

This Report will be made public on 7 November 2023

Report Number **C/23/52**

To: Cabinet
Date: 15 November 2023
Status: Key Decision
Responsible Officer: Frederick Miller, Transportation Lead Specialist
Cabinet Member: Councillor Polly Blakemore

SUBJECT: PROPOSED ON-STREET PARKING CHARGES

SUMMARY: This report makes recommendations for parking charges to be introduced in and around shopping streets in Folkestone, Sandgate, Hythe and New Romney as shown in appendix 1.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

Cabinet is asked to agree the recommendations because the proposed schemes will:

- a) Increase parking enforcement efficiency.
- b) Encourage driver compliance.
- c) Improve traffic flow and reduce parking congestion.
- d) Encourage greater use of off-street parking.
- e) Help plug the council's budget deficit.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To receive and note report C/23/52.
2. That subject to statutory consultation:
 - a. Parking charges be introduced in and around the shopping streets as shown in appendix 1 in Folkestone, Sandgate, Hythe and New Romney from the 1st April 2024.
 - b. That the following charges with the minimum stay being 30 minutes and maximum stay 2 hours, all days, 8am-6pm, be applied:
 - Folkestone- £2 per hour, linear per minute
 - Sandgate, Hythe & New Romney- £1.80 per hour, linear per minute
 - c. That unlimited waiting for permit holders continue to apply in areas with existing shared use parking.
 - d. To authorise capital spend of £70k for the procurement of new pay & display machines, signing and lining.
3. That results of the consultation be reported to cabinet in order for any proposed changes to be included in the fees and charges and council budget papers.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Proposals to introduce charges in shopping streets in the district were first mooted in 2010. During the public consultations in 2012, many objections were raised by local traders. They stated that the proposed charges would reduce footfall in the town centres and do great harm to the retail climate.
- 1.2 Following the public consultations, it was decided by Cabinet not to introduce the parking charges in any of the shopping streets. Members however agreed to progress the charges on Folkestone seafront, The Leas and much later along Princes Parade. Free limited waiting for up to 2 hours was introduced in several shopping streets.
- 1.3 There has never been any clear evidence that free parking in shopping streets has a positive impact on footfall. The availability of parking is what is crucial. In areas where demand for parking is high, free limited waiting can significantly reduce vehicle churn. To manage parking better, other districts in Kent and towns in many parts of the country have been charging for parking in shopping streets for decades.
- 1.4 What is very clear, are the disadvantages of free limited waiting and the difficult challenges this brings. They include:
 - Enforcement- Limited waiting bays are extremely difficult to enforce. Officers have to log all vehicles and return after 2 hours to take enforcement action. This takes an enormous amount of enforcement time.
 - “Circling” – as a result of vehicles being parked for slightly longer than permitted, other vehicles are then required to “circle” the area looking for available parking spaces. This causes congestion and has a detrimental impact on the local air quality.
 - “Double parking”- officers receive many complaints about this particularly in Sandgate Road, Folkestone. Drivers tend to double park in the hope that free parking may soon be available, instead of using the available chargeable car parks. This also causes congestion.
 - Retailers rely, to a significant extent, on trade resulting from short, single purpose visits to town centres. These trips generally last less than 30 minutes and are usually undertaken by car. However, studies of town centres have shown that finding a short stay parking space can be a significant deterrent to making such a trip. Anecdotal evidence suggests that in Folkestone, Sandgate, and New Romney, short stay parking is used for long stay parking with drivers simply moving from one bay to the next. This is to the detriment of the short stay user and has an adverse effect on local businesses. The new proposals will change this as the drivers will only be able to purchase parking for up to the maximum period allowed.

2. PROPOSALS

2.1 Officers propose that subject to statutory consultations, the existing 2-hour free limited waiting bays in the following roads are converted to paid for parking (Pay and Display) as shown in appendix 1:

- Folkestone- Bouverie Square, Bouverie Road West, Christchurch Road, Cheriton Place, Manor Road and Sandgate Road.
- Sandgate- Sandgate High Street
- Hythe- High Street, Hythe
- New Romney- High Street New Romney

2.2 Pay & display is a highly effective way of managing parking pressures because of the following reasons:

- Pay and display dramatically reduces officers time spent on the enforcement of free limited waiting bays. Officers time can be deployed in other areas where there are high incidents of illegal parking.
- Motorists who have paid to park are far more inclined to comply with the parking restrictions.
- A price disincentive encourages better use of alternate means of transportation, walking, cycling and car sharing.
- Introducing pay and display and aligning operating times and charges with the local off-street regime encourages greater use of car parks, relieving on-street parking congestion.

2.3 It is proposed that subject to statutory consultation, the following linear per minute charges with minimum stay of 30 minutes and maximum stay of 2 hours are applied all days, 8am-6pm, from 1st April 2024:

- Folkestone - £2 per hour
- Sandgate, Hythe, and New Romney - £1.80 per hour

2.4 Sandgate High Street and a couple of the roads in Folkestone currently have some shared use parking i.e., permit holders or free 2-hour limited waiting, allowing vehicles with permits unlimited waiting. It is proposed that these spaces are converted to shared use- permit holders or pay & display.

3. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 One of the drawbacks of pay & display schemes is the initial expense. A financial model has been developed and this is shown as appendix 2. The estimated one-off capital cost to cover new pay & display machines and signage is £70k.

3.2 The financial model also sets out the estimated annual revenue costs (£26k) and the potential income each scheme will generate. On a best-case scenario (30% occupancy summer & 20% winter), the total annual potential income is in the region £384k, whilst on a worst-case scenario (20% occupancy summer/10% winter), it is over £230k.

- 3.3 The on-street charges have been set higher than those proposed for car parks in the 2024/25 fees & charges proposals. This is an approach used by many authorities to encourage more motorists to use the car parks, thereby relieving on-street congestion. This could also increase the council's off-street income.
- 3.4 For many years, there has been a net cost to the council for on-street parking. Any overall surplus could now be used to offset some of those deficits and could also go towards future transport improvements in accordance with national legislation.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 4.1 A summary of the perceived risks follows:

Perceived risk	Seriousness	Likelihood	Preventative action
<p>Public backlash.</p> <p>When a pay and display scheme is first proposed, there is usually a considerable amount of initial resistance. Members of the public usually regard it as a "tax on motorists".</p>	High	High	<p>Officers will ensure that the benefits of the proposed schemes are effectively communicated. Officers will also highlight the disadvantages of the existing free limited waiting schemes and why they are unsustainable.</p> <p>Officers will publicise the heavily discounted car park permits available to residents of the district.</p>

5. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

5.1 Legal Officer's Comments (NM)

The Council has the legal authority under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (as amended) to introduce charges for parking in its area. Subject to the Council complying with the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and to relevant FHDC officers liaising with KCC upon the proposals there are no legal implications arising directly out of this report.

5.2 Finance Officer's Comments (TM)

The financial implications are contained within the report.

5.3 **Diversities and Equalities Implications (FM)**

There are no negative implications arising from this report, particularly in relation to holders of disabled parking badges, as any existing disabled parking bays will remain. The normal exemptions for blue badge holders would continue to apply. Vehicles displaying a disabled person's badge would be permitted to park in pay & display spaces without charge for as long as necessary.

5.4 **Climate Change Implications (OF)**

There will be positive climate implications arising from the proposals within this report. The result will be a decrease in congestion and a potential increase in the uptake of alternative/active modes of transport, so improving air quality in busy shopping streets.

6. **CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officer prior to the meeting.

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The following background documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report:

None

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Map showing proposed P&D areas
Appendix 2: Financial Model