

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-038-2018/19
Date of meeting: 07 March 2019



Portfolio: Contracts and Technical Services

Subject: Petition to rescind Sunday Off Street Car Parking charges in Ongar

Responsible Officer: Qasim (Kim) Durrani (01992 564055).

Democratic Services: Adrian Hendry (01992 564246).

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

(1) To note the Petition signed by 75 signatories from Ongar seeking to rescind the Cabinet decision of September 2018 of a free one hour followed by £1 all day charge on Sunday in the Pleasance Car Park in Ongar;

(2) To agree that on the basis that the changes being introduced were agreed by Cabinet in September 2018 as part of parking tariff review it is too soon to make an amendment and that a full review of the impact of the new tariff will be carried out within a year of being implemented.

Executive Summary:

The last tariff change was in 2015 however it did not include Ongar and Waltham Abbey. Parking charges have not changed in Ongar since 2008.

In September 2018 Cabinet agreed a new car parking tariff. The review seeks to balance the needs of various users and is an attempt to simplify parking tariff, accept the principle of controlling demand by price, help local businesses by keeping the lower charge bands unchanged, gradually removing subsidy from Season Ticket prices, continue the differential tariff across the District, create uniformity in charging on weekends and enable reinvestment to improve and enhancing user experience.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To consider a petition submitted by 75 residents of the District.

Other Options for Action:

It is possible to rescind the earlier Cabinet decision of September 2018 and keep free Sunday parking in Pleasance Car Park in Ongar. There are four other car parks that will also see the introduction of new £1 charge, these are: Basons Lane Ongar, Cornmill, Quaker Lane and Darby Drive Waltham Abbey. It could be deemed unfair if only one car park remained free and others were chargeable.

Report:

1. The Council has received a Petition signed by 75 residents of Ongar, attached as an annex. The petitioners seek for the Council to reconsider its earlier decision of introduction of a £1 all day parking charge on a Sunday in Pleasance Car Park in Ongar, after an initial free one hour. The Petitioner's reasons include adverse impact on: members of Petangue club, ramblers, dog walkers, visitors and vitality of local shops and businesses. Under the Council Constitution Cabinet is obliged to consider the Petition and take appropriate action.
2. In September 2018 Cabinet agreed a new car parking tariff to be implemented across all 20 pay and display car parks owned and managed by the Council. These car parks play an essential role in servicing high streets and towns across the District by providing safe parking spaces to: shoppers, short and long stay visitors, workers and commuters. Use of these car parks is subject to parking charges which were last reviewed in 2015, in the case of Ongar and Waltham Abbey in 2008. The new tariff is planned to be implemented from early March 2019.
3. When considering tariff review Cabinet was keen to ensure needs of the local users and it was agreed to keep short and long stay tariff for the first three bands: 20 pence for half hour, 80 or 90 pence for up to 1 hour and £1.60 or £1.80 for up to 2 hour stay.
4. The review considered parking arrangements on weekends. In some car parks full weekday tariff applies while in others there is partial or full day free parking. A decision was made to bring consistency across the District in charges in those car parks that are free on weekends. This means those car parks that are currently free on Saturday and/or Sunday a free one hour period followed by £1 all day will be introduced. All other car parks that attract a full tariff will remain unchanged.
5. While the use of car parks on weekends by residents, visitors and tourists is welcome it is worth noting the costs, for example: enforcement to ensure safe parking, maintenance associated with repairs to car park surface, signs and lines and vegetation etc. by introducing a £1 all day charge the Council will recover costs incurred in keeping the car park safe and in good state of repair.

Resource Implications:

New car parking charges will come into force in March 2019. It is estimated, based on the modelling assumptions, that an additional income of £320,000 per financial year could be generated once all the changes are introduced, subject to no reduction in parking stays.

It is estimated that rescinding the decision to charge £1 on Sunday in Ongar would result in annual lost revenue of £3,000. This could be a lot higher if, in the interest of fairness, the remaining four car parks also retained free Sunday parking. This could present a budgetary issue as the Council budget has been agreed which includes the additional income from car parks.

Legal and Governance Implications:

The changes to the tariff structure are carried out under Notice of Variation under sections 35C and 46A of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

All the Council car parks have Park Mark accreditation. Most of the car parks have new CCTV

systems. All car parks are regularly maintained, all equipment kept in good working order, hedges, fences and signs are checked and updated when required. New pay and display machines enable remote access to officers to monitor usage of the machines. Use of credit and debit card and payment by phone enable easy payment options for customer.

Consultation Undertaken:

NSL – Council's parking enforcement contractor for introduction of changes
RTA Associates for validation of parking modelling and advice on weekend charging.

Background Papers:

Cabinet report of 6 September 2018.

Risk Management:

The Council last increased tariffs in Ongar in 2008. The Council is keen to help local businesses and high streets. If the decision is rescinded then there is a financial as well as reputational risk. The financial risk arises from the loss of income which has already been included in the Council budget. The reputational risk is associated with only allowing free parking in Ongar and not the other four car parks.