

**STRATEGIC PLANNING,
SUSTAINABILITY AND
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

22 JANUARY 2018

Outcomes of the Bus Interchange Study, Parking Strategy and Park and Ride Study, and Park and Ride Operational Review

Final Decision-Maker	Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee
Lead Head of Service/Lead Director	William Cornall, Director of Regeneration and Place/Mark Green Director of Finance and Business Improvement
Lead Officer and Report Author	Mark Egerton, Strategic Planning Manager/Georgia Hawkes, Head of Commissioning and Business Improvement
Classification	Public Private appendices attached
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

This report sets out the findings of Maidstone tri-study - the bus interchange study, parking strategy and strategic Park and Ride study, as well as the Park and Ride operational review. The report then provides subsequent proposals that relate to the tri-study and Park and Ride operational review.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. The tri-study report is agreed for publication.
2. The council invests in the bus station.
3. The proposed changes to town centre car parking tariffs shown at paragraph 1.57 are agreed
4. The proposed changes to Park and Ride pay to ride tariffs shown at paragraph 1.66 are agreed.
5. The Park and Ride service continues to be funded for 7 years and the frequency and duration of the service is improved.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Strategic Planning and Transportation Committee	22 nd January 2018

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Context

- 1.1 This report is separated into two main elements. The first element brings together the findings of the tri-study (bus interchange study, parking strategy and strategic Park and Ride study) and the Park and Ride operational review. The second element of this report then sets out a series of officer-led proposals relating to the above matters. The report has separate recommendations associated with both of these elements.
- 1.2 In respect of the tri-study, the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee received reports on 7th February 2017 and 14th March 2017 regarding:
 - a) A bus station options appraisal and
 - b) Maidstone Park and Ride provision and town centre parking strategy.
- 1.3 As a result of the above reports, the committee asked officers “to undertake a study to instigate preferred options to improve bus interchange facilities within the borough, with a view to incorporating future work on Maidstone Town centre parking strategy and Park and Ride study, with consideration to multi-modal journey planning and that this be conducted at a borough-wide level”.
- 1.4 Following a tendering exercise, WSP Parsons Brinckerhoff was commissioned to take forward this tri-study. Members also asked to be involved in the scoping of the study and this was facilitated by an all-Member workshop that took place on 31st June 2017. There was subsequent engagement with key stakeholders and both primary and secondary evidence was collected.
- 1.5 The tri-study report is attached as **Appendix 1**.

Purpose of the Tri-Study

- 1.6 Previous reports to this committee have set out the important role that the Council has to deliver the adopted Local Plan and Integrated Transport Strategy. In particular, the study aligns with Local Plan Policy SP23 (Sustainable Transport).
- 1.7 The matters that are being considered in this report are particularly important to Maidstone Borough, which has embraced meeting future development need in the context of concerns relating to infrastructure provision, particularly transport infrastructure provision.

- 1.8 In his Local Plan Final Report, the Inspector noted that “the number of vehicles is unusually high in Maidstone because of the high levels of car use relative to other modes such as public transport, walking and cycling. Measures are therefore needed to encourage modal shift in the interests of both air quality and congestion”. The inspector went on to note that “the need to reduce emissions, additional measures are likely to be needed including...a review of the amount of parking provision in the town centre and its costs relative to other travel modes, especially bus travel...Park and Ride (or Park and train) may also be part of the solution if it result is fewer vehicles entering the town centre”.
- 1.9 The adopted Local Plan notes that the Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) should aim for a reduction in the number of single-occupancy car trips into Maidstone Town Centre by long-stay commuters – particularly during peak periods – which can be achieved through interventions such as enhanced public transport provision on the main radial routes, Park and Ride and walking and cycling infrastructure”. It also notes that the Park and Ride service should be considered in the context of the supply of town centre car parking (both public and private) and the associated parking tariffs.
- 1.10 Among other matters, Local Plan Policy SP23 commits to delivering modal shift “through managing demand on the transport network through enhanced public transport and the continued Park and Ride services and walking and cycling improvements”. The policy also commits to managing “parking provision in the town centre and the wider borough to ensure it is fair and proportionate and supports demand management”. It also commits the Council and highway authority to developing preference measures to improve journey times and reliability and make public transport more attractive, particularly on the Park and Ride routes and the radial routes into the town centre.
- 1.11 The ITS includes various proposals, including ‘Action PT13: work towards an improved bus station in Maidstone Town Centre’. Objective 1 of the strategy has regard to “Enhancing and encouraging sustainable travel choices including...the development, maintenance and enhancement of public transport provision, including Park and Ride, encouraging uptake amongst the population;”. It also includes a target “to undertake a full and independent review of Maidstone’s Park and Ride provision, issue and act on recommendations by 2017.”
- 1.12 The Maidstone Town Centre Parking Strategy also aligns with the Integrated Transport Strategy, with Action P3 seeking to ‘optimise the level of parking space provision in the town centre’. The Integrated Transport Strategy includes a number of actions relevant to future parking provision in Maidstone Town Centre.
- 1.13 As part of the tri-study conducted by WSP, The bus interchange study sought to:
- Establish options that would improve bus interchange facilities in Maidstone (including the bus station), improve air quality, reduce congestion and reduce noise pollution, improve the quality of bus

services in Maidstone, increase bus patronage, improve ease of movement for buses and support the growth of the town

