

To: **BRACKNELL TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION COMMITTEE**  
**11th SEPTEMBER 2023**

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## **TOWN CENTRE OFF STREET DAY RATE CAR PARK CHARGES – OCTOBER 2023**

### **Executive Director of Delivery**

#### **1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The council reviews its fees and charges for its town centre car parks on an annual basis. Season ticket prices were reviewed as part of the council's annual budget and increases were made in line with inflation from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023. This paper looks at options in respect of the off-street council run car parks in the town centre which are reviewed annually in September in line with the anniversary of the opening of the Lexicon in 2017.

#### **2 Recommendation**

- 2.1 **The Committee notes the options on charging tariffs for The Avenue, High Street, Braccan Walk and Weather Way car parks from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023.**
- 2.2 **The Committee approves their preferred option as detailed in Table 2 Option 1 set out in the report below.**
- 2.3 **Agree the tariff increase at Bracknell & Wokingham College from £2.00 to £2.50 per stay.**

#### **3 Reasons for Recommendations**

- 3.1 The fees for The Avenue, High Street, Braccan Walk and Weather Way car parks are reviewed annually in line with the anniversary of the opening of The Lexicon. If the recommendation in this report is agreed and assuming that there is no year-on-year changes to the volume and dwell time of visitors based on 22/23 usage, the proposed increases will generate an additional maximum of £376,712 per annum **(High Street calculations are reduced to 20% of current based on it closing on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023).**

#### **4 Alternative Options Considered**

- 4.1 The Council could maintain the current charges for The Avenue, High Street, Braccan Walk and Weather Way car parks. However this option is not recommended in the current budget circumstances as increasing current rates could generate additional income of up to £376,712 per annum based on 22/23 usage. In 22/23, usage rates were down approximately 12% from pre-covid levels, there is no indication that they will return and therefore usage in 22/23 should be considered as the new normal.
- 4.2 If tariffs are not increased this year and increased in 12 months time in October 2024 then the increase will need to be greater at that point in order to rebalance income which may be considered negatively by the customer.
- 4.3 The Avenue car park is by far the busiest car park in town and at peak periods can sometimes reach capacity with some level of queuing. In order to better manage

supply and demand across the whole estate the daily tariffs at Braccan Walk could be set at a slightly lower level so as to reduce demand at the Avenue at peak periods. Clearly this would have a negative effect financially.

## **5 Supporting Information**

- 5.1 The Council entered into a 40-year lease to manage the Avenue multi-storey car park and Weather Way surface car park in 2017. The Council owns and manages the High Street and Braccan Walk multi storey car parks.
- 5.2 The High Street car park will close to the public from the end of October, whilst we can direct season ticket holders to Braccan Walk there is a potential that both season ticket and daily tariff customers could opt to park in Princes Square car park which is owned and managed by the Lexicon. Any increased tariffs will therefore only apply for 1 month at this location and estimated to be in the region of an additional £6,600. From November 2023, 20% of High Street parkers have been estimated to transfer to Braccan Walk and this number is included in the figures in this report.
- 5.3 When car park fees are set, the Council needs to consider the fee structure from a commercial perspective alongside the inter-relationship with the vitality of the town centre.
- 5.4 The lease for The Avenue car park sets the method of calculating the maximum permissible fee increases for day rate parking. High Street and Braccan Walk car parks align with this methodology in order to maintain the balance for council run car parks in the town centre.
- 5.5 In order of popularity, The Avenue, High Street, Braccan Walk, and Weather Way car Parks operate alongside Princess Square and Bracknell Station (including The One) multi-storey car parks.
- 5.6 All town centre car parks face competition from the three hours free parking in the Peel Centre and one and a half hours free parking at Waitrose. There are obligations on the relevant parties to ensure that through their own enforcement procedures, they are regulating this in order to try to deter abuse.
- 5.7 The Avenue and Braccan Walk mainly provide for the needs of shoppers. Weather Way car park provides the only unrestricted height accessible public car park for town centre users and is a small but popular site. High Street has traditionally been used for season tickets and staff parking which will relocate to Braccan Walk.
- 5.8 For longer stays and particularly for those that work in the town centre preferential rates are available at Albert Road and Wick Hill car park where season tickets are available.
- 5.9 There is a validator in Braccan Walk which is set at £2.00 for Bracknell & Wokingham College students per stay regardless of duration. It was previously set for many years at £1.50. Consideration should be given to increasing the set tariff to make any charge proportionate to the daily tariff.
- 5.10 By way of example, from Nov 22 to May 23 useage was 5,245 visits with an income of £10,480. Given that the average duration of stay for a student is possibly in the region on 5-6hrs an income of £37,762 could have been achieved, this is broadly a loss of income of £27k over the 7 month period. Usage numbers are relatively low

