

TITLE	Evening, Sunday and Shute End Charges
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on 31 March 2016
WARD	None specific
DIRECTOR	Heather Thwaites, Director of Environment
LEAD MEMBER	John Kaiser, Executive Member for Highways and Planning

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

These proposed charges will ensure that the council's off street car parks provide a best value return on the asset.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Executive:

- 1) approve the permanent making of The Wokingham Borough Council (Various off-street Borough Car Parks) (Variation (2)) Order 2016);
- 2) Instruct officers to amend signage and equipment in the car parks;
- 3) inform those who have responded to the consultation accordingly.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report summarises the Sunday and evening car parking charges proposed, responds to the objections from the consultation on these proposals, and recommends a decision to the Executive.

Background

The principle of charging for car park use is well established. The Council currently charges users in most of the car parks it operates with those charges applying between the hours of 8am and 6pm, Monday to Saturday. The Council is increasingly under pressure to generate new streams of income in order to support services. The proposals for evening and weekend charging will generate additional income and brings Wokingham car park charging regime in to line with many other authorities locally.

For the car parks listed below, a £1.00 charge for parking Sunday and bank holidays all day (8am-6pm) and Monday to Sunday, nightly (6pm-8am). All car parks below have a Nightly Season Tickets (6pm-8am) for 12 months of £292, apart from School Lane, Wargrave, which has a residents parking scheme in place.

- Cockpit Path
- Easthampstead Road East
- Easthampstead Road West
- Crockhamwell Road
- Headley Road
- Denmark Street
- School Lane, Wargrave
- Station Road, Earley
- Lytham Road East
- Lytham Road West
- Polehampton Close East, Twyford
- Polehampton Close East, West
- Shute End Council Offices
- The Paddocks
- Carnival Pool
- Rose Street
- Winnersh Triangle.

In addition, the following charges shall apply to The Shute End Council offices car park on Saturdays between 8:00am and 6:00pm (excluding bank holidays):

- 70p up to 1 hour;
- £1.20 up to 2 hours;
- £2.00 up to 4 hours;
- £3.00 up to 6 hours;
- £4.00 up to 10 hours.

For all car parks, the unladen weight limit has increased from 30 cwt to 3000kg. In all other respects, the charges listed in the car parks shall continue to apply in addition to those that appear above.

Analysis of Issues

A public consultation on the above proposal was held from 13 January 2016 until 5 February 2016. Notices were placed in each car park and advertisements appeared in both local papers. In addition, letters were sent to each town and parish council as well as the Wokingham and Woodley Town Centre Management Initiatives. All ward members were also informed of the proposals and consultation. Consultation responses were made on the council's website. Responses which came in writing were also added to the consultation. The responses to the consultation can be seen in

Appendix A. *[Due to the size of this Appendix it is not included in the agenda but can be found on the Council's website or is available on request from Democratic Services.]*

Most responses to the consultation were against the proposals. The objections and responses are summarised in this section. Appendix A, which shows the objections, refers to the numbered responses below.

1 – Safety impact

Safety concerns were raised regarding women using the car parks to pay at night. Although the fear of crime is understandable, the council's crime figure analysis, in conjunction with Thames Valley Police shows that crime, even in the council car parks, is very low. With the introduction of these charges, trained enforcement officers will now patrol the car parks during the evening, ensuring that an even higher level of safety is maintained.

2 - On street parking impact

Car users who wish to avoid the charges in the council car parks may choose to park on street. Whilst this parking is an acceptable alternative if done so legally, illegal parking may inconvenience residents. The council has been given approval by the Executive to apply to parliament for the powers to undertake on-street parking enforcement. Until these powers are granted, the council will continue to work with the police to ensure illegal parking is addressed.

3 – Resident impact

The evening charges will have an impact on residents who do not have private parking availability at their residence and choose to use council car parks. Parking is not a right that the council provides for each residence and the provision of where to park a vehicle must be a factor when choosing a place to live. Through planning work, the council aims to provide different types of accommodation to the population to account for different needs. The proximity to amenities and public transport is part of the attraction in leaving near a town centre, even at the detriment of private car owner's ability to have reserved parking for their vehicle. The council has offered an overnight season ticket as part of these proposals to address this concern.

For some residents, the cost of parking may be prohibitive. Adult and children's services run by the council can give advice as to individual circumstances.

4 – Social impact

Various community groups concerned by the impact on their organisations were mentioned in the responses to the consultation. These include theatre groups, community centres, car-boots/markets, sporting activities in local parks, libraries, after school clubs, major events, and centres of religious worship. Although the circumstances of each organisation varies, all bring a sense of purpose to their constituents and to the wider community. Whilst the council recognises this contribution, the car parking asset must generate value for money to the council in order to support the transport goals of the council as well as other valuable services that the council provides to the community. The land value of the car parks must also be considered when operating a parking service. In order to provide off-street parking that balances the needs of the multiple users of the council's services, charges must be established in order to provide value for money.

5 – Business impact

Among the businesses that residents felt may be negatively impacted by the proposals were take-aways, restaurants, bars, retailers, traders, banks/cash points, fitness/health classes, doctor surgeries, and pharmacies. The charges are proposed so that the provision for off-street parking can remain and be sustainable to support the customers of these businesses in the future. Benchmarking with neighbouring borough councils show that similar charges are in place in other districts, often at higher values than those set out in this proposal.

6 – Community impact

Concerns on the impact of the proposals on the vibrancy of the borough's town centres were raised in the consultation. Whilst some individuals may choose not to use the town centre car parks during the hours of the new proposals, the risk of impact on parking is minimal compared to other factors, many of which are addressed through the works of town centre regeneration and other similar projects. Parking studies have shown a steady year-on-year increase in the use of all of the borough's car parks. With many new residents moving to the borough, this trend is expected to continue and the council is preparing projects to address the future parking needs of the area.

7 – Financial viability

Concerns were raised within the consultation as to the financial viability of this scheme. In generating these proposals, the cost of enforcement was considered. If the proposals gain approval, the implementation of the proposals will be carefully monitored in order to ensure value for money is achieved. The proposed revenue savings will ensure that the transport aims of the council can be achieved. The off-street parking service is a non-statutory service that provides a valuable asset to the community and is part of the council's transport asset.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	(£150k)	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	(£150k)	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	(£150k)	Yes	Revenue

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

None

Cross-Council Implications

None

List of Background Papers
See Appendix A

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