- Align with Maidstone's Local Plan as well as the adopted Integrated Transport Strategy.
- Take account of existing published evidence, produced in support of the emerging Local Plan regarding future growth, congestion and its implications
- Consider current and future population increases, potential development and its implications
- Undertake detailed scoping analysis of existing bus facilities and routes as well as proposed sites that have potential suitability for bus interchange facilities
- Focus on the link between potential future bus hubs and improvements to the existing bus network
- Generate and justify a preferred option or options

1.14 The parking strategy sought to:

- Align with Maidstone's emerging Local Plan as well as the adopted Integrated Transport Strategy
- Interpret existing evidence available to the Council supplemented by significant primary data collection
- Consider current and future population increases, potential development and its implications
- Generate and justify a preferred option or options regarding future town centre car park provision, charges and usage

1.15 The Park and Ride study sought to:

- Lead from and complement the Park and Ride operational review
- Align with Maidstone's emerging Local Plan as well as the adopted Integrated Transport Strategy.
- Assess the purpose, role and current patronage of existing facilities
- Consider current and future population increases, potential development and its implications
- Take into account and facilitate current and future potential development including highlighting opportunities for regeneration and redevelopment
- Generate and justify a preferred option or options regarding future Park and Ride provision for the borough, including means of optimising service provision, usage and income.

1.16 The tri-study report has also given clear consideration to multi-modal journey planning and assesses potential improvements to multi-modal interchange facilities at a borough-wide level, including with rail services. It has also considered out of borough patronage, including intra-urban journeys.

1.17 The tri-study report recommendations also have a long time horizon of up to 25 years.

Purpose of the Park and Ride Operational Review

- 1.18 The tri-study has subsequently been joined by the aforementioned operational review of Maidstone's Park and Ride service. This review has a shorter timeframe but has significant links with the tri-study.
- 1.19 The review of Park and Ride started in October 2016. It was carried out to look at the operational short to medium term future of Park and Ride, looking only at making the best use of the current assets used for Park and Ride within financial plans. The review has been carried out to be complementary to the tri-study.
- 1.20 The main objectives of the Park and Ride review were to:
1. Review and assess whether the current Park and Ride service offers value for money
 2. Review and assess the impact the service has in supporting the ITS, specifically in terms of reducing peak time traffic congestion and improving air quality
 3. Identify any other benefits Park and Ride delivers
 4. Ensure the review is complementary to the strategic study looking at Park and Ride provision in the long term
 5. Explore different uses for the funding and assets that are currently used for Park and Ride

Findings of Tri-Study and Park and Ride Operational Review

- 1.21 The results of the Park and Ride operational review were reported to this committee in July 2017. Details of the methods used to gather evidence for the tri-study, including primary and secondary data sources, as well as the initial outcomes of the tri-study and an update on the Park and Ride operational review were presented to an all-Member workshop on the 6th November 2017. This report does not therefore seek to reproduce the significant evidence that is contained within the tri-study report and Park and Ride review.
- 1.22 The **bus interchange study** considered 4 distinct options:
- Optimising the existing bus station
 - Alternative off-street single facility
 - Alternative on-street options (e.g. removing the existing bus station and providing for all bus services on High Street/King Street); and
 - Alternative multiple sites, creating smaller-scale 'bus hubs', e.g. at Maidstone East Railway Station
- 1.23 The study found that, in terms of origin and destination, a primary bus terminating facility is most reasonably located in the area along the High Street/King Street corridor. It also found that there were a number of benefits associated with the existing bus station, including its integration

with the retail offer, covered waiting facilities, closed bus stops until buses are ready to board and multi-directional access.

- 1.24 Whilst there are clear improvements that could be made with a new station, it is also apparent that the ability to construct a new bus station that would meet the key requirements is likely to be challenging for either the public or private sector.
- 1.25 A remote layover facility would also be an impractical solution, causing journeys of unnecessary time and distance, and resulting in higher emissions. The report recommends that if such a facility is required in the future, this could be formalised at the lower end of Earl Street, where extended layover is already known to take place.
- 1.26 In addition, providing more on street bus stopping capacity at Maidstone East is considered to be a valid option, in a street where there is less conflict with other traffic, although bus network enhancement will not necessarily depend on it. There also appears to be a continuing need into the future to provide more direct links within the urban area to Maidstone East and Maidstone West rather than prioritising services for the hinterland.
- 1.27 The report goes on to note that immediate opportunities for better integration between existing bus and rail provision are mainly focussed on information and signage, rather than infrastructure and re-timings/re-routing of bus services. In the longer-term, the development of bus services, possibly pump-primed by money from developer contributions, will be need to continue, to deliver comprehensive integration across stations generally.
- 1.28 The report notes that developments in ride-sharing and 'e-hail' mobility services could provide greater opportunities for links to rural rail stations and certain town centre stations. It also lists bus services that may have potential opportunities to provide direct connections to rail stations, potentially reducing arrivals and departures in the bus station by 5 buses per hour, resulting in 6 buses per hour terminating at Maidstone East and 2 buses per hour terminating at Maidstone West.
- 1.29 The **town centre parking strategy** finds that the overall town centre car parking supply is adequately sized to support a vibrant town centre economy. There are, however, points of stress which should be addressed to improve efficiency and the 'customer journey'.
- 1.30 In particular, it would be beneficial to reduce the duration of stay limits and/or increase car parking charging in the busiest and smallest car parking areas.
- 1.31 In the event that this town centre parking strategy is agreed by Members, the report recommends production of a more detailed implementation plan in due course, with focus on various matters, including a reduced stay limit in the defined north-east zone from two hours to one hour, reducing long stay car parking in the north-east area and a critical review of smaller car parks generally.