from the College and it is likely that with High Street closure they can still be accommodated. There should be an annual review of any charges to Bracknell & Wokingham College but any continued arrangement will be provided at a heavily subsidised and discounted rate.

- 5.11 As stipulated in the lease for the Avenue car park, there is a cap on the fee increases. The Council has previously chosen to implement the same fee increase across all car parks it manages in the town centre.
- 5.12 As detailed in table 2, below, the options for increasing daily charges are as follows:
- Rates are increased in all four car parks (including Weather Way) by the amount that is permissible in The Avenue car park, according to the lease (this is the July RPI figure).
  - Rates are increased by a maximum of £0.10 in all four car parks for all charging bands that it is permitted for in The Avenue car park, according to the lease.
- 5.13 The fees for The Avenue, High Street, Braccan Walk and Weather Way car parks are reviewed annually in line with the anniversary of the opening of The Lexicon. If one of the above charging options is agreed on, the proposed increases could generate the following amount of additional income based on a full 12 months.

*Table 1 – Potential Additional Income to be Realised from Charging Options*

Option	Approximate Maximum Additional Annual Income (based on 22/23 usage)
1 maximum permissible increases to all rates as allowed in the Avenue lease	£376,712 (inc 20% from HS)
2 increases limited to £0.10 where an increase is permissible in the Avenue lease	£111,995 (inc 20% from HS)

\*Please note that with limited data on usage over the day and night period these figures are the **maximum** estimated amount of additional income that will result from price increases.

- 5.14 The night charge tariff increases to £2.10. Anyone entering the car park from 6am will remain on the day tariff until up to 7pm to allow for the night rate switchover from 6pm and so that two separate levels of charges (day time and night time) are not incurred within the same charging period. Anyone entering the car park after 6pm will immediately incur the night rate only.

- 5.15 There are no proposed changes to the lost ticket charge of £12.

*Table 2 – Options for changes to car park daily charges*

**Option 1:** maximum permissible increases to all rates as allowed in the Avenue lease

**Option 2:** increases limited to £0.10 where an increase is permissible in the Avenue lease

Hours	Current Rate	Option 1 (lease) Proposed New Rate	Option 1 Proposed Increase	Option 2 (10p) Proposed Rate	Option 2 Proposed Increase
0 – 1	£1.80	£2.00	£0.20	£1.90	£0.10

1 – 2	£3.20	£3.50	£0.30	£3.30	£0.10
2 – 3	£4.10	£4.40	£0.30	£4.20	£0.10
3 – 4	£4.80	£5.30	£0.50	£4.90	£0.10
4 – 5	£6.30	£6.90	£0.60	£6.40	£0.10
5 – 6	£7.20	£7.90	£0.70	£7.30	£0.10
6 – 7	£8.00	£8.70	£0.70	£8.10	£0.10
7 – 8	£9.00	£9.80	£0.80	£9.10	£0.10
8+	£10.50	£11.40	£0.90	£10.60	£0.10
Night Charge	£1.90	£2.10	£0.20	£2.00	£0.10

5.16 At these rates, with the exception of the first hour Bracknell Forest's car parks would remain cheaper than the Oracle, Reading and Alma Road, Windsor but more expensive than the Atrium, Camberly although its likely these will be reviewed as part of their budget setting process.

