

Report to Councillor Joy Dennis, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

September 2024

On-Street Parking Charges Review 2024/25

Report by Assistant Director (Highways, Transport and Planning)

Electoral Divisions: all

Summary

As Highway Authority, the County Council is responsible for managing on-street parking in West Sussex. This includes setting on-street parking charges at appropriate levels to deliver the County Council's objectives for parking management, as set out in the [Integrated Parking Strategy 2022-2027](#).

The on-street parking charges review for 2024/25 considers all on-street parking charges, including all types of parking permits, dispensation notices, suspensions, pay and display and off-street charges in Crawley Library car park.

Three options are being put forward for consideration for implementation. The first two adjust the parking charges to make changes to the administration of the Controlled Parking Zones, to correct any imbalance that exists between the on and off-street charges in some towns, to take account of inflation, to manage parking demand and to help facilitate future developments in service provision. The third option makes no adjustment to the current parking charges.

Recommendations

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, having considered the options for changes to on-street parking charges, has decided to freeze on-street parking charges for 2024/25, as set out in section 2.3 of the report

Proposal

1 Background and context

- 1.1 The last review of on-street parking charges in West Sussex took place in 2023/24 and was implemented on 2 October 2023. This implemented an increase in most charges generally in line with inflation.
- 1.2 The 2024/25 review considers all on-street parking permits, dispensation notices, suspensions, pay and display and off-street charges in Crawley Library car park.
- 1.3 The general objectives for the 2024/25 review of on-street parking charges are to:

- a. increase parking charges to account for inflation and increases in operational running costs as well as correct any imbalance that exists between the on and off-street charges in some towns
 - b. manage parking demand, thereby freeing up on-street parking spaces for those who have the greatest need
 - c. encourage on-street parking events of short duration, thereby maximising the available parking capacity, reducing the amount of circulating traffic and increasing accessibility; and
 - d. discourage unnecessary use of private cars in town centres and to encourage more sustainable transport choices.
- 1.4 The income and expenditure for on-street parking is required by law to be contained within the On-Street Parking Account. The purpose for which any surplus might be utilised, should one be generated, is ring-fenced by Section 55 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. In summary, these are to:
- a. repay any funds for parking measures that have been borrowed from the general rate fund
 - b. contribute towards the provision or maintenance of parking facilities
 - c. contribute towards improvements to passenger transport services or infrastructure
 - d. contribute towards other highway improvements.
- 1.5 Options 1 and 2 are policy driven. Their impact must therefore be viewed in the context of their contribution towards the aims and objectives of the Integrated Parking Strategy 2022 - 2027. Generally, the County Council has raised prices in line with inflation as this reflects increasing costs associated with delivery of the service.
- 1.6 It should be noted that the County Council is only responsible for on-street parking and its charges, with the exception of Crawley Library. Off-street parking is controlled by the District and Borough Councils or privately. In most cases across the County off-street parking charges are increased annually and, in some cases, such as Arun District, now exceed the equivalent on-street short stay charges.

2 Proposal details

- 2.1 For 2024/25 there are three options, Option 1 being based on a wholesale increase of 5.2% in line with the Retail Price Index for December 2023 (see Appendix A) and Option 2 - the 'hybrid option' being based on a combination of Retail Price Index increases and Demand Management considerations (see Appendix B). Option 3 is to freeze parking charges at their current level.
- 2.2 Within Option 2 (the hybrid option), charges for Government Permits are increased by RPI only to align with the proposed charges for Healthcare Permits. Furthermore, In East Grinstead, charges for Part-Day Permits have been reduced slightly to align with equivalent part-day schemes in Billingshurst and Worthing.
- 2.3 Whilst national inflation is reducing to the Bank of England's target of 2% it has previously remained above that target with 2 years of very high levels. Option 3 (to freeze parking charges) is therefore included as an option to offer assistance for those residents whose ability to meet increased costs for on-street parking may need to catch up to meet the effect of inflation more broadly.

3 Other options considered

- 3.1 The Cabinet Member may opt for a variation of any of the options. For example, in previous years, mainly due to the pandemic, charges for some types of permits, such as healthcare, have been frozen or increased by RPI only whilst others have been increased in line with demand management principles.

4 Consultation and engagement

- 4.1 The District and Borough Councils operate civil parking enforcement in West Sussex and manage the Controlled Parking Zones, under agency agreements, on behalf of the County Council. Officers from all authorities meet regularly to monitor parking charges and the operation of the schemes and to discuss any issues that arise. In this case the proposals set out in this paper have been shared with the relevant Parking Managers and no issues raised.

5 Finance

- 5.1 Budgeted on-street parking income totals £4.687m in 2024/25. The effect of each option is set out below.
- 5.2 Option 1 is estimated to deliver additional income of £0.2m per annum, which is anticipated to be sufficient to cover inflationary cost pressures but would not provide the further additional £0.2m income anticipated within the budget agreed by Full Council in February 2024. The impact of the shortfall would need to be managed via the County Council's budget planning process moving forward.
- 5.3 Option 2 is estimated to deliver additional income of £0.411m per annum, which would be sufficient to cover inflationary cost pressures and provide the further additional £0.2m income anticipated within the agreed budget.
- 5.4 Option 3 would not deliver additional income. The existing parking reserve is sufficient to cover the inflationary cost pressures for the year 24/25 but not beyond.
- 5.5 It should be noted that estimating the additional income that any increase in parking charges will generate is inherently difficult, because of the possibility, especially in the short-term, that there will be displacement to off-street car parks or other changes to parking behaviour and journey choices. This may of course vary between areas and over time.
- 5.6 The costs of implementing options 1 and 2 would be approximately £0.030m and would be met from within existing budgets. These costs include advertising and amending the traffic regulation orders, making the necessary alterations to the back office stationery and carrying out the necessary modifications to the pay and display equipment.

Whilst the service does generate a surplus, once the costs of operation have been covered, that surplus is used to support concessionary fares and rural bus services. Were these not to be covered by this surplus they would create an additional pressure on the County Council's overall budget.

6 Risk implications and mitigations

Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
Options 1 and 2 could result in parking displacement into residential areas as drivers seek to avoid increased charges. Option 3 could result in more drivers entering town centres and searching for short stay parking spaces, thus leading to increased congestion and pollution.	<p>The Integrated Parking Strategy provides the framework within which competing and conflicting parking needs are identified, assessed and prioritised. It also sets out the criteria for reviewing and setting levels of parking charges.</p> <p>Regular monitoring takes place in each of the town centres where parking charges apply, and this informs officers if the parking charges are not set at an appropriate level and are failing to meet the objectives of the Integrated Parking Strategy.</p>
Option 3 requires drawing down increased sums from the on-street parking reserve in order to recover costs for operating the parking service so that a long term sustainable operation can be maintained.	The balance on the on-street parking reserve will be monitored and managed through the County Council's budget planning process.

7 Policy alignment and other matters taken into account

- 7.1 In general terms all options align with the Sustainable and Prosperous Economy priority within the Council Plan 2021 – 2025, in that providing parking in a well-managed way helps to support local businesses and communities.
- 7.2 There are no equality, human rights, climate change, crime and disorder, public health or social value implications.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Option 1 (RPI)

Appendix B – Option 2 (Demand Management)

Background Papers – none