- 1.32 The report highlights the opportunity to reset car parking charges to a new baseline to better reflect the charging regimes of private operators and other comparable town centres. It recommends that additional revenue should be reinvested in measures to meet Integrated Transport Strategy objectives and transport related Local Plan policies, such as Park and Ride, or measures to improve air quality.
- 1.33 The report notes MBC's aging car park charging infrastructure, proposing a more pragmatic solution, such as that currently operating in Sandling Road car park. It also recommends a public and private sector increase in long-stay parking charges and re-opening a connection between The Mall and Romney Place multi-storey carparks.
- 1.34 The strategy also recommends a medium to long term approach of trip interception to the town centre at the edge of the centre itself. This includes an option to open the right turn from Barker Road into Broadway, offering a means to increase attractiveness of Lockmeadow and intercept trips before reaching the town centre. In addition, the report notes the merit in tackling the lack of current opportunities to intercept trips from the Sittingbourne Road and College Road approaches.
- 1.35 Finally, the report notes that many journeys into the town centre are repeat journeys by local shoppers with set habits. It recommends that signage should be reviewed to provide greater emphasis on the number of bays accessible on routes at major decision points/junctions and more importantly, a broader advertising campaign to encourage use of those car parks that are currently underutilised.
- 1.36 It is worth noting at this point that officers within Maidstone Parking Services are developing an innovation strategy following investigations into current and developing technologies in the parking industry. In recent years Parking Services have seen a surge in parking technology aimed at improving the customer experience; however, until now these systems have not been integrated and often provided as standalone solutions.
- 1.37 With advances in smart phone Apps and digital transformation, parking customers expect services to provide good integration with current technology and nationally this expectation has influenced the market where significant improvements have led to a convergence in technology driven by the needs of our customers. Systems can now be integrated to provide seamless and reliable services to our customers whilst contributing to improved business efficiency.
- 1.38 A report will be presented to the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee in February 2018, which will outline the planned innovation within Parking Services and development of services over the next two years.
- 1.39 Among other matters, the **Park and Ride study** investigated different strategies in terms of long term requirements for Park and Ride services. In particular, consideration was given to the introduction of micro Park and Ride sites, introduction of new Park and Ride sites, and closure of the Park and Ride sites.

1.40 The analysis has led to a number of recommendations to improve the current Park and Ride services:

- Retain the dedicated bus services to existing Park and Ride sites;
- Stop P&R service 501 at Turkey Mill bus stop in both direction;
- Extend hours of operation of dedicated Park and Ride services within existing resources, if possible;
- Review opportunities to keep the Park and Ride car park open later in the evening;
- Continue to advertise and market the Park and Ride services to existing and new users;
- Review the pricing strategy to increase revenue by harmonising the off peak fares (subject to the MBC final modelling results confirmation); and
- Reduce town centre parking availability to encourage weekday commuters to park outside the town centre. Such measures could include increasing the number of resident permit zones or shortening the maximum parking period.

1.41 In addition, the report also provides a range of more strategic suggestions to be considered alongside the above recommendations and the town centre parking pricing strategy:

- Micro Park and Ride does not appear to be viable at the moment unless new sites can be identified;
- If one Park and Ride site were to be closed, it would be preferable to close London Road. Retaining Willington Street Park and Ride in combination to increasing parking fares in Maidstone town centre could significantly reduce the current subsidy required to operate Park and Ride;
- The past performance of Sittingbourne Road Park and Ride site demonstrated a greater demand than for both existing Park and Ride sites; thus a site near the former Sittingbourne Road Park and Ride site location might be considered in the future;
- Introduction of a new Park and Ride site directly north of Maidstone to cater for the A229 traffic would address the most heavily used corridor into the Town Centre. This could be envisaged in the Invicta Park site which is planned to be redeveloped within the Borough Local Plan time frame.

1.42 The **Park and Ride operational review** initially reported to SPST committee in July. It found that the current model of Park and Ride did not provide value for money for the £242,000 per year it costs the council to run the service once costs and income are taken into account. This is because, whilst the service is used by about 800 people every day and is valued by users, it is not particularly effective in delivering the Integrated Transport Strategy objectives of reducing peak time congestion and improving air quality: it only takes about 170 cars off the road during the morning and evening peak time traffic periods. The review also found that Maidstone's Park and Ride ran less frequently and finished earlier than all the other services the review considered. However, in spite of the issues, the review noted the opportunity for greater utilisation of the service and,

therefore, greater contribution towards the ITS. Additionally, the review did not find any other option for use of the current assets and finances that would contribute to the objectives of the ITS any better.

