

Agenda Item No:

Report to: Charity Committee

Date of Meeting: 15 February 2011

Report Title: Review of Car Parking Charges 2011 - 2012

Report By: Richard Homewood
Corporate Director Environmental Services

Purpose of Report

To review and propose increases in off street parking charges

Recommendation(s)

- 1. That the Charity Committee approve increases in parking charges in Foreshore Trust Car Parks as set out in Appendix A, with effect from 1 April 2011**

Reasons for Recommendations

To help mitigate against increasing maintenance costs associated with rising inflation and the 2.5% increase in VAT which came into effect in January 2011 and maintain real levels of income to fund the maintenance and repair of the Trust's assets.

Background

1. Parking charges for off street parking were last reviewed by the Foreshore Trustees and the Borough Council Cabinet in January 2010. On that occasion it was agreed not to increase off street pay and display and season ticket charges.
2. The outgoing Foreshore Trustees have made the following policy statement in respect of car parking charges;

Car parking is a major source of income for the Trust but the trustees have always been aware that this is also one way by which the Trust makes the foreshore available to the public. The trustees have, therefore, sought to moderate car parking charges and increase access for disabled people. Because of the duty of the Trust to ensure public access to the foreshore, the trustees have not agreed to any proposals which contain an element of increasing charges in such a way as to discourage people from parking in foreshore car parks at particular times of day or particular times of year.

3. The following report considers the position for Foreshore Trust Car Parks and recommends limited increases in Foreshore Trust Car Parks (Pelham Place and Rock a Nore). These recommendations take into account the above policy statement and are considered compatible with it.

Discussion

4. The overall parking policy has always been to operate a charging strategy that encourages the use of off street parking for longer term parking by visitors to the seafront facilities. In recent years the Trustees have taken a cautious approach to increasing charges and have introduced seasonal charges with lower fees in the winter months to encourage year round use.
5. An analysis of off street car park usage trends shows that although overall there has been a steady upward trend since 2005, there was a slight reduction in usage last summer (5%). Usage last year was, however, still 2.2% higher than two years ago. This recent dip in usage is not just a Hastings phenomenon, and is thought to be a result of the recession, concessionary bus travel and fuel increases rather than a reaction to the general level of parking fees.
6. Off street pay and display income for April to October is on target with the profiled budget. However, the income from season tickets is 22% lower than the profiled budget. This is mainly due to the reduction in season tickets sales.
7. We believe that the overall steady rise in off street parking usage between 2006 and 2009 was due to the Trustees' cautious approach to increasing parking charges, which took account of the increasing financial pressures faced by the community.
8. With this in mind, a cautious approach is recommended when considering the extent to which the Trust should increase off street parking charges in April.

Trustees do however also need to bear in mind that charges were not increased last year and that real income levels need to be maintained in order to maintain income levels that will support the cost of maintaining the Trust's land and property and pursuit of its charitable purposes.

Pay and Display

9. A recent comparison of parking charges in the South East shows that Brighton, Rother and Eastbourne have higher charges than Hastings for one, two and three hour stays. Maidstone, Tunbridge Wells, Dover and Lewes have lower parking charges, whereas Ashford parking charges are similar to Hastings.
10. It is therefore considered appropriate to increase the parking charges for one, two and three hour stays in Pelham Place and Rock a Nore Car Parks. The specific proposals are set out in Appendix A. It is estimated that these increases would generate additional income of £20,000 for the Trust)

Season Ticket Charges

11. An analysis of season ticket sales from 2002 to 2010 shows that there has been a 43% reduction in sales. Whilst this has helped to achieve our aim of discouraging commuter parking, it also indicates that the present charges are the maximum that drivers are currently prepared to bear.
12. The comparison of season ticket charges with neighbouring authorities shows that season ticket charges at Brighton, Tunbridge Wells and Maidstone are higher than Hastings, whereas in Dover, Rother and Ashford charges are less than Hastings.
13. Given these facts an increase in season ticket charges is not recommended. However, if season ticket charges have to be increased it is suggested that only the cost of the annual season ticket is increased. The suggested increase would be from the current charge of £620 to £640. If the sales/renewals continue at the current level, the estimated additional income generated would be £1,000 for the Foreshore Trust.

Conclusion

14. It is likely that the current fragile state of the Hastings economy will continue for some time, and it is therefore suggested that the Foreshore Trust needs to continue to support affordable access to the foreshore by adopting a cautious approach to increasing parking charges, that will compensate for inflation and the increase in VAT but not overly penalise visitors. It appears that in recent years, a combination of adopting this approach has paid dividends by increasing usage and income despite opposite trends elsewhere in the country. If the trend towards increased parking usage over the past four years continues and a modest increase is implemented a further £21,000 additional income should be generated in a full year.

Wards Affected

Castle, Old Hastings

Area(s) Affected

Central Hastings, South St. Leonards

Policy Implications

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	No
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	No
Risk Management	Yes
Environmental Issues	No
Economic/Financial Implications	Yes
Human Rights Act	No
Organisational Consequences	No

Background Information

Appendix A

Officer to Contact

Rasoul Shahilow
rshahilow@hastings.gov.uk
01424 783360

The appendix to this report cannot be published on the Council's website because of the complex images that it contains (a table). A copy may be obtained from Elaine Wood, Principal Committee Administrator, email ewood@hastings.gov.uk or tel. 01424 451717.