

CABINET

DATE OF MEETING: 2 JULY 2020

TITLE OF REPORT: REINSTATEMENT OF CAR PARK CHARGES

Report of: Head of Environment and Technical Services

Cabinet member: Councillor Alan Oliver, Cabinet Member for Environment

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To seek approval to reinstate car park charges in Harts car parks with effect from 1 August 2020 and to agree not to change on-street parking tariffs before January 2021.

2 OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That car park charges are reinstated in all Hart off street car parks on 1 August 2020.

2.2 That no changes will be made to off street parking tariffs before January 2021.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 In March 2020 as part of the Councils response to the coronavirus pandemic and to support local retailers and business during this difficult period the Cabinet Member for Environment authorised the suspension of charges in Harts car parks until the end of June 2020.

3.2 On 23 March 2020, the government implemented a national lockdown to limit the spread of COVID-19. This included the closure of all non-essential retail premises, where possible for people to work from home, and the banning of all nonessential travel. Consequently, the use of council car parks since March 2020 has been minimal.

3.2 The closure of non-essential retail, pubs and restaurants has had a major impact on the local economy particularly in the Harts village and town centres.

3.3 The ban on non-essential travel has now been lifted and on the 15 June non-essential retail reopened, it is anticipated that other businesses such as pubs, restaurants and hairdressers will be allowed to reopen in early July.

3.4 The council is committed to supporting the economic recovery of its retail centres and has implemented the following initiatives to deliver this:

- Suspension of all off street parking charges.
- Closure of parking bays in Fleet Road to make social distancing easier for shoppers.

- Submitted bids for government funding for the temporary pedestrianisation of parts of Fleet Road.

4 CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1** With reductions in the level of the virus and the relaxation of the lockdown measures there is a need to plan for services to return to a ‘new’ normal.
- 4.2** Car park charges provide an important source income for the Council and their reintroduction is needed to fund the provision of essential Council services. They are also an important tool in managing car park demand.
- 4.3** It is hoped that extending the provision of free parking to the beginning of August will help encourage increased use of Harts retail centres and support local economic recovery.

The approach has been benchmarked against surrounding local authority and other private parking providers.

Council/Car park provider	Date car parking charges date reinstated or anticipated
Hart District Council	1 st August 2020
Hart Shopping Centre	Not applicable – charges applied throughout
Basingstoke and Deane	Not applicable – charges applied throughout
Test Valley Borough Council	22 nd July 2020 (some charges reinstated from 22 nd June)
Waverley Borough Council	1 st July 2020
Wokingham Borough Council	30 th May 2020

- 4.4** As an alternative to ticket machines the Council will be promoting the MI permit app which allows parking to be paid for by mobile phone. The standard charge for the MI permit app is 20p per transaction. However, in response to the current pandemic, and with the view to encouraging more people to use this contactless payment method, a concession has been negotiated with the app supplier whereby no transaction charge will be applied to any parking payment of less than £1.60.
- 4.5** In recognition of the uncertainty and disruption that has been caused to local retailers and businesses in recent months this report recommends that consideration of any amendment to the car park tariff structure is postponed until after 1 January 2021. In the meantime, it is intended that discussions will take place with local town and parish council’s about the possibility of providing short stay free parking in the rural car parks.

5. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1	Is the proposal identified in the Service Plan?	No
	Is the proposal being funded from current budgets?	No
	Have staffing resources already been identified and set aside for this proposal?	No

The council’s response to COVID-19 is not identified in the 2020/21 service plan, and the reduction of income was not accounted for in the 2020/21 Council budget.

5.2 It is estimated that suspension of car park charges for the period March to 1 August 2020 will reduce forecast car park income by £300,500.

5.3 At this time, it is not possible to estimate what impact COVID-19 will have on car park usage and income after 1 August 2020.

6 ACTION

6.1 Subject to this report’s recommendations being approved, car park charges will be reintroduced in Harts car parks on 1 August, and an advertising campaign undertaken to promote the use of the MI permit app.

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APPENDICES / CONFIDENTIAL APPENDICES: None

BACKGROUND PAPERS: None