1.43 Since July, the following actions have been undertaken:

- Tender exercise for Park and Ride service
- Further survey with users and non-users of Park and Ride regarding potential changes to the charging structure and possible changes to the service
- Survey of town centre businesses
- Additional financial modelling, including review of pay to park and pay to ride payment models

1.44 The key findings from these additional pieces of work are:

1. An additional bus would be required to increase the bus frequency to every 15 minutes, which makes the contract cost more expensive than for 20 min intervals.
2. A move to pay to park could lead to about 1/4 of concessionary fares travellers and other off-peak travellers no longer using the service. Off-peak and concessionary fares income make up about 2/3 of the total Park and Ride income. This makes pay to park a riskier proposition than retaining a pay to ride model.
3. Only 15% of current Park and Ride users and 27% of non-users said that pay to park would make them more likely to car share. Those travelling using standard tickets and those who use Park and Ride once a month or less were most likely to say they might car share.
4. People are more likely to pay more for buses that run more frequently.
5. Most users are happy with buses that run at 20 minute intervals but non-users think buses should run at 15 or 10 minute intervals in order to meet their needs.
6. People are generally prepared to pay more for peak travel than non-peak travel.
7. There is a demand from both users and non-users for buses to run later into the evening.
8. Both users and non-users think the two most important things for a good Park and Ride service are:
 - Frequent buses
 - Cheaper than town centre parking
9. The things that are most likely to make non-users consider using Park and Ride are:
 - Payment by card
 - Real time travel information
 - Payment by app
10. About 1/4 of non-users who responded to the survey would consider using Park and Ride in the future. The results also suggest that pay to park or group travel tickets would be more attractive to non-users than every passenger in the car paying to ride the bus.
11. Most businesses don't have parking for their staff or offer any travel concessions. Of those that do offer staff parking, the majority have this included in their lease or own the spaces.

1.45 In conclusion, it is clear from the research carried out that the current service requires improvement and is unlikely to attract many new users on its own merits because:

- Buses do not run frequently enough
- The service finishes too early
- The cost of travel is not cheap enough compared to parking in the town centre, particularly for people who travel with more than one person in a car
- Passengers cannot pay by card
- Buses are older and not of a high enough environmental specification

Current Proposals

1.46 Many of the recommendations from the tri-study will be implemented over the coming years and inform future reviews of the Integrated Transport Strategy and Local Plan, for example. However, officers have also generated proposals from the recommendations contained within tri-study and operational review of Park and Ride.

1.47 Initial proposals were presented at an all-Member briefing on 8th January 2018 and it is clear that, in order to contribute to a successful ITS, Park and Ride cannot be considered in isolation.

Bus Station Proposal

1.48 With the focus on the existing bus station and a clear need to improve the quality of offer it is apparent that Maidstone Borough Council has a role to seek improvements. The ITS reinforces this approach.

1.49 It is apparent that improvements are unlikely to come from a single source, given that key stakeholder interest in the bus station and its operation is shared by the Council, the landowner (Capital and Regional) and the bus operators. It is proposed for the Council to take a lead role in negotiations with the other key stakeholders with the aim of making improvements to its attractiveness and ease of use.

1.50 Ultimately, significant financial contributions will be required to make meaningful improvements to the bus station. Once again, an approach where responsibility for bringing forward finances is shared between the Council, the landowner and the bus-operator is likely to maximise the possible improvements.

1.51 Whilst the level of financial contributions will need to be justified once improvement proposals have been established, the Council itself is likely to be asked for a financial contribution to the improvements. A potential source of funding is subsidy from parking revenue and work will also be undertaken to identify other potential sources, including Maidstone's Community Infrastructure Levy, the Local Enterprise Partnership and the new homes bonus.

Town Centre Car Parking Charges Proposal

1.52 Currently, the Pay and Display tariff structure is broadly consistent across all car parks and does not consider a variable tariff structure based on location and demand, other than a few exceptions such as King Street and Palace Avenue. In order to tackle the issues around the significant demand in the car parks to the north east of the town centre (this includes King Street, Wheeler Street, Brewer Street, Union Street East/West and Brooks Place) it is therefore recommended that tariffs reflect location demand and are set at a level to achieve occupancy levels of approximately 85%, which is the industry standard to provide good levels of bay turnover and parking availability.

1.53 Town centre Pay and Display parking is considered to be low-priced particularly for longer stays, as the current tariff structure reduces the hourly rate for a longer the period of stay.

1.54 The findings of the town centre parking survey carried out by WSP identified an imbalance between the town centre parking charges and the Park and Ride service. This imbalance favours Pay and Display parking making a successful Park and Ride service more difficult to achieve. When compared to the Park & Ride charge, town centre Pay and Display parking can offer a much cheaper alternative to Park and Ride when car occupancy exceeds more than one:

3 Hour stay

Number of occupants	Pay & Display	Park & Ride Peak	Park & Ride Off Peak
1	£2.50	£2.60	£1.60
2	£2.50	£5.20	£3.20
3	£2.50	£7.80	£4.80
4	£2.50	£10.40	£6.40

4 Hour stay

Number of occupants	Pay & Display	Park & Ride Peak	Park & Ride Off Peak
1	£3.50 / £4.00	£2.60	£1.60
2	£3.50 / £4.00	£5.20	£3.20
3	£3.50 / £4.00	£7.80	£4.80
4	£3.50 / £4.00	£10.40	£6.40

