of more sustainable transport options which include bus travel, walking and cycling. There is little published evidence which demonstrates a direct correlation between changes in parking charges and changes in town centre footfall. Other factors will have an influence on people's choice on where they shop or access services and, therefore, the level of footfall in a town centre including the amount and availability of paid and free parking; the cost and quality of off-street parking; the accessibility of the town centre by different transport modes (for example by train or bus); and most fundamentally the quality of the retail, leisure and services on offer.

2.18 In Bexhill town centre and other areas of Rother, the County Council utilises a mixture of two hour time limited and paid for parking bays to create a turnover of spaces or 'churn' of visitors and shoppers, rather than spaces being occupied by a single user for a long period of time. It should also encourage drivers to:

- consider how they travel and whether it is an alternative mode of travel – walk, cycle, bus or train; and
- park in off-street car parks.

2.19 In Bexhill there are 1,292 resident and short-term time limited bays, 161 short-term time limited only bays and 430 short-term paid for parking bays, and 681 long-term paid for parking bays. As an alternative to on street parking there are 470 off-street parking bays in Bexhill. In Battle there are 47 resident permit and two hour time limited bays and 14 short-term paid for parking bays. Alternatively, there are 320 off-street parking bays. In Rye there are 37 resident permit bays and 144 short-term paid for parking bays. With 331 off-street parking bays. In Robertsbridge there are 13 short-term time limited bays, with 119 off-street parking bays.

2.20 The above analysis demonstrates that the majority of car parking capacity in Rother is in off-street car parks. So, the proposed increases to paid for parking charges should not have a detrimental impact on the economic viability of these towns. The proposals are intended to encourage, wherever possible, visitors to use the off-street parking facilities, but also provide all day parking where there is limited off-street parking provision.

2.21 Offering a discount based on the vehicle emissions, resident parking permits can help to encourage greater use of less polluting vehicles which will help to reduce harmful emissions and improve air quality in our town centres and across the county.

2.22 The proposals for the on-street parking charges aim to:

- encourage greater use of off-street car parks;
- reduce the number of vehicles driving on town centre roads searching for parking spaces; and
- encourage greater use of alternative modes of transport which in turn will reduce harmful emissions and improve air quality

These outcomes will make these towns a more appealing place to work, live and visit and thereby boost the local economy.

Equality Impact Assessment

2.23 Members must have due regard to the duties set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (the Public Sector Equality Duty or PSED).

2.24 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) (Appendix 4) has been carried out to identify adverse impacts that may arise as a result of the proposals for those with protected characteristics. This assessment details potential actions to help minimise, avoid or mitigate negative impacts of the proposals. The Lead Member must read the Equalities Impact Assessment and take its findings into consideration when determining these proposals.

2.25 The EqIA has considered the impact of the proposals on different groups. The Council considers that by delivering these proposals and with the general provisions of the parking schemes as a whole, it is meeting its statutory duties under the Traffic Management Act, Local Transport Plan, the Equality Act 2010 and its commitment to improve the environment.

Implementation

2.26 If the proposals are approved, the Parking Team will draft the Notice of Variation that will be advertised in the Observer publications for a minimum of 21 days. All Rother permit holders, Councillors and Stakeholders will receive notification by email and the Notice of Variation will be displayed in prominent positions in every road which has a parking bay that is affected across Rother District.

2.27 If the proposals are approved the new charges should be operational from 2 April 2025.

3 Conclusion and Reasons for recommendations

3.1 By offering a reduction in the permit charge based on vehicle CO2 emissions, the Council can help to facilitate the uptake of vehicles with cleaner fuels across Rother, Eastbourne, Hastings and Lewes, which in turn will help to reduce pollution in coastal towns and local town centres. Introducing such an incentive will help to achieve key outcomes within the LTP4 focussed on helping to achieve the Council's net-zero ambitions and support the reduction of emissions to improve air quality.

3.2 The purpose of the proposed increase as set out in Appendix 2, is to encourage greater use of sustainable modes of transport wherever possible, using alternative modes of transport will help to reduce vehicle congestion and pollution in the town centres. It is proposed that these charges are to be reviewed annually to ensure they remain appropriate, in line with the annual review which takes place for all other CPE areas.

3.3 Charging at a sufficient level to impact driver behaviour, can bolster the local economy by encouraging a 'churn' of visitors and shoppers, rather than spaces being occupied by a single user

for a long period of time. The proposals for the on-street parking charges aim to encourage greater use of off-street car parks, reduce the number of vehicles driving on town centre roads searching for parking spaces, and aim to encourage greater use of alternative modes of transport which in turn will reduce harmful emissions and improve air quality. These outcomes will make these towns a more appealing place to work, live and visit and thereby boost the local economy.

3.4 The East Sussex LTP4 Strategy is underpinned by partnership work focussed on enabling greater integration of journeys, access and choice across all modes, specifically supporting the delivery of inclusive infrastructure, services and the redesign of road space to balance the needs of different road users. This emphasises support for people walking, wheeling, cycling and using public transport, creating healthy places within both urban and rural areas. This is alongside facilitating the uptake of vehicles with cleaner fuels, through the delivery of electric vehicle charging infrastructure and embracing the utilisation of transport technologies as they emerge. This will support the decarbonisation of transport, tackle climate change and help local economies to prosper. The East Sussex LTP4 highlights the important fact that the responsibility for the delivery of LTP4 rests not just with the County Council but with multiple organisations, especially strategic transport partners and district and borough Councils to ensure that residents, businesses and visitors can access what they want or need to get to in the county.

3.5 Any future parking surplus, excluding existing commitments, could be used as a further contribution towards the Council's public transport costs. The investment in these activities is complementary to the objectives of the LTP4 in the provision of sustainable transport which assists in supporting accessibility to key destinations and creating healthy places however, these improvements alone will not enable the change in behaviour that the proposals to parking charges is seeking to achieve.

3.6 The Lead Member is therefore recommended to note the response to the consultation, approve the proposals to increase on-street parking and permit charges as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report; and agree that parking and permit charges across the county will be reviewed annually.

RUPERT CLUBB

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LOCAL MEMBERS

Councillors Azad, Clark, Field, Geary, Glazier, Hollidge, Kirby-Green, Maynard and Redstone

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None