

To: **EXECUTIVE**
17th SEPTEMBER 2024

TOWN CENTRE OFF STREET DAY RATE CAR PARK CHARGES 2024

Executive Director of Communities

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 1st April 2024. 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 and implemented in October.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 **The Executive notes the options on charging tariffs for The Avenue, Braccan Walk and Weather Way car parks from 1st October 2024.**
- 2.2 **The Executive approves their preferred option as detailed in Table 2 Option 1 set out in the report below.**
- 2.3 **The Executive agree the tariff increase at Bracknell & Wokingham College from £2.50 to £3.00 per stay.**
- 2.4 **The Executive agree that in future the town centre off street day rate car parking charges can be increased in line with the maximum allowed in the lease of the Avenue and that this is agreed as part of the annual fees and charges process starting in April 2025.**

3 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The fees for The Avenue, 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 23/24 usage, the proposed increases will generate an additional maximum of £111,088 per annum.
- 3.2 In order to streamline and simplify the fee setting process these car parking fees should be included within the fees and charges as part of the annual budget setting process agreed by Council in February every year.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 The Council could maintain the current charges for The Avenue, 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 £111,088 per annum based on 23/24 usage. 23/24 usage rates were broadly consistent with 22/23 usage, however the first quarter of 24/25 has shown a decrease of 16% on the first quarter of 23/24 so the trend needs to be carefully monitored.

- 4.2 If tariffs are not increased this year and increased in 12 months time in October 2025 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 There is adequate capacity across the town centre. Even with the closure of the High Street car park there is not a detrimental impact on Braccan Walk car park which is only used to half its capacity. The Avenue car park is the busiest car park in town and at peak periods such as Christmas it can sometimes reach capacity with some level of queuing, however this is on occasion in the pre-Christmas run up rather than being the norm. In order to better manage supply and demand at peak periods 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 Braccan Walk multi storey car park. The lease costs and running costs have increased by around £95k in line with inflation and therefore car parking charges must increase to keep balanced.
- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 The lease for The Avenue car park sets the method of calculating the maximum permissible fee increases for day rate parking. Braccan Walk car parks align with this methodology in order to maintain the balance for council run car parks in the town centre.
- 5.4 In order of popularity, The Avenue, Braccan Walk, and Weather Way car Parks operate alongside Princess Square and Bracknell Station (including The One) multi-storey car parks.
- 5.5 All town centre car parks face competition from the three hours free parking (no return within 2hrs) 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.
- 5.6 Town centre footfall is reported to be up 10% year on year, but this position is not reflective in town centre parking usage which has seen a 16% drop in the Avenue and Braccan Walk in the first quarter of this year. Usage figures have also dropped in Princess Square but not to the same extent. The closure of the High Street car park in October 23 has not seen usage displaced elsewhere. There is also a drop in usage at town centre surface car parks. Usage figures will need to be closely monitored over coming months. The drop in usage could possibly be attributed to a number of factors including free use of the Peel centre and Waitrose, an increased use in active travel methods into the town and an increase in residential developments in the town centre.
- 5.7 Table 1 outlines the projected additional income achievable based on 23/24 usage. Given that usage in Q1 of 24/25 is 16% down on 23/24 (13% down in the first four months of the year) it is prudent to suggest that there could be a 15% reduction on

those estimations, and this is accounted for in the table (estimated at 15% as it is so early in the year). In reality, the income achievable is likely to fall somewhere between these figures.