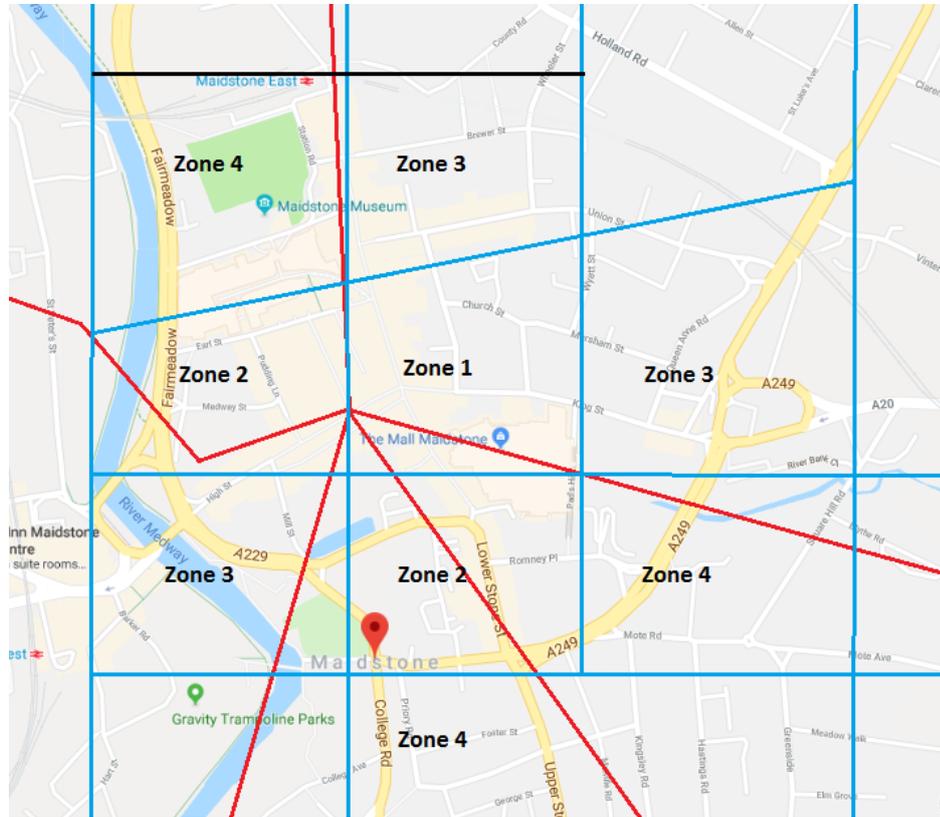
Over 5 Hour stay

Number of occupants	Pay & Display	Park & Ride Peak	Park & Ride Off Peak
1	£6.50	£2.60	£1.60
2	£6.50	£5.20	£3.20
3	£6.50	£7.80	£4.80
4	£6.50	£10.40	£6.40

1.55 In order to increase use of Park and Ride, which supports delivery of the Integrated Transport Strategy, the Local Plan and the Low Emissions Strategy, it is clear this situation needs to change: it should be substantially

cheaper to use Park and Ride than to drive into town and park for 4 or more hours.

1.56 Parking Services have considered the survey data and identified four zones based on parking demand and location to town centre facilities.



1.57 The current Pay and Display tariff has also been reviewed and proposals within this report provide a consistent hourly rate within the existing time bands specific to each zone:

Zone 1	1		3	4	King St		
Current	£1.30	>	£3.90	£5.20			
Var	£1.50	>	£2.50	£4.00			
	-£0.20		£1.40	£1.20			
Zone 2	1		3	4	Medway Palace		
Current	£1.25	>	£3.75	£5.00			
Var	£1.50	>	£2.50	£4.00			
	-£0.25		£1.25	£1.00			
Zone 3	30 min	1	3	4	5	over 5	Brewer Wheeler Lucerne Union W Union E Brooks Sitting'ne Barker Lockm'dw
Current	£0.60	£1.10	>	£3.30	£4.40	£5.50	£7.00
Var	£0.50	£1.00	>	£2.50	£3.50	£5.00	£6.50
	£0.10	£0.10		£0.80	£0.90	£0.50	£0.50
Zone 4	1		3	4	5	over 5	Mill Mote College Bruns'k Well
Current	£1.00	>	£3.00	£4.00	£5.00	£7.00	
Var	£1.00	>	£2.50	£3.50	£5.00	£6.50	
	£0.00		£0.50	£0.50	£0.00	£0.50	
On-St	30 Mins	1	1.5	2	All		
Current	£0.80	£1.50	£2.25	£3.00			
Var	£0.70	£1.50	£2.00	£2.50			
	£0.10	£0.00	£0.25	£0.50			
Current Tariff						Sandling	
No changes						JWW	

1.58 This tariff proposal allows a reduction in charges for stays of one hour in both Zone 1 and Zone 2 where demand is high to enable short period visits to be maintained to support local business.

1.59 The hourly tariff has been applied consistently throughout each time band providing a reasonable level of parking charges whilst promoting migration from high demand car parks to outer zone car parks and Park and Ride where reduced demand has been identified.

1.60 The proposed tariff structure provides improved harmony between town centre parking charges and the Park and Ride service, particularly if discounted group travel options are implemented for Park & Ride customers.

1.61 The proposed tariff changes should also promote the use of alternative transport methods or a shift to lower demand car parks instead of the car parks identified by WSP as having more demand than spaces. This will lower strain on the worst affected car parks and reduce congestion caused by vehicles unable to find spaces, especially during peak hours.

1.62 Customer migration to outer zone car parks and to Park and Ride for longer stays are likely, however accurate projections to the level of migration are not possible and therefore the income projections below are based on 0% migration to 20% to alternative methods of travel into the town centre:

	Increased Income	Increased Income excluding VAT	VAT
0%	407,064.90	339,220.75	67,844.15
-10%	238,007.55	198,339.63	39,667.93
-15%	151,259.53	126,049.61	25,209.92
-20%	64,511.50	53,759.58	10,751.92

1.63 The tariff proposals support budgeted income expectations and identify that a -10% variation in pay and display customers will still result in additional income of £198,340. This could be used to invest into Park and Ride to cover any shortfall between the cost of delivery of an improved service and the income achieved from Park and Ride ticket sales.