	<b>Proposed BFC rates</b>	<b>Atrium, Camberly</b>	<b>Oracle, Reading</b>	<b>Alma Road, Windsor</b>
<b>0-1</b>	£2.00	£2.00	£1.70	£2.00
<b>1-2</b>	£3.50	£2.00	£4.00	£4.00
<b>2-3</b>	£4.50	£2.50	£6.00	£6.10
<b>3-4</b>	£5.30	£4.00	£8.00	£8.10
<b>4-5</b>	£6.90	£6.00	£10.00	£12.80
<b>5-6</b>	£7.90	£6.00	£12.00	£16.20
<b>6-7</b>	£8.70	£9.00	£13.00	£16.20
<b>7-8</b>	£9.80	£9.00	£15.00	£16.20
<b>+8</b>	£11.50	£9.00	£20.00	£16.20
<b>Night charge</b>	£2.10	£2.00	£1.50 <1hr	– N/A

			£3.50 >1hr	-	
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- 5.17 Increasing the tariffs by option 1 (the maximum permissible) will provide additional income this year, however it is important to highlight that expenditure costs are also increasing. For example, the Avenue lease is £1.379 million per annum with an increase upto a cap of 5% annually depending on RPI. Contract, utilities, business rates and maintenance costs also increase annually.
- 5.18 Choosing option 2 (10 pence increase) will result in an overall loss on the parking management service of £154k and as such compensatory savings will need to be delivered elsewhere within the Council.
- 5.19 If there are no tariff increases, the overall position for the parking management service as a whole (to include the management of the multi-storey car parks, surface car parks, residents parking zones and decriminalisation enforcement) will be a net cost of approximately £266k in 24/25 and compensatory savings will need to be delivered elsewhere within the Council.
- 5.20 If the tariff increases as per option 1 this will result in a positive net income position of £111k in 24/25.
- 5.21 Following the closure of High Street car park a three month suspension of business rates will be applied. It is likely that business rates will then be reapplied after this suspension unless the relevant criteria is met. Business rates for high Street car park are £118k in 23/24.
- 5.22 A summary of the financial position is below with the full details available in annex 1 (confidential) which includes an estimated inflationary uplift on expenditure.

## 6 Consultation and Other Considerations

### Legal Advice

- 6.1 The changes to the parking charges will require a statutory consultation, advertisement and Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) to be formally made and introduced under Section 35C Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 by way of a Notice of Variation. Any objections and observations will be formally considered and reported. The Notice of Variation is to be advertised in the local paper, on each car park and on line for a minimum period of 21 days in accordance with the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and in accordance with Regulation 25 of the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.

### Financial Advice

- 6.2 The financial implications are contained within the report.

### Other Consultation Responses – The Lexicon

- 6.3 Whilst we acknowledge the current high inflationary economic environment, the increase in tariffs for car parking in the town centre will undoubtedly add to the challenge of maintaining The Lexicon as the destination of choice from Bracknell Forest residents. Whilst we also understand operational costs for Bracknell Forest

Council will have increased the changes proposed to car parking charges will further add to residents' concerns regarding the spiralling day to day living costs and may consequentially reduce overall parking visits to the town centre.

As everyone will be aware the success of Bracknell Town Centre in recent years has been partly built on the fantastic accessibility for attracting car borne shoppers into the town, which has helped to retain the competitive edge of The Lexicon in what has been a very difficult past few years.

We are particularly concerned that the Option 1 tariff proposed for Up to 1 hour will make The Lexicon a more expensive parking destination than The Oracle, Reading. This may not help us in attracting shoppers from outside the borough and would request this tariff in particular is reconsidered.

In the event that the council is unable to sustain the current tariffs, which is our preferred option, we would strongly recommend that the £0.10 flat rate increase set out as Option 2 in the report is adopted from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023.

BRLP will expect any tariff changes will need to considered in the context of the clauses in the BFC lease with Canada Life and the Canada Life lease with BRLP.

#### Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.4 Reviewed for 2021 changes and no amendments required.

#### Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.5 The council owns the High Street and Braccan Walk car parks and has taken on the rent liability for The Avenue Car Park that it now manages. All car park income is subject to variations in demand. The proposals set out the maximum level of fees that can be charged and will be applied to all off street BFC car parks.

#### Climate Change Implications

- 6.6 The proposed increase in town centre charges will have minimal impact on climate change. Should there be any influence it will be to slightly reduce the number of cars driving to the four car parks referenced in this report which would have a positive climate impact. The uplift in car parking charges may support increases in the use of public transport, cycling and walking into the town centre.

#### Background Papers

N/A

#### Contact for further information

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