- 5.8 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. Braccan Walk and Albert Road are mainly used for season tickets now the High Street has closed.
- 5.9 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.
- 5.10 There is a validator in Braccan Walk which is set at £2.50 for Bracknell & Wokingham College students per stay regardless of duration. It was previously agreed that this should be reviewed annually. Consideration should be given to increasing the set tariff to make any charge proportionate to the daily tariff. The proposal would be to increase it to £3.00 per stay. From April 23 to March 24 usage was 7,869 visits with an income of circa £17,500. It is difficult to provide an exact figure but given that the average duration of stay for a student is possibly in the region on 5-6hrs (£7.90 at existing rates) an income of circa £62,000 could have been achieved. The Council is subsidising student users of the car park circa £44,500 per annum.
- 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 The Avenue, Braccan Walk and 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 the Avenue, Braccan Walk and Weather Way 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, 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 23/24 usage)	Approximate Maximum Additional Annual Income (based on a 15% reduction of 23/24 usage)
1. Maximum permissible increases to all rates as allowed in the Avenue lease	111,088	94,425

2. Increases limited to £0.10 where an increase is permissible in the Avenue lease	78,490	66,717
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*Please note that these figures are the **maximum** estimated amount of additional income that will result from price increases – there is no available data to allow us to understand what proportion of cars enter the car parks during night time hours so the calculations are based on the incorrect assumption that all users enter during the day and pay daytime fees.

- 5.14 Increasing the tariffs by the maximum permissible (option 1) will provide the biggest income increase this year, with an additional estimated income of approx. £32,600 against option 2.
- 5.15 The night charge tariff increases to £2.20. 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 (daytime and nighttime) are not incurred within the same charging period. Anyone entering the car park after 6pm will immediately incur the night rate only.
- 5.16 There are no proposed changes to the lost ticket charge of £12.
- 5.17 The recommendation in 2.4 will streamline this process into the annual fees and charges which are presented to Council. Any fee increases will be in line with the maximum allowable increase as per the Avenue lease.

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	£2.00	£2.00	£0.00	£2.00	£0.00
1 – 2	£3.50	£3.60	£0.10	£3.60	£0.10
2 – 3	£4.40	£4.60	£0.20	£4.50	£0.10
3 – 4	£5.30	£5.40	£0.10	£5.40	£0.10
4 – 5	£6.90	£7.10	£0.20	£7.00	£0.10
5 – 6	£7.90	£8.10	£0.20	£8.00	£0.10
6 – 7	£8.70	£9.00	£0.30	£8.80	£0.10
7 – 8	£9.80	£10.10	£0.30	£9.90	£0.10
8+	£11.40	£11.80	£0.40	£11.50	£0.10
Night Charge	£2.10	£2.20	£0.10	£2.20	£0.10

- 5.18 At these rates, with the exception of Carnival Pool in Wokingham the first hour in Bracknell Forest's car parks would remain cheaper than all other neighbours current pricing. As the tariff bands increase BFC charges would fall in the middle. It is likely that neighbouring authorities will review their fees as part of their own budget setting process.

	Proposed BFC rates	Atrium, Camberly	Oracle, Reading	Carnival, Wokingham	Alma Road, Windsor
0-1	£2.00	£2.50	£2.40	£1.40	£2.30
1-2	£3.60	£2.50	£4.30	£2.60	£4.60
2-3	£4.60	£3.50	£6.00	£4.50	£7.00
3-4	£5.40	£5.00	£8.00	£4.50	£9.30
4-5	£7.10	£7.00	£10.00	£6.50	£14.70
5-6	£8.10	£7.00	£12.00	£6.50	£14.70
6-7	£9.00	£10.00	£13.00	£7.00	£14.70
7-8	£10.10	£10.00	£13.00	£7.00	£14.70
+8	£11.80	£10.00	£15.00	£7.00	£14.70
Night charge	£2.20	£2.50	£2.00 <1hr £3.50 >1hr	– £1.00 6pm-10pm - Free 10pm – 6am	-
Lost ticket charge	£12.00	-	£20.00	-	-

5.19 In addition to the two options of increasing by the lease amount and 10p, there could also be a third option to not increase the tariffs in line with the RPI uplift and remain as existing charges. This would have a negative effect in future years as any future increases would evidence a greater jump.

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

- 6.3 No response received from the Lexicon.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.4 Reviewed for 2021 changes and no amendments required.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.5 The council owns Braccan Walk car park 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 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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