1.64 Although impossible to predict accurately, it is important to consider that a percentage of migrating customers are likely to transfer to the Park & Ride service resulting in improved passenger income.

Park and Ride Proposal

1.65 The recommendation is to continue to run the Park and Ride service by accepting the best tender return for running the service at 15 minute intervals. This includes new more environmentally friendly buses, a more frequent service and cashless payment facilities. This fits with the council's Local Plan policy of continuing with a Park and Ride service and improves the service, making it fit for purpose. Officers will also engage with the intended provider about the cost of running the service up to 7pm. We know this would cost about £34,000 under the current contract, so costs are expected to be similar to this.

1.66 These improvements to frequency and duration of the service increase the current cost of the contract to the council. The adverse financial impact of this can be mitigated to an extent by changing the charging tariff of Park and Ride. The proposed tariff changes are shown below:

Type of ticket	Current	Proposed	Change
Peak	£2.60	£2.50	-£0.10
Off peak	£1.60	£2.50	+£0.90
10 trip ticket	£10.30	£10.00	-£0.30
Concessions	Free	Free	None
Group travel for all occupants of a car (up to 5 people)	N/A	£3.00	N/A
12 week season ticket	£103	£103	None
Annual season ticket	£412	£412	None

1.67 The proposed pricing structure makes it slightly cheaper to travel at peak times and to travel frequently using a 10 trip ticket (equivalent of £2.00 per return journey) and very good value compared with parking in town for 4 hours or more under the proposed changes to car park charges, especially for anyone travelling with more than one person in the car. It does increase

the cost of off peak travel quite substantially, but anyone likely to travel on Park and Ride regularly within the space of 3 months can purchase a 10 trip ticket, or season tickets are available. It should also be noted that this review found that the £1.60 fare was one of the lowest in the country.

1.68 In order to ensure that people do shift from town centre car parking to Park and Ride, it is important that the change to the tariff structure is done in conjunction with changes to town centre parking charges.

1.69 Kent County Council currently permits use of English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) passes on the Park and Ride service and this enables those with qualifying bus passes to travel for free. Whilst many Park and Ride services that charge on a pay to ride basis are part of the ENCTS scheme and accept concessionary fares, Park and Ride schemes are not always funded through this scheme. The service presents very good value in comparison with the return fare from on local bus services, even if off-peak fares are increased as recommended. However, officers at Kent County Council (KCC) have indicated that, whilst they remain happy to support the Park and Ride through acceptance of the ENCTS pass, KCC cannot afford to increase the funding from current levels. If off peak fares are increased to £2.50, the impact on KCC under the current scheme would be in the region of £68,000 if there was no change in passenger numbers and around £85,000 if number of those using concessionary fares increased by 10%. Further discussions at an officer level are planned to work through this issue and the implication to both councils.

1.70 The potential impact of changes to passenger numbers and income of the tariff changes are shown in the table below. The figures make the assumption that KCC funding will remain at the level received in 2016/17.

Change in users	No of users	No of cars	Income	Change from 16/17 income
+25%	310,846	206,393	£470,086	£128,658
+15%	285,979	189,881	£441,184	£99,755
+10%	273,545	181,626	£426,733	£85,304
No change	248,677	165,065	£397,830	£56,402
-10%	223,809	148,602	£368,928	£27,500
-15%	211,375	140,346	£354,477	£13,049
-25%	186,508	123,836	£325,575	-£15,853

1.71 A 10% increase equates to around 80 more users a day, which is estimated to be about 53 additional cars per day. Whilst it is impossible to accurately predict the impact on usage, information taken from the surveys, coupled

with impact of changes to car parking tariffs, suggests a 10% increase in usage is a reasonable assumption.

- 1.72 This modelling has been undertaken without including assumptions about use of the £3 group travel ticket. However, as only about 1 in 7 current users said that they would be more likely to car share if they paid to park, it is not expected that many current users would migrate to this type of ticket, but that instead it would attract a new market of additional users to the service. Obviously, a marketing campaign would be required for both Park and Ride and the revised car parking charges to maximise use of the service.
- 1.73 The increase in income from the revised structure would help to mitigate the increase in costs caused by increasing the frequency of buses and running the service later. This shown at Appendix 4.

2. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

Tri-study report

- 2.1 Option 1 - Agree the WSP tri-study report for publication.
- 2.2 Option 2 - Request specified modifications to the WSP tri-study report and agree its publication

Bus station

- 2.3 Option 1: Agree to the bus station improvements proposal, that being to work with key stakeholders to investigate funding opportunities and improvements to the bus station, as well as committing to joint funding of those improvements subject to a further report being brought back to this committee.
- 2.4 Option 2: Reject the bus station proposal and suggest alternatives measures to enhance the bus station facility.

Town centre car parking changes

- 2.5 Option 1: Adopt the proposed car parking tariffs shown at paragraph 1.57 – this is the recommended option as it will serve to re-balance car park demand, shift drivers to other forms of sustainable transport, including Park and Ride, and raise additional income that could be invested in sustainable travel.
- 2.6 Option 2: Keep the existing car parking tariffs – this is not recommended as the changes to a variable tariff will help meet the WSP recommendations of achieving occupancy of about 85% in all town centre car parks. The changes are also expected to generate additional income of about £200,000 which could be used to fund the £75,000 saving required from Park and Ride in 2019/10 and any additional funding required to improve the service by increasing frequency and duration.

