

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Report prepared by J Kitson

Date Issued: 19th March 2009

1. **OBJECTIONS TO TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER OFF-STREET**
- 1.1 Issue for decision
- 1.1.1 To consider the objections received as part of the formal consultation following the advertising of Traffic Regulation Orders relating to the Off Street Parking Places Order (Variation Two).
- 1.1.2 To consider informal petitions raised in relation to the introduction of Sunday Pay & Display charging.
- 1.2 Recommendation of the Assistant Director of Environmental Services
- 1.2.1 That the objections be noted but that the extension of the current Pay & Display tariff to all days be agreed.
- 1.2.2 That the orders be implemented as outlined in Appendix A and the objectors informed of the outcome.
- 1.3 Reasons for recommendation
- Background
- 1.3.1 The Cabinet Member decision to increase the mid range tariff up to three hours within the Councils Pay & Display car parks by 20p to £1.80 and the introduction of Sunday Charges was agreed on 24th December 2008.
- 1.3.2 The national downturn in the economy has had a significant impact on Pay & Display income performance. It is estimated that if current conditions continue a 14% budget deficit is likely which will

impact on our ability to maintain the car parks to a good standard and may influence customer retention levels in the longer term.

- 1.3.3 Customer usage and transaction levels have been studied in each of the council's car park tariff bands and balanced against private car park operators within the town.
- 1.3.4 Many Council off-street car parks are situated in prime locations close to the town centre with competitive charges applied for up to three hours when compared to other local car park operators.
- 1.3.5 Data collated from the ASLAN parking system has confirmed that the tariff for up to three hours is popular with customers, as almost half park for a period of up to 3 hours. It considered that the Councils town centre car parks can remain competitive if the charges within this band were increased by 20p to £1.80. Tariffs of up to 1 hour and over 4 hours have also been reviewed, however it is recommended not to change the existing tariff in these areas as financial impact in these bands is comparatively low in comparison and may influence customer retention levels.
- 1.3.6 The breakdown in relation to customer tariff band use during the last financial year identifies that only 6% of customer's park for over 4 hours with 24% purchasing a ticket for up to a maximum period of 4 hours. 49% purchase a ticket for up to 3 hours with 21% parking for up to 1 hour.
- 1.3.7 Data collated for the first and second quarter of 2008/9 identifies that customers wishing to park for a period of over 4 hours has remained consistent. However a reduction of 13% has been noted within the within the 3 to 4 hour tariff band. Usage data confirms that customers purchasing parking time are limiting their period of stay as the percentage parking up to 3 hours has increased by 12%.
- 1.3.8 In order to retain competitiveness maintaining a low first hour headline charge is considered important as this will help to ensure off street parking remain competitive.
- 1.3.9 Based on data from the last financial year, the impact of a 20p increase in the up to 3 hour tariff has been estimated to increase income by approx £27,953 per annum. It should be considered that a percentage of customers may migrate to competitor parking facilities and so the estimated figure has been reduced by 20% to reflect potential customer behavior.

- 1.3.10 Sunday charges have been introduced in Maidstone by some local car park operators as it is an established method of raising revenue to cover the cost of providing parking facilities.
- 1.3.11 Local charging levels for Sunday parking do vary and are dependent on car park location and access to the town centre shopping and commercial facilities.
- 1.3.12 Due to the current economic climate and the impact this has had on Pay & Display income levels, Sunday charging is a consideration for raising revenue to enable Maidstone Borough Council to continue its investment in maintaining car park standards and investing surplus revenues to support Council priorities.
- 1.3.13 Many local authorities in Kent have also introduced Sunday charging successfully to support the cost in providing services. Charges are normally based on the weekly tariff rates applied in each local area.
- 1.3.14 Surveys have been carried out in other Kent towns where Sunday charges apply. Car park occupancy levels on a Sunday were estimated at between 5% and 8% of the recorded car park occupancy during a normal weekday.
- 1.3.15 Sunday charging can potentially generate £88,000 per annum if based on average occupancy levels observed on Sundays in other car parks. However, usage and turnover could be subject to variation as market demands in the current economic climate are difficult to predict.

Process

- 1.3.16 A Public Notice formally advertising the order was published in the Local Press during the week ending Friday 23rd January 2009. Appendix A provides a schedule of the orders advertised.
- 1.3.17 Full details were contained in the draft orders which, together with a copy of the Public Notices, and a statement of the Council's reasons for proposing to make the orders were placed on deposit at the Invicta House (Kent County Council) County Hall, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 1XX, and at the reception desk, Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone ME15 6JQ.
- 1.3.18 Letters were also sent to statutory and non statutory consultees and public notices were posted in each of the Councils Pay & Display car parks.

Considerations and recommendations

- 1.3.19 Two objections were received on the grounds that the proposals will have an adverse impact on the local economy and disperse the current users of the car park into the surrounding residential streets. It was suggested that this would result in localised vehicle congestion, affect Maidstone as a shopping centre and would also have an impact on religious activities. Twelve letters were also received with comments and observations in relation to the proposal.
- 1.3.20 A petition of 519 signatories against Sunday charges and resident parking proposals was presented independently to the formal consultation exercise, at the Overview and Scrutiny meeting held on the 18th December 2008. A further petition of 990 signatories against Sunday charges and resident parking proposals was presented to the Joint Transportation Board meeting held on 24th February 2009. As these consultations included the introduction of Sunday charges the views of these respondents should be considered, although it should be noted that respondents to the petition are likely to have also taken part in the formal consultation process for resident parking proposals where their views and observations will have been recorded and considered. However, in charging for Sunday parking the Council would be in line with many other local authorities in Kent and also other car parks in the town centre. It is recommended that although objections have been received that the changes be implemented as set out in the draft order.
- 1.3.21 The concerns raised regarding vehicle dispersion to other areas, particularly resident areas, will be closely monitored. As will the effect on local businesses.
- 1.3.22 No objections were received in relation to increase the mid range tariff up to three hours within the Councils Pay & Display car parks by 20p to £1.80.
- 1.3.23 It is therefore recommended to proceed with the proposal as advertised and make the order.

1.4 Alternative actions and why not recommended

- 1.4.1 To not proceed with the order as advertised will result in the changes not being implemented and consequently result in a budget deficit.

- 1.4.2 To consider alternative tariff band changes may result in the Councils Pay & Display car parks becoming uncompetitive when compared to other car parks. This will lead to a reduction in income levels.
- 1.4.3 To consider not proceeding with the introduction of Sunday charging will have a significant impact on potential income levels resulting in a budget deficit.
- 1.4.4 To consider a reduced charging tariff band for Sunday parking will result in a variation to normal daily rate charging. This may create a confusing tariff structure for some customers and lead to reduced income levels and budget deficit.

1.5 Impact on corporate objectives

- 1.5.1 Due to the current economic climate and the impact this has had on Pay & Display income levels, Sunday charging is a consideration for raising revenue to enable Maidstone Borough Council to continue its investment in maintaining car park standards.
- 1.5.2 Corporate objectives to improve access across the borough through better roads, public transport and services, directly relate to Parking Services and the provision of off-street parking facilities.

1.6 Risk Management

- 1.6.1 There is a risk that customers may migrate to other car park facilities as a result of an increase to the Pay & Display tariff, however, it should be considered that the Councils car parks are located centrally to the town centre and continue offer good value for money being competitively priced when compared to other car park providers.
- 1.6.2 There is a risk that some shoppers or visitors who previously came to Maidstone on a Sunday will look to travel elsewhere. However with a thriving town centre, Maidstone has a wealth of attractions offering history, culture, leisure and entertainment and so the impact is likely to be minimal when compared to the benefits. Other local authorities who have introduced a Sunday charge have indicated that charges have not generated any medium to long term negative impact.

1.6.3 The introduction of a Sunday charge must be balanced against the risk of adversely impacting on the levels of on street parking, surveys will be required to closely monitor any localised dispersion affect due to vehicle migration.

1.7 Impact on Corporate Implications

1. Financial	X
2. Staffing	
3. Legal	X
4. Equality Impact Needs Assessment	
5. Environmental/Sustainable Development	
6. Community Safety	
7. Human Rights Act	
8. Procurement	
9. Asset Management	

1.5.1 Financial

The costs of the order variation and implementation will be met from within the existing Parking Services budget. The introduction of the charges will generate additional income estimated at £115,953, in accordance with the Council’s budget strategy.

1.7.2 Legal

Formal orders will need to be made and signed by the Maidstone Borough Council’s Legal Team.

1.8 Background Documents

None.

NO REPORT WILL BE ACCEPTED WITHOUT THIS BOX BEING COMPLETED

Is this a Key Decision?

Yes

No

If yes, when did it appear in the Forward Plan? _____

Is this an Urgent Key Decision?

Yes

No

Reason for Urgency

How to Comment

Should you have any comments on the issue that is being considered please contact either the relevant Officer or the Member of the Executive who will be taking the decision.

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Appendix A

Schedule of order advertised

The Order will;

(i) Introduce Charges on a Sunday in all the Pay & Display Car Parks excluding Lockmeadow.

(ii) Revise car park tariffs as follows –

Short stay car parks	Between 8am and 6.30pm - Up to 30 Minutes	£0.40
	Between 8am and 6.30pm - 30 Minutes to 3 Hours	£1.80
No. 1 – Wheeler Street	Between 8am and 6.30pm - 3 to 4 hours	£2.70
No. 3– Brewer Street	Between 6.30pm and 8am - any period	£1.50

All Long stay car parks excluding Lockmeadow and King Street	Between 8am and 6.30pm - Up to 1 Hour	£0.70
	Between 8am and 6.30pm - 1 to 3 Hours	£ 1.80
	Between 8am and 6.30pm - 3 to 4 hours	£2.70
	Between 8am and 6.30pm - over 4 Hours	£4.50
	Between 6.30pm and 8am - any period	£1.50

Short stay car parks	Between 8am and 6.30pm - Up to 30 minutes	30p
	Between 8am and 6.30pm – Up to 1 Hour	50p
No6 – Medway Street	Between 8am and 6.30pm - Up to 2 Hours	£ 1.00
	Between 8am and 6.30pm – Up to 3 Hours	£1.80
	Between 8am and 6.30pm - Up to 4 Hours	£2.00

	Between 6.30pm and 8am - any period	£1.50
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Short stay car parks No. 8 – Mote Road No. 10 – Mill Street	Between 8am and 6.30pm – Up to 1 Hour	£0.70
	Between 8am and 6.30pm - 1 to 3 Hours	£1.80
	Between 8am and 6.30pm - 3 to 4 Hours	£2.70
	Between 6.30pm and 8am - any period	£1.50

Short stay car parks No. 14 – Palace Avenue	Between 8am and 6.30pm - Up to 3 Hours	£1.80
	Between 8am and 6.30pm - 3 to 4 Hours	£2.70
	Between 6.30pm and 8am - any period	£1.50