Park and Ride

2.7 Appendix 4 is a comparison of the costs, estimated income and savings that would be delivered from each of the options for Park and Ride.

Option 1 – Accept the best tender return to run the Park and Ride service for 7 years with buses at 15 min intervals, increase the duration of the service and implement the revised pay to ride tariff shown at paragraph 1.66

2.8 This recommended option allows the council to continue to meet its policy stated in the Local Plan to provide a Park and Ride service. The service will be more frequent, run later, allow card payments and buses will be newer and more environmentally friendly. Combined with the changes to town centre car parking charges, the improvements to the service and the changed Park and Ride tariff will lead to increased use of Park and Ride, which is important to ensuring that the council delivers its Integrated Transport Strategy and Local Plan.

2.9 If the income from the ENCTS scheme does not increase, the service will require additional funding. Even using this worst case scenario, the service improvements and the £75,000 saving required in 2019/20 could be met by the increased income from adopting the proposed car parking tariffs.

Option 2 - Accept the best tender return to run the Park and Ride service for 7 years with buses at 20 min intervals, increase the duration of the service and implement the revised pay to ride tariff shown at paragraph 1.66

2.10 This option allows the council to continue to meet its policy stated in the Local Plan to provide Park and Ride whilst contributing towards the £75,000 saving. The buses would be newer and allow for cashless payments and the service could be run later until 7pm. However, as the service will not be running more frequently, it will still not really be fit for purpose. This means the service is likely to attract fewer new users, putting both the assumed level of income at risk and the delivery of the ITS and Local Plan at risk.

Option 3 - Extend the current contract for one year, increasing bus frequency and duration of the service and implement the revised pay to ride tariff shown at paragraph 1.66

2.11 This option allows the council to trial a more frequent and later running service without committing to running the service over a longer period. The probability is that this would be slightly more expensive for a year than proceeding with option 1 and that fewer users would shift to Park and Ride as the buses will be older and still will not allow card payments, which puts the assumptions around Park and Ride income at risk. The buses would not be as high an environmental specification as option 1 and option 2.

2.12 However, a year's trial does allow us to pilot the service improvements and new charging model to gather information on what we want from the service. The tender process indicated that there may be some innovative options that could be investigated, but to achieve best value further work

would be required, which includes taking into account consultation that has taken place and further market engagement and trials of possible options. This information would allow us to see whether we want to continue with the service for the longer term and on what basis. If the changes to Park and Ride and car park charges are successful and we better understand what our requirements for the service are, we could commence a further procurement exercise about 6 months into the extension of the contract.

2.13 Whilst this pilot to confirm service requirements was being carried out, officers could also further investigate other options for use of the current Park and Ride sites and other sustainable transport measures.

2.14 It should be noted that whilst the risk of the service being unreliable has reduced due to works that have been carried out on the current buses, the risk that service reliability will be impacted is greater than for option 1 or 2.

Option 4 - Extend the current contract for one year, increasing bus frequency and duration of the service and introduce a pay to park charging structure

2.15 As for option 3, this option allows us to understand what our requirements for a future Park and Ride service are, which may inform a future tender to ensure value for money. This option also allows us to trial whether a pay to park charging structure is desirable.

2.16 Whilst this pilot to confirm service requirements was being carried out, officers could also further investigate other options for use of the current Park and Ride sites and other sustainable transport measures.

2.17 The potential impact of changes to passenger numbers and income of the tariff changes are shown in the table below.

Change in cars	No of cars	Income	Change from 16/17 income
25%	206,331	£ 453,764	£ 112,336
15%	189,825	£ 417,382	£ 75,954
10%	181,572	£ 399,395	£ 57,967
No change	165,065	£ 363,011	£ 21,583
-10%	148,559	£ 326,627	-£ 14,801
-15%	140,305	£ 308,641	-£ 32,787
-25%	123,799	£ 272,259	-£ 69,169

2.18 The analysis at Appendix 4 assumes a charge of £2.50 per car and an increase in users of 10%.

2.19 A pay to park structure is more strategically aligned with town centre parking and allows potential users to make a much easier comparison between the costs of town centre car parking and Park and Ride. A charge

of £2.50 per car would make Park and Ride a better value option for those travelling into the town centre in groups than the proposed pay to ride tariff, which should attract more new users to the service.

- 2.20 However, under this option those using concessionary fares would no longer be able to use the service for free. This is a large risk as 1/3 of the current income for Park and Ride comes from the subsidy the council receives from KCC from concessionary fares. This also means this option would have a larger effect on concessionary fares users, especially older people who are the largest users of the service, as shown in the equality needs impact assessment at Appendix 5. Income made from ticket sales would also be subject to VAT under a pay to park scheme, meaning more users have to use the service to make the same level of income.
- 2.21 Whilst introduction of a pay to park tariff is the ideal in terms of strategic alignment with other town centre parking, it is more expensive to implement, even for a year, and more risky in terms of retaining current users and increasing income levels.

Option 5 - Discontinue Park and Ride, consider future options for the sites and invest the saving in alternative sustainable transport measures

- 2.22 Discontinuing the Park and Ride service would save about £196,200, which could be re-invested in other sustainable transport schemes. The whole net cost of delivering the service is not saved due to costs that would still exist without the service e.g. some management costs. It should be noted that if the sites are retained, the council would still have to pay the non-domestic rates, so savings would be in the region of £141,000. In addition, there is a possibility that some staff costs might be retained under another budget.
- 2.23 There is currently no indication of what other sustainable transport measures might be more effective than Park and Ride for a similar cost. The operational review did not identify anything that would be better, but this was not the main focus of the work. The council also has no other plans for the Park and Ride sites if the service is decommissioned.
- 2.24 Any decision on alternative uses for the sites and on using savings from discontinuing Park and Ride to invest in other sustainable transport initiatives will need to be considered with key stakeholders e.g. local bus companies, KCC etc.

3. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Tri-study report

- 3.1 Agree the tri-study report for publication (option 1). This will ensure that the tri-study can be used as evidence to inform decision making on relevant matters.

Bus station

- 3.2 Agree to the bus station improvement proposal (option 1). This option presents the greatest opportunity to ensure a co-ordinated approach to

improvements and investment, maximising the potential benefits and quality of the offer and therefore ensuring greatest compliance with the approaches set out in the ITS and Local Plan.

3.3

Town centre car parking charges

3.4 Agree the proposed car parking tariffs shown at paragraph 1.57 (option 1). This will help re-balance car parking demand and raise additional income that could be invested in Park and Ride or other forms of sustainable transport.

Park and Ride

3.5 Agree to improve the frequency and duration of the service and fund this for 7 years, and implement the revised pay to ride tariff shown at paragraph 1.66 (Option 1). This will ensure the service is fit for purpose and support delivery of the ITS and Local Plan.

4. RISK

4.1 The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. The risks that have been rated "RED" or "BLACK" are:

- a. The risk to potential income of KCC not increasing the subsidy for concessionary fares trips in line with the increase in off peak fares
- b. The risk to the council's finances of the subsidy to Park and Ride increasing due to the proposed service improvements – the level of this financial risk is between moderate and major.

4.2 However, we are satisfied that the following further responses to these risks are sufficient to bring their impact and likelihood within acceptable levels.

- a. Financial modelling has been undertaken on the assumption that the subsidy remains at the current level, so the council is fully prepared for this eventuality and plans accordingly
- b. This risk can be mitigated by the increase in income from changing town centre car parking charges

4.3 We will continue to monitor these risks as per the Policy.

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

5.1 A summary of the most recent Park and Ride improvement survey is appended to this report (Appendix 2)

5.2 Results of the Park and Ride business survey are attached as Appendix 3.

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 If the preferred option is agreed, the Tri-study will be published on Maidstone's website and will be used to inform future decision making. The best tender response will then be accepted and the new contract mobilised.
- 6.2 Notice will also be given to users of the Park and Ride service and regarding the changes to service and the pricing.
- 6.3 A report will be also be provided on future town centre parking arrangements and charges at the February meeting on this committee.

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	Accepting the recommendations will materially improve the Council's ability to achieve regeneration of the town centre as well providing a clean safe environment. We set out the reasons other choices will be less effective in section 2	Rob Jarman/Georgia Hawkes
Risk Management	Already covered in the risk section.	Rob Jarman/Georgia Hawkes
Financial	<p>Park and Ride options 1, 3 and 4 will demand new spending in 2018/19. Option 2 may demand new spending in 2019/20 onwards following the £75,000 saving required from Park and Ride. This additional cost could be met by the increase in income from changes to the car parking tariffs.</p> <p>Park and Ride option 5, to discontinue the service, would save around £196,200 that could be invested in other sustainable transport initiatives. There may be costs</p>	[Section 151 Officer & Finance Team]

	as identified in appendix 4 and paragraph 2.22.	
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Rob Jarman/Georgia Hawkes
Legal	There are no specific legal implications at present, however any contractual changes, or changes to leases / site ownerships, or any other concerns should be referred to the relevant legal officers at the time for advice.	Cheryl Parks, Lawyer (Planning) Mid Kent Legal Services
Privacy and Data Protection	Mid Kent Legal Services are content that following discussions with the report authors that any personal data collected for the purposes of the studies was done so in strict conformity with regulations relating to data protection.	Cheryl Parks – Lawyer (Planning) Mid Kent Legal Services
Equalities	We recognise the recommendations may have varying impacts on different communities within Maidstone. Therefore we have completed a separate equalities impact assessment (Appendix 5). It should be noted that those with concessionary fares passes will no longer be able to use the service for free under a pay to park model. This particularly affects older users with regards to Park and Ride.	Anna Collier - Policy & Information Manager
Crime and Disorder	N/A	Rob Jarman/Georgia Hawkes
Procurement	A compliant procurement exercise has been carried out. If a decision is made to extend the current contract to help us determine how we wish to	Rob Jarman/Georgia Hawkes and Mark Green Section 151 Officer

	proceed with the service and explore options to better inform any future tender, as the current contract does not allow for an extension, we will seek a waiver from the Contract Standing Orders and Financial Procedure Rules to extend the contract with Arriva.	
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8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix 1: Maidstone Tri-study: Bus interchange study, town centre parking strategy and Park and Ride study
 - Appendix 2: Summary of the most recent Park and Ride improvement survey
 - Appendix 3: Highlights from the Park and Ride business survey
 - Appendix 4: Financial comparison of the 5 options for Park and Ride **(Exempt)**
 - Appendix 5: Equalities Impact Assessment
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